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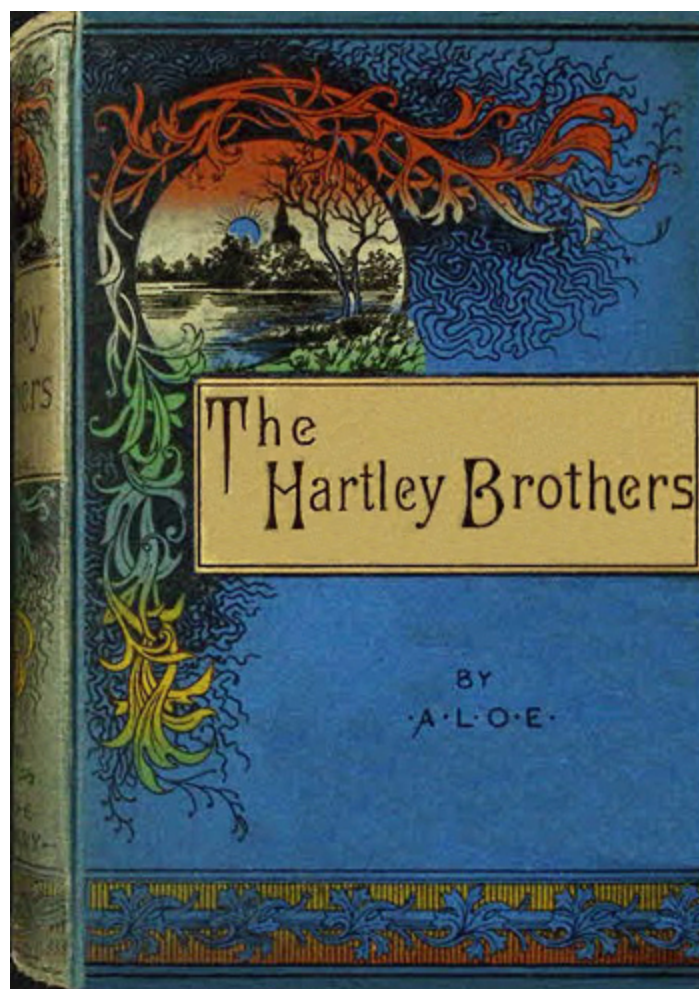
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Transcriber's note: Unusual and inconsistent spelling is as printed.





"Captain Gump was silent for several seconds; Mrs. Evendale, who was almost trembling with nervousness, expected an outburst of passion, perhaps an insulting retort."—p. 50.

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THE HARTLEY BROTHERS

OR
THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN

BY
A. L. O. E.

AUTHORESS OF "THE WHITE BEAR'S DEN," "NED FRANKS,"
"THE CLAREMONT TALES,"
ETC.

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PREFACE.

To those who have happened to read my two former volumes, "Pictures of St. Paul," and "Pictures of St. Peter in an English Home," the Hartley Brothers will already be familiar, for this little work is a sequel to their story. There would have been more symmetry in my arrangement, could I have given the third book the title of "Pictures of St. John," but this could not be accomplished. We know too little of the career of "The Apostle of Love" to treat his history in the same way as the histories of "The Apostle of Faith" and "The Apostle of Hope;" while St. Peter and St. John are so often mentioned together in the Gospels, that much going over ground already trodden would have been rendered inevitable. All that the writer has been able to do is to try to represent the spirit of the disciple whom Jesus loved, as exhibited in those who in modern days tread in his steps. As the Bible itself may be said never to grow old, so the characters of those of whom we read in the Bible are reproduced, generation after generation, in such as are followers of the early Christians. We look on such plants in our gardens now as Adam himself may have tended; in like manner the fruits of the Spirit never die out, they reappear in every age; love, joy, peace are perennial wherever true Christianity exists.

A.L.O.E. may once more remind her readers that she is a Missionary, only employing her pen as supplementary work to humble labours amongst the natives of India, to help on that work by supplying her purse. If writing interferes with evangelisation, the pen ought at once to be laid aside; but practically it does not interfere: it is a handmaid, and not a rival.

And so A.L.O.E. sends forth this book, this child of her old age, to do such humble work as the Lord may permit it

to do, looking to Him for the blessing without which all labour is vain.



A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

FROM A. L. O. E.

OFTEN, at the festive season, young people want some new amusement to give pleasant occupation in wet days, and during dark evenings. A.L.O.E. has written this little poem to supply such a want; if well learned by heart, and clearly recited, it may make children's parties go off more pleasantly, and, it is hoped, more profitably also. A.L.O.E.'s dear young readers—and perhaps families of old readers also—may welcome this small New Year's Gift, sent across the wide sea from a Missionary's home in India.



(The Old Year comes to bid good-bye to certain, young people.)

OLD YEAR.

When first, my young friends, I came to this place,
('Twas almost a twelvemonth ago),
With joy you beheld my merry young face,
Though my beard is now white as the snow.
I gave each a book, on its pages to trace
A journal, as days onward flow;
Now what's in it writ,
Let me look upon it,
For I very much want to know.

CHORUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Oh! What's in it writ,
Let us look upon it,
We all very much want to know.

FIRST BOY.

In my book there's a great deal of pleasure and fun,
Ninety-nine games I played, yes, and three matches won!
A ball came and hit me right in the eye,
I was made for three days in darkness to lie,
But I jumped up again, for I "never say die!"

I lost one whole day in a troublesome thicket;
There's little put down but of racing and cricket!

OLD YEAR.

Oh! Look at your pages, look at them, do!
The idle fish-insect has nibbled them through.
Let play have its place—
The game and the race,
But duty comes first in a noble boy's case.

SECOND BOY.

My book tells a great deal of lessons and work,
For I go at my reading and sums—like a Turk,
Make nothing of Grammar, noun, pronoun, or verb;
My hand-writing, too, you will please to observe.
Oh! Was I not proud when I got the first prize,
Overcoming a chap I dislike and despise!
My greatest delight was to see his surprise,
For he counted himself so exceedingly wise.
He'll never beat me, if for ever he tries!

OLD YEAR.

Oh! Quick turn aside,
Such pages to hide,

They are blotted all o'er with ill-nature and pride!

SICK CHILD.

I've been so long ill, I've had little to write,
For months it was pain, both by day and by night;
I tried to be patient, indeed I did try
Not to give so much trouble, and never to cry,
But sometimes a tear came, and sometimes a sigh!
Oh! How much I owe to my dear Mother's care,
Her smiles and her soothing, her sweet words of prayer!
I'm sure, but for her, I'd have died in my pain,
But I'm getting so well and so happy again!
 I think you will find,
 On each page, underlined,
That God is so good, and my Mother so kind!

OLD YEAR.

And sickness, we find,
Left a blessing behind,
The rose-leaves of patience, a spirit resigned.

A GIRL.

My journal looked much like a milliner's bill,
With lace and with lappets, with flounce and with frill,

With choosing and trying,
And fitting and buying,
To fashions applying,
The looking-glass eyeing,
'Twas all rather frivolous, there's no denying.
A spark fell on my book,
Oh! Look at it, look!
'Tis almost as black as a raven or rook!

ALL.

Oh! Look at it, look!
'Tis a cinder-like book,
There's nothing to show for the time which it took!

A LAD.

I scarcely remember a word that I wrote;
There was nothing to praise, and little to note;
Three hundred and sixty-five days went so fast,
I scarce could believe when we came to the last.
But many a blunder and fault there has been.

OLD YEAR.

I cannot find one, they are blotted out clean.
I see against sin you have manfully striven,

Each fault was mourned over, confessed and forgiven,
Then effaced by the blood-purchased mercy of Heaven.
But other things stay, quite forgotten by you,
In bright golden letters they flash on the view;
I think that the hand of some kind angel wrote
The actions you thought were too trifling to note.
Let others now read them, as they will appear
In the glorious Day, when the whole world shall hear.

FIRST BOY READS—

Three hundred times written—"took care of young brother."

SECOND BOY READS—

And hundreds of times—"went on errands for Mother."

GIRL READS—

Dropped last shilling (unseen) in Miss'nary box.
(Alas! All mine went in trimming my frocks!)

SICK CHILD.

Oft, when I was ill, he watched by my side,
I ate all the fruit his wee garden supplied,—

FIRST BOY.

My time spent in play, in hard work he employed.

SECOND BOY.

Though he won no prize, my success he enjoyed.

GIRL.

All those gold dots stand for praises and prayer,—
My book is but ashes—and his is so fair!

SICK CHILD.

I think even angels with pleasure will look
On the bright shining lines in that beautiful book!

OLD YEAR.

O children! My moments are passing away,
But hear the last words which the Old Year can say.
You will soon a new book, on a new year, begin,
Pray God to preserve it from records of sin!
Oh! Ask that His grace may your spirits pervade,
Whether working or playing, in sunshine or shade,
That the Lord and His angels with pleasure may look
On the bright shining lines in each beautiful book!

THE HARTLEY BROTHERS; OR, THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN.

CHAPTER I. STARTING FOR INDIA.

"FAREWELL Clarence! Ida—good-bye! God's blessing rest on those whom we leave behind us!"

There is the last grasp of the hand—the last wistful gaze on familiar faces—and the bridge is raised, the connecting link with the shore broken. The little crowd assembled on the platform give a faint cheer, and handkerchiefs are waved, as the vessel, starting on her long voyage to India, slowly moves forward through the mass of craft of various kinds that half block up the River Thames. The brown water curdles into cream-like foam under the paddle-wheels, and the smoke from the funnel streams backwards.

Each one on board is taking a last look of old London with her dingy Tower, and the friends lining the shore, who may never be seen again. Now faces can be distinguished no more; the "Alligator" increases her speed as her course is more clear; some of the passengers dive down below into their respective cabins, for a drizzling rain is falling, and soon London herself can no more be viewed behind the forest of masts, swathed in her dun mantle of smoky mist.

Two young men keep their place on the deck, leaning against the bulwarks, unconscious of dripping rain. The taller and finer looking of the two, wrapt in a cloak, might at first sight be recognised as a clergyman, though Harold Hartley took orders but a few months ago. The younger is little more than a lad, numbering, perhaps, sixteen or seventeen summers, with broad shoulders, a form made more for activity than grace, a sunburnt face, and a rough head of hair under his wide-awake; his locks are brown in colour with a little dash of auburn red, which also tints the thick eyebrows which overhang bright intelligent eyes.

"So, Robin, we are fairly started for India!" said Harold, laying his hand on his brother's arm. "We have the meeting with our father to look forward to now; all the partings are over."

"The one bitter parting was over six months ago," observed Robin with feeling, "when we stood by her deathbed, and received her last blessing. Our strongest tie to old England is the grave of our more than mother; though," added the youth, "I never think of her as in the grave." Robin

raised his eyes for a moment towards a bit of clear blue in the cloudy sky, which looked to him like a smile from above.

"You and I must not give way to sad thoughts," observed Harold Hartley.

"They are not sad thoughts now," said Robin, "I consider such memories to be like a treasure in a golden casket, to be carried about with us wherever we go; or rather—they are pictures in an album, and when we are far-away in the East, how often shall we open the clasp, and turn over the leaves! There is dear old William Lodge, where we spent such jolly days; the little arbour in the shrubbery—the cote where I kept my pigeons, the parlour where we met for our evening readings, the chair where she—" Robin paused abruptly, and pressed his lips together to keep in a sigh.

"It is a great satisfaction to me," observed Harold, "that she who adopted us, and loved us as her own sons, so fully approved of our giving ourselves to mission work in India."

"The thought of it made Mother so happy!" said Robin, with animation. "Perhaps our going makes her all the happier now, for Mother may be watching us still. I do not like to think how much trouble I gave her, little unmanageable cub that I was!"

"You never gave her a tithe of the trouble that I did," remarked Harold regretfully; "but Mother had the patience of a saint. If I ever do anything for my Master in the mission field, I owe it—under grace—to her."

The rain after a while ceased, and passengers emerged from below to have a sight of Greenwich, as Elizabeth's stately old palace was passed. Suddenly the brothers were surprised by a shrill, familiar voice behind them exclaiming, "Dear me! Can it be! Yes, Harold and Robin Hartley! Though almost grown out of knowledge!"

"Miss Petty!" cried both the brothers at once, turning round to greet an old acquaintance whom they had not seen for seven long years, yet whom they would have recognised by her peculiarities had the seven been numbered thrice.

There stood the small, thin form, a little more shrivelled and bent, there was the familiar face, a good deal more wrinkled, but otherwise little altered. It was surmounted by a bonnet almost as gay as that which, in Robin's childhood, had diverted his attention in church by its gaudy wreath of artificial flowers. There was exactly the same inquisitive expression in the narrow slits of eyes, but the lashes had become white, for eye-lashes are not so easily dyed as hair on head or brows.

"Miss Petty, are you really going to India?" asked Harold, with unaffected surprise; he had almost added "at your age," but happily checked himself ere the words passed his lips. Poor Miss Petty indulged herself in a dream of perpetual youth, from which it would have been discourteous to have awakened her.

"You wonder at my having the courage to cross the sea, but you see I had a reason, a very particular reason," said Miss Petty in a confidential tone, which she was fond of assuming. "My dear friend, Lady O'More—you have of course heard of Sir Patrick O'More—very distinguished man—in high command—had to leave her only child in England last year, on account of measles or mumps, or something of the catching kind of illness. Now Lady O'More wants to have her Shelah with her—such a fond mother, you know; and she could not trust the darling to anyone but me, so I consented, as guardian, you understand, to my dear friend's child, to take her under my care as far as Bombay."

The Hartleys did not inquire whether the friendship, now first heard of by them, was a mere formal correspondence concerning what was really a simple matter of business, Miss Petty, for a consideration, undertaking to play the nurse to a baronet's child. If they guessed this, their guess was not far from the truth, for Miss Petty was so much accustomed to exaggeration, to giving out fiction as fact, merely because she wished it to be so, that her mind had gradually lost all power to discriminate between false and the true. As some persons have no sense of smell, so had she none of the delicate spiritual perception of—and disgust at falsehood, possessed those of sensitive conscience. Miss Petty had not the warning of danger which such perception bestows.

"But what are you going to India for?" inquired Miss Petty, looking up curiously at the tall, graceful, intellectual man whom she had known in his boyhood and early youth.

"I am going out as a missionary," was Harold's reply.

"Oh, dear! What a pity! You might have done much better in England!"

"I do not think so," said Harold.

"I am certain of it," cried Miss Petty. "I saw in the 'Times' that you had taken honours, and come out a double First. You might in time have been a Lord Chancellor, or a Lord Mayor, and have ridden in your carriage and four. Missionaries are as poor as rats, no one thinks anything of them, they ain't in society, you know! You would have done ever so much better for yourself, had you remained at home."

Harold answered with a smile, "I am quite contented with my lot."

"Well, well, you'll repent of your choice one of these days. But what on earth is taking you across the sea, Master Robin? You ought to be learning Greek and Latin at home. You're not fledged; you can't fly about the world as a missionary yet."

"No," laughed Robin, "I'm a callow downy nestling; but I can hop about a little, and I hope to fly when my feathers are grown."

"What can you do?" persisted Miss Petty, who had seated herself on a bench by the bulwarks, prepared for what she called a good long chat with old friends.

"Not much, but I can do something," said Robin, good-humouredly. "I can make a box, pack it, and carry it; groom a horse, shoe it, and ride it; act as clerk or medicine compounder; cut down a tree and light a fire; cook a dinner and eat it, and make myself useful to my father and brother in a general sort of way—at least I'll try to do so."

"But all that won't bring in a penny," observed sage Miss Petty.

"You know that when a piece of machinery is packed up in a box to go some distance, one sticks in little odd items to fill up the crannies and corners, to keep the instrument from being shaken by the jolts on the journey. My brother is the machine, and I—well, I'm one of the odd items to keep him safe and steady," said Robin, gaily.

"You won't like India," observed Miss Petty, shaking her head; "no more shall I, but I don't mean to stay in it long. I hear that snakes, scorpions, cockroaches, and mosquitoes are as plentiful as the blackberries on our hedges, and you feel like a leg of mutton being turned round on a spit before a big kitchen fire!"

Robin laughed so merrily at this description of the miseries before him that his mirth was infectious. "I can't enter into the feelings of a leg of mutton in such a predicament," he cried.

"Ah! Master Robin, you were always fond of joke," said Theresa Petty; "but you'll find life in India no joke, I warrant you. Besides, I can never make out what missionaries want to do with those dirty blackies. Not that I know much about them; I never saw one but that wretched creature whom my cousin brought home as a bearer."

Every trace of mirth vanished from Robin's face in a moment. "You must not—you shall not speak so of dear Prem Dás!" he exclaimed. "Do you not know that he was converted, that my father baptised him, and that he lived Christ's true servant?"

"And died Christ's faithful martyr," was added in Harold's deep rich voice, but in a tone almost too low to catch Miss Petty's attention.

"Oh! You need not fire up, Master Robin; you were not always so very fond. I've heard that one day when you found the idiot praying to a plaster-of-Paris figure, you kicked him as you would have kicked a dog."

"I was a dog when I did so!" exclaimed Robin passionately. "And you do ill to bring up against me an act of childish brutality, of which I shall

repent to my dying day!" The youth fiercely strode away to a distant part of the deck, his heart boiling over with anger.

"I see that Robin has lost none of his pepper and mustard," observed Miss Petty in a testy manner; "he never knew how to treat a lady."

"A more courteous, generous-hearted fellow never existed!" exclaimed Harold, almost as indignant as his brother, though he had much more command over his feelings.

"Ah, well! Ah, well! I can't sit gossiping here now, I must go and look after my Lammikin!" cried Miss Petty, rising, and then shuffling towards the companion ladder which led down to the saloon and cabins below. Harold heard her muttering to herself, "None lose their tempers as soon as your saints!"

The old lady had some difficulty in descending the steep steps, for the "Alligator" was beginning to heave up and down, as the ship was nearing the Nore.

Miss Petty made her way to No. 6, the number of her cabin, after blunderingly looking into 4 and 5. She was never clever at finding her way. On pushing back the sliding door of her cabin, she saw her young charge seated on the floor, happily engaged in eating toffy.

Shelah O'More was a child of about five years of age, with fiery red hair and a freckled face. Her nose had an inclination to turn upwards, to counterbalance which the corners of her mouth had a tendency to turn downwards when anything aroused the little girl's ire. Shelah's mouth, however, looked good-tempered enough at the moment, for it was full of the sweets which bedaubed her lips with brown, while her treacle-covered fingers had left an unbecoming smudge of the same on her saucy little nose.

"You dirty young pup! I'm ashamed of you! You're not fit to be seen!" exclaimed the guardian of the baronet's child. "Have you gobbled up all your toffy already?"

"No," replied Shelah, speaking indistinctly and with difficulty, on account of the sticky lump which she was serenely sucking. "I've put what's left in that thing," and the brown-smear'd, thick-tipped finger pointed to Miss Petty's new yellow satin workbag.

"Oh! You mischievous monkey; you—you—" And poor Miss Petty made a dash at the bag, which Shelah did not surrender without a struggle. Miss Petty then opened it, and found reels of cotton, bodkin, needle-case, scissors, and thimble, all sticking together in most unlovely union, her exploration only ending in her soiling her own fingers, and utterly losing her temper. The guardian caught hold of Lammikin by the shoulders and gave her a hearty shake, which vigorous action produced a loud roar which resounded over the ship.

This was the first, but was not to be the last struggle between the guardian and her Lammikin charge.

CHAPTER II.

CONTRASTS.

ROBIN, after a brief rapid striding up and down deck, returned to the side of his brother. The youth was flushed and excited.

"Harold, if that woman tack herself on to us during all the voyage, what shall we do?" he exclaimed.

"Bear and forbear," was the quiet reply.

"That's easy enough for a calm, self-possessed, sensible fellow like you, but not so for me!" cried Robin. "Of all things on earth, what I most

dislike is an elderly butterfly, with dyed hair, and a mischief-making tongue."

"A species unknown to entomology," observed Harold.

The remark brought a smile to Robin's downy lip, and so almost restored his good-humour.

"I am afraid that we shall have a very disagreeable voyage," said Robin, "and the worst of it to me is—that I am to blame for all that we may have to bear."

"How so?" inquired his brother.

"If I had not been in such a desperate hurry to join our father and begin our work, we would never have embarked in this 'Alligator.' Instead of waiting till the proper month, October, I was eager to start in August."

"I was your partner in that piece of folly," said Harold.

"Then it was your kindness to me that made you choose a vessel for cheapness rather than for anything else, so that what would have taken you to India comfortably had you travelled alone, might cover the expenses of two."

"If I thought that my boy's company would more than compensate for petty discomforts, this second piece of folly must be entered entirely on my side of the account," said Harold, looking with a loving smile on his brother.

"I am afraid that we shall have more than petty discomforts," observed Robin; "one can laugh at trials if they are confined to rough fare, bad accommodation, slower sailing, or such-like trifles; but one cannot be quite indifferent as to the company which one keeps. Miss Petty always puts one out of patience, and from what I have heard and seen of the captain, I am sure that he is neither a gentleman nor a Christian!"

"Dear old boy, I thought that you and I had resolved to speak evil of no one," said the young clergyman.

"Ah! Broken resolutions! They vex me more than anything!" cried poor Robin, throwing himself on the bench which Miss Petty had vacated. Harold, more leisurely, took his seat beside his brother. "You know, Harold, that we have lately been studying together the life and character of St. John, and I have been setting that loved and loving disciple before me as a model, determined that I would, by God's help, try to be in every thing like the holy apostle. Now, I have not been a day on board before I have flared up like a fury, said bitter things, and thought more bitter, just as if I were still just a foolish, passionate child."

"My brother," said Harold, and he intuitively drew nearer to Robin as he spoke, "do you think that the Apostle John was born a saint, or that he developed into a saint?"

"I think that he became one by living very very near to His Lord, resting on His sacred bosom, and learning love from close intercourse with Him who is Love itself."

"John seems to have been naturally of a fiery disposition," observed Harold Hartley. "Christ gave to him and his brother the title of 'Sons of thunder,' and it is remarkable that it was the disciple whom we commonly associate with ideas of gentleness and tenderness who proposed to call down fire from heaven on an inhospitable village."

"It is some comfort to know that even the beloved disciple had human imperfections," said Robin, "as it prevents our being utterly discouraged at our own. But, Harold, some people, and good people too, think that they can attain to perfection even in this life."

"It seems to me," observed the young missionary, "that they do so by unconsciously lowering the standard of perfection which God has placed before us. It is not even St. John, but his Divine Master, whom we are to seek to resemble. It is indeed only a growing likeness, such as was doubtless seen in St. John; but would not the apostle, even when almost ripe

for heaven, have shrunk from indulging such a thought as this: 'I am as good, as holy, as perfect as was Christ, my Divine Master, when on earth'?"

"John would have rejected such a thought as blasphemous," exclaimed Robin. "St. John's words are, 'We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'"

"And this assurance of future perfection in the Divine Presence made the apostle add, 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure,'" remarked Harold.

Robin was silent for several minutes, and then observed in a different tone, "It would have been much easier for me to have kept my good resolutions, if I had not had Miss Petty for a travelling companion."

"Do you think that her being in the same ship is a matter of chance? Is it not possible that she may have been made our fellow-traveller without any choice on our part, on purpose to show us how imperfect is our patience, and to give us an opportunity of improving it by practice?" Harold smiled as he spoke, but his words were not uttered in jest.

"Then you think that intercourse with those whom we naturally dislike or despise may be an actual means of grace?" inquired Robin.

"Undoubtedly so, if we are enabled to conquer the inclination to dislike and despise them," said Harold.

The conversation then took another turn. "If I can in the least, judge of character by face, I think that there is one of our fellow-passengers whom we shall like," observed Harold, glancing in the direction of a lady, past middle age, who—clad in deep mourning—was sitting on the other side of the deck, engaged in reading.

"What a beautiful chastened expression is hers!" exclaimed Robin. "That is a face that can never grow old; it has the stamp of heaven's loveliness on it. Do you know who the lady is?"

"One of our people," replied Harold Hartley. "I was so much struck by her gentle meek dignity when Captain Gump spoke to her in his rough way about her luggage; her mildness made me inquire about her. 'Mrs. Evendale' is marked on her boxes, and I understand that the lady is the widow of a missionary, and that she is going out to take charge of some orphanage in South India."

"I shall try to sit next to her at table," said Robin; "one could fancy Mary of Nazareth like our fellow-passenger, allowing for the difference of costume, and the veil over the dark braided hair, and the simple drapery of her dress, makes even that difference less striking. The lady looks like one chastened by deep sorrow—sorrow borne in calm faith; one who has trod a thorny path, but with heaven's brightness upon it."

"My informant told me that Mrs. Evendale is not only widowed but bereaved of her children," said Harold. "She received the tidings of the death of one son by a fearful accident, when she was closing the eyes of the other."

"I wish that I could be as a son to her," said kind-hearted Robin. "Mrs. Evendale reminds me a little of our mother in expression, though not in feature and colouring. Our mother was so fair, and Mrs. Evendale looks like a daughter of Italy. Perhaps this fellow-traveller, such a contrast to the other, may not have been sent to us by chance."

A sudden puff of wind blew away from Mrs. Evendale a packet of papers which she had placed on the seat beside her, and sent them careering over the deck. Robin sprang up and gave chase to the fluttering leaves, glad of the opportunity of doing some slight service to the widow who interested him so much.

When the youth had picked up the last paper, he courteously carried all back to their owner. The lady thanked him in a voice which was melodious as music. Thus began an intercourse between the elder and younger traveller, which was to be fraught with consequences to both, which,—could they have been foreseen,—would have sent a strange thrill through their hearts. They now met for the first time, but they were only to be parted by—but we must not anticipate the rest of the story.

CHAPTER III.

BALKING THE BEAR.

THE "Alligator" had quitted the dock on a dull morning, when the August sun had been dimly visible through yellowish mist, and rain fell in a drizzling shower; but the evening sunset was glorious, and as the vessel steamed over the heaving waters of the Channel, rosy radiance fell on Albion's chalky cliffs, crimsoned the clouds, and made a pathway of light over the waves. The evening was one of calm beauty; there was now scarcely a breeze to waft slowly along the aërial islands which floated above.

The brothers again stood on the deck watching the changing aspect of the shore which they were quitting. After a brief silence, Robin began the conversation.

"I don't want to give all my hours to idleness during the voyage, though I have not, like you, Harold, made the eight feet square of our cabin into a floating library of commentaries, dictionaries, and grammars in languages living and dead."

"A soldier must have his weapons and the workman his tools," observed Harold.

"You are pretty well up in Urdu already, as you have kept up that language since childhood. Of course you need works in Persian and Hindi type. But I cannot understand why you burden yourself with big Arabic books—Koran, dictionary, and grammar—seeing that Arabia is not our field. It seems to me like a soldier of the Victorian era loading himself, in addition to modern weapons, with the cumbrous ones used at the time of the Conquest."

"Hardly so," said Harold, smiling. "You must remember that in India I shall be brought into contact with many Mahomedans, and that Arabic is the sacred language in which the Koran is written, which is used by all learned men, of whatever nation, who follow the False Prophet. What you look upon as a superannuated pike or battle-axe, is the weapon now, as it has ever been, of educated Mahomedans, whether met with in Palestine, India, Africa, Arabia, or Persia. Arabic holds the same place with Orientals that Hebrew and Greek do with us."

"My stupid head never took in much Greek," observed Robin, "and of Hebrew I knew not a letter. I left all that learning to you. I don't believe that I should ever manage Arabic."

"You are very quick—much quicker than myself—in acquiring language colloquially," said Harold. "In our Continental tour, you put me to shame with your French; I might have something packed in my brain, but yours was always at the end of your fingers."

"Oh! That's a different thing," cried Robin, amongst whose failings vanity was not to be reckoned. "One can't help drawing in air when it's all around, one learns to drink it as children drink, and to jabber a language even as they do. But learning from big books is to me like pulling up water from a very deep well; mine is too small a bucket," added Robin, tapping his own forehead, "it holds little, and goes swinging about, dropping its contents before ever it reaches the top. Do what you will, you can't make me into an Arabic grammar, or a walking encyclopedia."

"Well, my boy, you said just now that you did not mean to give the voyage to idleness; what are you going to learn? You have already caught up a good deal of nautical knowledge during visits to the coast, but may not be quite qualified to manage a steamer."

"I did not mean that sort of thing," replied Robin. "I am not going to apprentice myself to Captain Gump. I intend to do something in the way of learning by heart. I might commit to memory the First Epistle of St. John."

"You would possess yourself of a treasure."

"One ready to be used on every occasion, when a book is not at hand," observed Robin. "I want to drink in the spirit of St. John, and if his works are in my memory and heart, they will intuitively come to mind when I am going to give way to some fit of temper; they may,—don't you think so?—act as a kind of restraint?"

"Thy Word have I hid in any heart, that I sin not against Thee," said Harold. "Your design is good; I will try to learn the same portion of Scripture in Arabic."

"It would never seem the same as in the dear mother tongue," observed Robin; "but perhaps it is foolish to think so; the Epistle was, of course, not first written in English. Harold, there's another thing which I want to ask you. Don't you think that you, as a clergyman, could do something for the sailors and our fellow-passengers here?"

"That thought has been in my mind all day," replied Harold; "I have been waiting for an opportunity of speaking to Captain Gump on the subject."

"There he is," said Robin. "Does he not look like a bear standing on his hind legs, or a chess-castle wrapped in a shaggy brown coat? I'm afraid, from what people say, that you'll not find him an easy customer to deal with. He is not like one of the pleasant, gentlemanly men usually chosen to command passenger ships. He must be an adept in ill manners to have shown rudeness to Mrs. Evendale, as he did this morning."

The appearance of Captain Gump was certainly not prepossessing. In stature he was almost dwarfish; but he made up in breadth for want of height, being a remarkably powerful man. The captain's face was blackened by superabundant hair, which seemed to be always of three days' growth; no one could remember having seen him clean-shaven, even on a Sunday, and the captain's black bristles, like the porcupine's quills, had a "touch-me-who-dares" appearance about them.

When Harold walked up to the captain with a courteous "Good evening, sir," the commander of the "Alligator" only returned the greeting with a grunt. Captain Gump had taken a dislike to Harold from the minute

that he saw the young clergyman step on deck, partly because Hartley was a missionary, partly because of his height, for Gump bore a grudge against any man who happened to be a foot taller than himself.

"I wish to say to you, sir," said Harold, politely, "that if you propose to have services on board your ship, as there seems to be no minister on board but myself, I shall be most willing to conduct them."

"I propose no such thing," was the blunt reply; "this is a vessel, and not a Methodist chapel."

"But I think—"

"I don't care what you think," interrupted the bear. "Who are you, that you want to bring your preaching and prosing here?"

"I am a missionary," was Harold's reply.

"One of those amiable idiots who expect to wash blackamoors white," growled the captain; "not even a reg'lar parson."

"I am in orders," said the young clergyman, who was slightly nettled by the remark.

"Orders! What are your orders to me? There are no orders here to be obeyed but mine;" the captain emphasised his words by giving a slight stamp with his broad, heavy foot. "And we don't want no Jonahs here; I've read enough of the Bible in schooldays to know that the first 'un with his preaching nearly sent a ship—crew, cargo, and all—to the bottom o' the sea. I won't have that sort of thing in my vessel," added the captain, with a profane oath.

"'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,'" said Harold, sternly.



"'Did you ever hear the story of the 'cute captain who made his Jack-tars obey him without so much as a touch of the cat?' cried Robin."—p. 25.

"Did you ever hear the story of the 'cute captain who made his Jack-tars obey him without so much as a touch of the cat?" cried Robin.

Gump looked as if he were going to spring at the man who had dared to rebuke him on his own deck, and in the presence of others, for the swearer's loud voice had drawn some listeners to the spot. Robin saw the storm brewing, and with his quick wit managed to act as a lightning-conductor ere the fierce captain's fury had time to burst.

"Did you ever hear the story of the 'cute captain who over-reached his Jack-tars, and made them obey his will without so much as a touch of the cat?" cried Robin.

"Hold your tongue, boy," rudely growled the captain.

But Robin was not to be silenced when he had a good story to tell, especially when he had an object in telling it. He put himself between his brother and Gump, and went on with what the captain thought effrontery quite astounding.

"The captain was new to the ship, and the crew were a rough lot, a very rough lot, you see. So the captain got them together, and made a kind of short speech; perhaps you did so to your salts, though not such a very odd speech as was made by that very eccentric captain."

Even Gump's curiosity was slightly aroused; he was much more given to cursing and swearing than to making speeches, but he had spoken a few words to his men when assuming command.

"The captain said," continued Robin, "'My hearties, I've a favour to ask of you all.'"

"Ask a favour of his own tars! What a muff he must have been!" muttered Gump.

Robin went on with animation, as if unconscious of any interruption, or any probability of giving offence. "'Then,' said the captain, 'I ask you to let me swear the first oath on this ship.'"

"Not much to ask," said Gump, with a grim smile.

"Oh! But it was something," cried Robin, "for of course the tars agreed to do what the captain wished, and as he never swore the first oath, they had no chance of swearing at all!"

Captain Gump's anger, as Robin intended, was now turned upon him instead of his brother. The swearer was all the more provoked because some of the hearers laughed at the story, and glanced at him to see if the arrow had hit the mark. Gump began in a loud, fierce tone, "You're a young Jack-a-
—"

But Robin gave him no time to finish the sentence, adroitly ending the title in a way not intended by Gump—

"Jack of all trades, yes, that's what folk call me; and here is one of my tricks!" And with the agility of a cat, the youth sprang at one of the ropes of the ship, clambered up, and was looking laughingly down from the shrouds before Gump had sufficiently recovered from his surprise at the sudden feat to be able to utter a word.

Shelah O'More clapped her hands, and Miss Petty exclaimed:

"Robin was always climbing; he'll break his neck one of these days."

"The sooner the better!" grumbled Gump, as he walked to another part of the deck; but he spoke with a grin on his face. He could not refrain from a chuckle, Robin had so utterly taken him by surprise, and when an angry man has once been drawn into a laugh, or anything like it, it is difficult to him to resume his ill-humour.

Robin, having accomplished his object, swung himself down by a rope and rejoined his brother.

"Suppose that we enjoy the quiet of the saloon below, and leave the captain's red-heat time to cool down," said Robin playfully to Harold.

The brothers accordingly went below, and sat down to a game of chess. Harold gave grave attention to the game and won it: he was of a calm, self-possessed nature now, though fiery in earlier youth; but the excitement of the scene on deck filled Robin with mingled indignation and mirth, distracting his thoughts from the board. Robin moved his castle as if it were a knight, jumping over the heads of a couple of pawns, and captured his own queen by mistake in a very triumphant manner.

"Chess is too dull and sober a game for me!" exclaimed Robin, starting from his seat when Harold gave the inevitable checkmate; "I always feel inclined to go head-over-heels when I'm done, to recover from the strain of so much thinking!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BATTLE, AND ITS RESULT.

"I AM glad to see you able to come on deck, Miss Petty," said Harold, on the following morning, when the old lady, looking paler and more wrinkled than she had done on the preceding day, made her way to a bench. "We have had a wonderfully quiet night for the Channel; Neptune is treating us kindly."

"I don't know what you mean by a quiet night," was the peevish reply; "and his name is not Neptune but Gump."

Harold did not consider himself obliged to correct the old lady's mistake, and suppressed the smile which rose to his lips.

"I was as miserable as I could be!" continued Miss Petty. "I was boxed up in a swinging cage which would not keep steady for a minute, and with a cat for a companion!"

"A cat?" repeated Harold.

"Yes; a cat, a wild cat—a tiger cat!" exclaimed the Lammikin's guardian, looking angrily in the direction of Shelah, who was standing staring at the man at the wheel. "There were two berths—that's what they call them—one over the other. I've never had Master Robin's fancy for climbing, so I chose the lower berth for myself, and helped the child up to hers as well as I could. I bade Shelah keep quiet and go to sleep. I was just dropping off myself, in spite of the sickening motion of the ship, when down comes a foot on my nose, and before I have time to so much as cry out, there is Miss Mischief with a bang on the cabin floor, as if she had taken a flying leap, and had fallen flat on her face! She roared, and I left her

to roar; I was not going to hoist her up again, to go tumbling about like a monkey. I've made up my mind to one thing; never—no, never—take charge of a child on ship-board again!"

Harold looked concerned, but it was not on account of the trials endured by the guardian. He felt that poor Shelah had not a chance of learning the sweetness of Christian love whilst under the care of one who knew it only by name.

"I wish to speak to you on a different subject, Miss Petty," said Harold Hartley. "Captain Gump, I regret to say, resolutely sets his face against religious services here, and his commands are lawn on his deck. But no one can prevent Christian passengers from reading and praying together in the saloon, and I hope that some few will unite in asking for a blessing on all on board, and listening to a short exposition from the Word of God. Mrs. Evendale suggested our holding this little meeting, and we have fixed on twelve o'clock as our hour. Will you let us count you among our number?"

Miss Petty hesitated, but only for a moment. She cared not for religious meetings in themselves, but she knew that something of the sort was considered respectable even by the world. Theresa also wished to keep up close intercourse with the Hartleys, who were the only ones amongst the gentlemen on board who did not either treat her with silent neglect or make her the butt of rude jokes. To those unrestrained by Christian courtesy, it was difficult not to laugh at poor, selfish, silly Miss Petty, and the old dame and her Lammikin were already by-words on board.

"I should be charmed to come," said Miss Petty, "if there were any one else to take care of that mischievous magpie; one never knows what she will be at."

Shelah was busy at the moment in trying to uncoil a bit of rope, and pull it to pieces.

"Bring Shelah with you," suggested Harold.

Miss Petty shrugged her shoulders to express how impossible it would be to do anything, or listen to anything, if Shelah were allowed to be

present. But the guardian made no other reply.

Mrs. Evendale was sitting in her former place, Robin not far-away, leaning over the side of the vessel as if watching the waves, but really absorbed in listening. While the widow was plying her needle, in a low melodious voice she was singing to herself, quite unconscious of a listener near. The air which she sang was plaintive and sweet:

MISSIONARY HYMN.

"For Thy sake,
And in Thy name,
We offerings make—
Lord! Send down flame!

"With Thy Word
We face the foe,
We grasp the sword,—
Lord! Speed the blow!

"For Thy love
We scatter grain;
Lord! From above
Send down the rain!

"Through life's hour
To work be mine;
The glory, power,
The harvest—Thine!"

"Forgive me for listening," said Robin, as the song ceased; "I am passionately fond of music, and could listen to you for hours."

"Music is a great solace to me," said the lady. "It has been well observed that hymns are like wings,—they bear us up towards heaven."

"Is that hymn printed in any collection?" asked Robin.

"Scarcely could it be so," replied Mrs. Evendale, with a faint smile, "as it was the outcome of a sleepless hour last night."

"And the air also?" asked young Hartley.

"No; the simple air is one which I learned in childhood from my grandmother. She was of Italian birth, and sang what the Tuscan peasants sing."

"Might I ask you to sing again, and let my brother listen also?" said Robin, as Miss Petty and Harold approached. Shelah was kneeling on a bench at a little distance, looking at bits of brown sea-weed floating below in the sea.

Mrs. Evendale made room on her bench for Miss Petty, and again softly began to sing. But this time the lady chose a well-known English hymn in which the Hartleys could join. Theresa Petty would greatly have preferred gossip, in which she herself was an adept, for the most soul-elevating hymn could not lift her spirit from earth.

Instead of listening, Miss Petty sat watching the movements of Shelah, and before the first verse of the hymn was finished, the guardian started up with almost a scream.

"Oh! The mischievous minx! If she has not thrown her own hat overboard!"

"It's my boat; see how it floats!" cried Shelah, clapping her hands.

"You goose! You donkey!" exclaimed the indignant guardian. "Your new Leghorn—trimmed with real lace! Where are you to get another hat for the voyage?"

"Don't want one," cried Shelah saucily, shaking her fiery locks. The child thought her covering of thick, untidy hair quite sufficient for comfort.

"You may not want one now," observed Harold Hartley, "but the protection of a hat will be quite necessary when we encounter the heat of the tropics."

"You'll have sun-stroke, and coup-de-soleil, and fall down in a fit!" cried Miss Petty. "And what will your father and mother say to me after all the trouble I've taken with their child!"

Robin good-naturedly clapped his own wide-awake over the little girl's head; but the hat being much too large for Shelah, it extinguished her forehead and eyes, only arrested by the turned-up tip of her nose.

Shelah pulled off the wide-awake, and laughed as she flung it back to its owner.

"I think that I can improvise something which will at least keep out the heat," said Mrs. Evendale, after some minutes' consideration. "I have a round, fancy basket below, which is, I think, about the right size for the crown of a hat, and I could quilt a brim if I had proper materials. Ah! This will supply both the wadding and silk," and the lady drew from behind her a small red cushion which had been given for a comfort during the voyage. "The gay colour will not matter on the head of a child."

"I like gay colours," said Shelah; "I won't throw your hat into the sea."

Mrs. Evendale gave no hint that the basket was one which she prized, or that the cushion was one that she would miss; a weakness in her back making the pillow almost a necessary to the widow. Mrs. Evendale went down to the cabin for her workbox and basket, and after removing the handle from the latter, tried it on the head of Shelah O'More.

"Nothing could fit better," observed Miss Petty.

The widow then sat down to cut up her cushion, and begin a puzzling task for the benefit of a disagreeable child, who was not likely even to think

of thanks.

To make the quilted covering took hours, but they were pleasant hours to the widow, for, as she plied scissors or needle, she and the Hartleys conversed together on the theme of that love to God which makes us love our brother also. It is that love which pours itself forth in deeds of kindness, as the sun sheddeth forth rays, and apparently with as little effort.

Miss Petty had gone down below, and Shelah for a time was quiet, making up for her restless night by having a sleep on the deck, wrapped up snugly in Mrs. Evendale's travelling rug.

When Shelah awoke, and Miss Petty's gay bonnet again appeared on deck, the hat was finished. It was certainly a most original hat, the colour of the cushion having been scarlet, and it was soft and sun-proof, and—at least, so thought Robin—had a peculiar grace of its own, imparted by the worker, not by the wearer.

"A regular cardinal's hat," observed Harold. "What do you say to Mrs. Evendale for her kindness?" he added, as the lady tied the strings firmly under the chin of the child, and then gave her a kiss, rather to the surprise of both Miss Petty and Shelah herself.

"I'll say she's a good kind woman," answered the girl.

"Oh! That's not the way to speak of a lady!" exclaimed Miss Petty, who prided herself on her knowledge of forms of politeness, and thought that the word "woman" conveyed an insult.

"I won't say it of you," observed Shelah.

"I hope not indeed!" exclaimed Miss Petty.

"I'll say you're a cross bad woman!" cried the saucy child, with a look of defiance.

Miss Petty had already almost exhausted her zoological vocabulary on her troublesome Lammikin, but she had still one shaft left. "You little toad!"

she cried, seizing the child by the arm, and dragging her by force towards the companion ladder. "I will shut you up in the cabin, I will, and you shall have no dinner till you humbly beg my pardon."

Shelah resisted, struggled, kicked and roared, and Miss Petty had no easy task to get her downstairs; but her guardian was resolute, especially as she heard some of the passengers laughing at the battle, and laying bets as to who would win it.

"This is painful," observed Mrs. Evendale, who longed to interpose, but felt that she had no right to do so.

"Miss Petty will ruin that child's temper," said Harold.

"And crack her voice; just hear how she screams!" added Robin.

The roaring was too loud to go on very long. In about five minutes it was succeeded by silence, and Miss Petty emerged from below, much ruffled in temper, and very red in the face.

"I've shut her in—she can't get out—I'll bring her into order, it's the only way to deal with such wild beasts," said the guardian, seating herself by Mrs. Evendale, and fanning herself with her handkerchief after her fight.

"Miss Petty, would you allow me to try if I can bring Shelah to herself?" said Mrs. Evendale, in a gentle, courteous manner.

"You'll never manage a child, you are a deal too soft," observed Miss Petty.

"I have brought up children," began the bereaved mother, but she could not finish the sentence, her voice faltered, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Let Mrs. Evendale try how she can manage," said Robin; and he thought to himself, "I am sure, that one reproving look from that sweet face would have had more effect with me when I was a child, than any amount of beating and abuse."

"Oh! Let Mrs. Evendale try what she can do!" exclaimed Theresa, wishing from her heart that the stranger would take full possession of the child, so long as all the credit and profit pertaining to the office of a guardian should fall to her own share.

Mrs. Evendale rose, crossed part of the deck, and descended the companion ladder. She proceeded to No. 6, but found the sliding door of that cabin secured from without by a piece of strong tape.

With some difficulty, the lady unfastened the knot; she then pushed back the door and entered the cabin just in time to see Shelah's booted feet projecting inwards from the port-hole, which she blocked up with her little body. The next instant the feet vanished, the port-hole was clear, there was the sound of a splash in the sea below, and the terror-stricken lady rushed up on deck, with the cry, "A child overboard!" ringing in her ears.

CHAPTER V.

TO THE RESCUE!

"A CHILD overboard! A child overboard!" How terribly that cry resounded over the ship, with a shriek from Miss Petty as the scarlet had disappeared under the waves! Every passenger then on deck rushed to the side of the vessel from whence he could look down on the scene of the catastrophe, uttering exclamations of horror.

Gump's loud voice was heard over all, giving orders to "Let off steam! Back the ship! Lower the boat!" For with all his faults, Gump was a true British seaman, and could not see a little girl drowned without at least making efforts to save her.

But Robin was the promptest of all; his coat was off in two seconds, and the third saw him over the side of the vessel before anything could be done with the boat. It was an exceedingly perilous leap from a steamer, but Robin had not given a thought to his own danger, he was absorbed in that of the child.

Close to where Mrs. Evendale had been seated was a life-buoy, fastened up in case of shipwreck. The lady's large scissors were lying on the seat close to Harold Hartley at the moment when the splash and the shriek made him start from his seat. With great rapidity, he seized the scissors and severed the cords that fastened the buoy. Then the young man threw it over the waves with such force and precision, that, though the motion of the vessel before it could be backed had carried it far beyond Robin, the belt fell splashing into the water not many yards from his arms, now extended in swimming.

"Does he see it? Yes, yes, he sees it; he'll be saved, his hand is on it. Oh, why are they so slow with the boat? There, there; do you see that red spot on the waters? the child's body must have risen to the surface! It's gone! Can you see it? No; it was just on the whitened line of the steamer's wake. The lad has got hold of the belt, but he'll never reach the place where the girl sank. He'd better give up the useless attempt to find her. There; they're lowering the boat at last!" Such exclamations were bursting from the lips of excited beholders, gazing anxiously across the heaving sea, that sea which looked so terribly wide, so fearfully deep.

Harold is the first to spring into the boat, the first to seize an oar; his anxiety is intense, but he does not utter a word, he rows as one rowing for life. Miss Petty is wildly rushing up and down the deck, uttering cries of distress, which she wishes to be heard and recorded. "Oh, my Lammikin! My darling! She'll be drowned, she'll be drowned! And what shall I say to her parents? It was not my fault—every one knows that it was not my fault; I never dreamed that the girl would throw herself through the port-hole into the sea!"

"Let us pray—let us pray for her and the noble boy who is risking his life for a fellow-creature!" exclaims Mrs. Evendale, clasping her hands. Her

lips move in fervent supplication, while her eyes are still fixed on the waste of waters.

The boat is being steered towards the life-belt, which is itself moving in a backward direction towards the place where the scarlet spot disappeared. Happily the sea is unusually still.

"There is the scarlet speck again!" exclaims Mrs. Evendale.

"Where, where? I can see nothing but the frightful waves," cries Theresa, "the light so dazzles my eyes!"

No one on deck can now see the life-belt, for the boat is between it and the ship; but Captain Gump's stout form is standing on the bridge, his telescope is raised to his eye, and his loud voice is again heard.

"The life-belt is taken into the boat, but the boy, where is he? He must have dived for the child—fine fellow; he's a sailor every inch of him; he swims like a fish! But he's thrown his life away," the captain mutters to himself. "God help him!" It is the first prayer which Gump has uttered for many a day.

The words have scarcely escaped his lips when a loud cheer from the boat rings across the waters; it is evident that one at least has been found. Again the captain's excited voice is heard from the bridge.

"Ha, ha! They've found him at last, and he's grasping at something red; he'll not let go, if he dies for it! The boy holds on like grim death, but will his strength stand out till they get him in?"

Again came the shout from the boat—again and again—it told its own tale to the anxious gazers on the deck of the "Alligator." Then as the boat with its rescued ones sped back to the ship, Mrs. Evendale fell on her knees, and returned fervent thanks for two lives preserved. When she rose, Robin could be plainly distinguished in the boat, with bare head and dripping locks, engaged with Harold in chafing some one lying in the bottom of the boat, for the form of the child could not be seen.

"Let us get hot water, flannels, stimulants ready," cried Mrs. Evendale, and she hurried down to make preparations below for restoring a half-drowned child. Miss Petty never thought of offering assistance.

Captain Gump came down from his perch on the bridge, an expression of honest satisfaction on his rough face. He received from the boat the yet senseless form of Shelah, and put it into her guardian's arms, with "There—take better care of her," and then went up to the brothers who had just sprung on deck. Gump held out his brown, hairy hand to Robin, and gave the youth's a strong, hearty shake.

"I say, young man, you were born to be a sailor!" exclaimed the captain. "Up in the shrouds one day, diving under the sea the next, you're not the chap to be made into a missionary drudge."

"I hope that I am," quoth Robin Hartley.

"You'll take to that kind o' work, just as the flying fish takes to the air, a dash and a flash—then a splash—it's in the salt water again." Then turning toward Harold, the captain continued, "You too have played the man; I didn't look for such pluck in a parson. If you've set your heart on having a service to-morrow, it's Sunday, I won't say anything against it. I suppose that a parson without his preaching feels like a sailor without his ship."

In the meantime Shelah had been carried down to the cabin, Miss Petty loudly lamenting and crying, "Oh she's dead! My Lammikin is dead! But every one can witness that it was not my fault."

Shelah, however, was not dead, and restoratives diligently applied by Mrs. Evendale had their effect. The little girl sighed, shivered, sneezed, and then opened her eyes, looking around her with some surprise, trying to recall what had happened. Then her gaze remained fixed on the open port-hole, through which, by means of standing on a box, she had managed to clamber.

"There's where I squeezed through," said Shelah. "I didn't guess where I was going."

"Oh, my Lammikin! Why did you get out there?" cried Miss Petty, in a plaintive, expostulatory tone.

"'Cause you'd shut up the door," was the saucy reply. "I'll tell papa, I will, that you got me nearly a-drowned in the sea. Oh, it was so horrid! Guggle, guggle, guggle. I never thought I'd be fished up again."

The next day Shelah was lively and well and active as ever, though Miss Petty, who had become very nervous, would not trust her on deck. The sea had no more tamed the girl's spirit than it had washed out the freckles from her face. The waves were considerably rougher than they had been on the preceding day, and Miss Petty was obliged to keep her cabin, instead of attending morning service.

Harold's congregation was a small one. Robin had hoped that the captain himself might be present, but the rough seaman kept out of the way of a sermon, though he listened at a little distance to the singing of hymns. The music might well attract him, Mrs. Evendale's singularly sweet voice blending harmoniously with the deeper tones of the Hartley brothers.

Little Shelah sat fairly quiet at Mrs. Evendale's side, though not attending to preaching or prayer. The child's quietness was chiefly owing to her dumpy fingers being for some time busily engaged in picking the green braid off her new Sunday jacket, in hopes of making that braid into a fishing-line, to enable her to catch sharks and whales by a pin. When Robin noticed what Shelah was doing, he remembered the mother who never felt easy when her children were quiet, for she felt certain that they must be engaged in some mischief.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ATTEMPT TO SERVE.

UNDISCOURAGED by the fewness of his listeners, the young missionary threw his whole soul into his discourse. His theme was love, and his text was drawn from the first epistle of St. John.

First: love was traced to its Divine Fountain-head—the love of God, for GOD IS LOVE. Then the preacher showed its effect on those who are called the sons of God,—both as regarded their feelings towards the Saviour who bought them, and towards the brethren—beloved for His sake. When Harold spoke warmly and earnestly of the unselfish, or rather self-sacrificing love which is ready to give life itself for the brethren, every eye was turned towards Robin, for every one present thought of the terrible scene of the preceding day.

Then Harold went on to speak of the influence of love in removing the fear of death—"Perfect love casts out fear.' Whether the Father's call come in the earthquake or the fire, or in the roaring of the stormy waves, love recognises the voice, love grasps the supporting hand, love looks upward to the Father's face, love rests on the Father's bosom."

After the service was over, Shelah was summoned to Miss Petty's cabin, and Mrs. Evendale went upon deck. The lady sat with her book in her hand, but her mind wandered from its pages. She thought how unutterably poor are those who know nothing of this love of which she had heard, those whose view of heaven is shut out by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

The lady thought of the captain who was skilfully guiding the vessel towards an earthly port, yet who was himself steering blindly towards the rock of destruction; who was faithfully serving the shipowners who employed him, whilst utterly neglecting his duty towards his Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer. Mrs. Evendale silently prayed for the seaman, and conscience whispered to her soul, "Do not content yourself with praying for another, ask for yourself courage to speak to him some little word for God. Are you afraid? 'Perfect love casts out fear.'"

The thought was yet in the lady's mind when a shadow fell on her open page. She looked up, and saw Captain Gump before her.

"How is that little Flibberty Gibbet after her cold bath?" he inquired. "I have not seen her on deck to-day."

"Shelah is quite well," was the reply; "but Miss Petty is afraid of letting the child come up here without her, lest Shelah should again fall overboard and be drowned."

"Oh! She'll not try that trick a second time," said the captain, with a grim smile. "I thought yesterday that she would be a feast for the sharks, and so assuredly she would have been, but for that plucky young lad. I suppose that Miss Lammikin is mighty grateful to him for pulling her out of the sea."

"I have not noticed any particular sign of gratitude," answered the lady.

"Then the girl is not worth her salt!" said Gump with decision. "I can put up with a child's being wild—'tis nature—or silly, or mischievous, or spiteful as a cat; there's but one thing which I cannot put up with, whether in child or man, and that's ingratitude to a benefactor. Why, the very beasts are grateful; the dog licks the hand that feeds him. An ungrateful fellow is worse than a beast."

"Shelah is very young," observed Mrs. Evendale, "and probably hardly understands either what she owes to young Mr. Hartley, or how very great was the risk which he ran in order to save her. But if, when the girl grows up, she does not wish even to hear the story of her deliverance, if she care nothing for her preserver, and even when she mentions his name does so only in a way to insult him, if—"

"Come, come, Mrs. Evendale," interrupted the captain, "the child isn't so bad as to make us fancy her an ungrateful wretch like that!"

"Captain, there are a good many such people in the world," observed the missionary lady, wondering to herself whether she would muster courage to say, "Thou art the man."

"I hope not," said Gump.

"I have been hearing this very day of generous, devoted, self-sacrificing love; I have been hearing of One who not only risked, but deliberately, of His own free will, gave up life to save the unworthy. Is it because the sacrifice is above our comprehension that men think that, where most gratitude is due, ingratitude is no sin?"

Captain Gump was silent for several seconds; Mrs. Evendale, who was almost trembling with nervousness, expected a burst of passion, perhaps an insulting retort. She did not realise what a power is often exercised by the beauty of holiness, the dignity of a life devoted to God, even over hardened natures like that of the rude seaman before her.

"I know what you're driving at," said the captain at last, speaking slowly and without anger. "I was told this sort of thing when I was a boy; but a rough sea-life has rubbed it all out, as the waves rub out marks in the sand. I have not so much as opened a Bible for twenty years or more."

"Would you like to see one again?" asked Mrs. Evendale, softly, laying her hand on the beautifully bound New Testament at her side.

"No time," said the captain more gruffly.

"Not time for two or three verses in the day! Even a busy man like you, Captain Gump, must find time for eating and sleeping, and you and I will both have to find time for dying. Would you accept this Testament from me?" The gift was proffered in so courteous a manner, that even the captain could not be angry.

"You can't spare it," said Gump, taking the little volume into his hand. Opening it, he perceived that there were passages in it marked, and double-marked, showing that the book had been much read, though the handsome binding was little injured.

"Oh! Yes, I can spare it," said Mrs. Evendale; "I have a complete Bible in the cabin below. I should be so glad if you could find half the comfort in the Gospel that I have done in times of bitterest sorrow."

The captain made no immediate reply; a double mark had drawn his attention to the words, "We love Him because He first loved us."

"I learned that verse when I was boy," Gump muttered half to himself; "but I've forgotten it, like everything else. Well, thank 'ee, madam, for your book; I'll have a look at it now and then, and maybe return it when we get to Alexandria, where the passengers must disembark."

The captain buried the small volume in one of his capacious pockets, for he did not choose that anyone else should see it in his hand. It was Mrs. Evendale's allusion to her own bitter sorrow that had touched one tender place in the sailor's heart, for he had noticed the deep mourning which she wore, and had heard that she was a widow, and childless. The captain himself had lost an only child; he had known the pain of bereavement, and thought to himself, "There must be something in a religion which can give comfort in such a trial."

Everyone on board noticed that from this time the captain's manner was more polite to Mrs. Evendale than to anyone else on board. He always placed her at meal-time at his right hand, and never swore in her presence. Indeed, Captain Gump now rarely swore at all, and that only when taken, as it were, by surprise. The captain made no objection to Harold's saying grace before meals, and, on the following Sunday, was present at Divine service. Gump said nothing of what was passing in his own mind; perhaps he could not have put his thoughts into words. Little did he imagine how many earnest prayers were offered up for him in his vessel, or how often in his behalf was pleaded the promise in 1 John v. 16:

"If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them which sin not unto death."

CHAPTER VII.

MALTA AND ITS KNIGHTS.

THE voyage continued for some time without any incident worth recording. Gibraltar's stately rock was passed, and favourable breezes sent the "Alligator" rapidly along the blue Mediterranean.

Mrs. Evendale gave a good deal of attention to Shelah, the only child on board, but with little apparent result, except that of rousing the jealousy of Miss Petty, who was annoyed at her charge preferring any one—indeed every one—to herself. Shelah, she knew, was old enough and sharp enough to convey impressions to her parents, which might prejudice them against the guardian, and so injure Miss Petty's chance of having her return voyage made easy and lucrative by the charge of other children. Miss Petty tried petting, but Shelah would not be petted by her.

"My Lammikin," once began Miss Petty, in the presence of several auditors, to whom she wished to give an idea of her tenderness towards her little charge.

"I'm not your Lammikin, you are Miss Wolf!" cried the saucy little girl, encouraged by a laugh from some of the bystanders.

The naughty Lammikin lost no opportunity of trying the patience of her poor guardian. Shelah sat down on Miss Petty's flower-trimmed bonnet, when it had been exchanged for the dinner-cap. Shelah got possession of her guardian's scissors, and snipped a fringe round the handkerchief which Miss Petty had dropped on the floor. The old lady found salt mixed in her tea, and had a good guess as to how it came there. There seemed to be no end of the Lammikin's pranks; but with Mrs. Evendale she never played any.

In due time the island of Malta was reached, and, to the no small pleasure of the passengers, Captain Gump gave them leave to go on shore, strictly limiting, however, the time which they might spend on land. An amusing scene, familiar to those who have touched at Malta, occurred when the passengers first set foot on the historical island. A mob of porters,

vehicle-drivers, and other jabbering candidates for employment, who look on pleasure-seekers as their natural prey, swarmed around.

Miss Petty, who knew not a word of Italian, and was frightened and confused by the bustle and noise, fought her way through the rabble as well as she could with the point of her parasol, holding by the hand Shelah, who mightily enjoyed the fun. Mrs. Evendale quietly followed behind, and, singling out a driver more respectable in appearance than the rest, gave him in Italian directions whither to drive.

"Oh, Mrs. Evendale, let us go shopping together!" cried Miss Petty. "I've heard that in Malta there are the sweetest things in silver and lace."

"I am afraid that I cannot accompany you, Miss Petty," said the widow, who was just about to step into the vehicle which she had hired. "My time here is very precious; I must take advantage of the only opportunity which I may ever have of visiting a dear friend, a great invalid, sent to Malta by the advice of the doctors."

"Then take Shelah with you, please do; I can't shop or enjoy anything in peace with this monkey always at my heels."

"I am sorry to have again to say no," replied Mrs. Evendale, who had taken her seat in the conveyance. "If my poor friend were in health, I should certainly take Shelah with me; but the lady is ill, may be dying. Shelah is too lively a child for a sick-room." The vehicle was driven away.

Lammikin turned down the corners of her mouth and looked cross; Miss Petty felt scarcely less so. "It's always the way with those saints," she muttered; "they are never ready to do me a service. Come, Shelah, we can manage for ourselves."

"I'll not go with you; I'll go with Robin!" cried Shelah.

But Robin was nowhere to be seen; he and Harold had landed before the ladies, and taken a different course. The Lammikin had no choice but to go with her guardian.

When the Hartley brothers touched land, Robin enthusiastically exclaimed, "How glorious it is to be in Malta, in Melita, the first spot trodden by an apostle's feet on which I have ever stood!"

"And what a splendid place it is," rejoined Harold, gazing up with interest at the noble buildings which give Malta the appearance of a collection of ancient fortresses. He thought of the olden times when those walls rang with the shouts of the gallant knights of St. John, who, with their fearless devotion, made their rocky island the bulwark of Christendom against the warriors of the Crescent.

"Gallant deeds have been done here," observed Harold, "which will make the name of the Knights of Malta illustrious to the end of time. What a brave stand they made against the tide of Moslem aggression when it came on Europe like a flood! They had inherited the spirit of the Crusaders of old."

"Harold, if you and I had lived in the time of Peter the Hermit," observed Robin, "I think that we both would have been off to Palestine to rescue the Holy Sepulchre; and if in the days when the Turks were trying by fire and sword to carry their false religion into the West, you and I would have taken the vows, and donned the white cross of the Knights of St. John."

"Perhaps we might have done so," replied Harold, "for we should not have understood better than others did in those times that our Lord's kingdom is not to be spread by earthly weapons. The warfare of the knights in the days of old is no bad type of that before us in India. All Christians should be crusaders, in the sense of bearing the Cross and fighting its battles; we missionaries, set apart and specially devoted to the noblest of warfares, may be called, if you will, the present Order of the Knights of St. John."

The idea took the fancy of Robin. "Had not the knights to take a special vow of purity and obedience," he said; "were they not to protect women, take up the cause of the oppressed, and fight against evil wherever they met it? This is exactly what we have to do. We have to set up our banner on a Rock. Our weapons are not sword nor spear, nor our armour the

glittering casque and mail, but we have to wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and wear the breastplate of righteousness, and for a helmet the hope of salvation."

Harold smiled at the enthusiasm of his young brother. "One part of the comparison you have omitted," said he. "Do you not remember the knight's solemn night-watch beside his weapons before he was esteemed worthy to use them? For the missionary knight of St. John there is some preparation required corresponding to this."

"I am afraid that I have not thought enough of preparation," said Robin; "though I have prayed, and that from my heart. How would you have us keep our vigil?"

"By increased watchfulness, prayerfulness, and submission to whatever trials God may appoint," replied Harold. "Our Leader will not leave His warriors without discipline, often far more prolonged and painful than the night-watch of the Knights of St. John."

These words were often to recur to the mind of Robin, as if, when they were spoken, coming events had indeed cast their dark shadow before.

"Now, whither shall we first bend our steps?" said Harold.

"I don't care for seeing Romish cathedrals, still less for staring into shops when I've no money to spend," replied Robin. "I've been making inquiries as to how far it is to the memorable bay, where St. Paul and his companions are said to have landed after their shipwreck. I long to see the place, and have just time to go there if I make all speed."

"I am not sure whether you have time for the expedition," said Harold Hartley. "What if the 'Alligator' should steam off without you? I doubt whether Captain Gump would wait for the Queen herself."

"I shall take care not to be late," cried Robin; "only lend me your watch."

Harold did so, and the active young Englishman went off at full speed.

"I must make some use of my time too," thought Harold; "the missionary knight should always be on duty; here are some of my shafts ready;" and he drew from his vest some small copies of single gospels in the Italian language, which he had brought from England for distribution in Malta.

"This is the Word of God," said the young missionary to an intelligent-looking man, who was engaged in selling fruit. Harold had learnt these few words in Italian from Mrs. Evendale, on purpose to use them thus.

But the man's hand was not stretched out to receive the precious gift; he shook his head, and said something in Italian which Harold could not understand, except that it implied refusal.

Nothing discouraged, the distributor went on his way, to find some more hopeful subject. He next tried a lad who had books under his arm. "He at least will be able to read," thought Harold.

"Bad book—forbidden by the priests," was the youth's reply in Italian.

The third person to whom a gospel was offered was a woman. She looked timidly round her, saw a Romish priest standing at the corner of the street, and hurried away.

"It is evident that Malta is not a place where the Scriptures are welcomed," thought Harold, sadly, as he replaced his rejected books in his vest. "Rome's constant opposition to the circulation of the Word of God amongst the poor is one of the clearest proofs that her doctrines will not bear its searching light."

Harold was near a shop, and remembering that he had lost his pen-knife, he went in to replace it by buying one which he chanced to see in the window. The trifling purchase was soon made; turning to quit the shop, Harold saw the seller of fruit by his side. The man furtively stretched out his hand, and Harold, understanding the gesture, for nothing was said, placed in that hand the Gospel, which was received with a silent look of joy.

"One seed sown," thought Harold; "may the Lord give His blessing to it! I have heard that this island of Malta, now famed for its orange groves, was originally only bare rock, and that all its soil had to be conveyed in ships from the mainland. Such efforts were made to cultivate fruit, and such success attended the efforts. Shall the children of this world always be wiser than the children of light? Shall the energetic men of earth look on difficulties as 'things to be overcome,' whilst God's servants magnify them into impossibilities."

Harold's reflections were interrupted by Miss Petty's meeting him as he passed out of the shop. She looked flustered, excited, and eager.

"Oh! Dear Mr. Hartley, I'm so delighted to see you; you are the very person whom I wanted to meet!" she exclaimed. "Do just lend me twelve shillings at once, for I've spent my last sixpence already in lace. Malta, with its shops full of beautiful things, is the place to empty the purse of a Cræsus!"

"I am no Cræsus," said Harold; "and I have not so much as twelve shillings with me."

"Then lend me ten; I daresay that I can beat the jeweller down. I never in my life saw so perfect a brooch—a peacock in filagree silver."

"Excuse me, Miss Petty," said Harold smiling, "but would it not be well to resist even the temptation of buying a silver filagree peacock, rather than go into debt?"

"Oh! I want your money, not your preaching," cried Theresa. "There's Mr. Bolton coming, he does not keep such a tight grasp over his money; he'll lend the twelve shillings, I'm sure, and I'm just dying to get that brooch!"

Mr. Bolton was a careless, good-humoured young planter, who kept coin loose about his person. He was always joking at Miss Petty, paying her absurd compliments, and laughing at her behind her back because she had the folly to believe them. The young man on receiving her pathetic appeal, dived into his pocket, and pulled out a piece of gold. Miss Petty received it

with childish delight, hurried into a neighbouring shop, and after a little while returned rejoicing in the possession of the peacock brooch, which she fastened into her collar.

"But where is your Lammikin, Miss Petty?" inquired Bolton. The question came with startling effect, as if awakening the guardian suddenly from an agreeable dream.

"Where?" she repeated, nervously looking to the right and the left, but neither on the right nor the left was to be seen a trace of Shelah. Miss Petty, absorbed in the purchase of silver and lace, had not given a thought to the restless child whose charge she had undertaken. The guardian was overcome with alarm at missing the baronet's daughter.

Then began a distressing search; Bolton accompanying poor Miss Petty, more for the sake of the fun of the thing than from any intention of giving her help. Theresa interrogated passers-by in English, rushed in and out of shops, and shouted the name of her charge till the street rang, and people stared at the crazy Inglezi.

"Let's get the crier to go about the town," suggested Bolton, laughing: "Lost—a Lammikin, a lively young Lammikin. Reward offered for her recovery—a shilling and a filagree silver brooch!"

"Oh, don't worry me!" exclaimed poor Miss Petty. Her trouble might well invite compassion. She wrung her hands, she cried, she sobbed, then again began asking every one whom she met whether he had seen a red-haired little girl in a scarlet hat.

The heat was great; the paved street reflecting the rays of the sun almost burned Miss Petty's thin boots, and sorely tried her now blistered feet.



"'Let's get the crier to go about the town,' suggested Bolton, laughing: 'Lost,—a Lammikin, a lively young Lammikin. Reward offered for her recovery—a shilling and a filagree silver brooch!'"—p. 64.

"Let's get the crier to go about the town," suggested Bolton, laughing: "Lost—a Lammikin, a lively young Lammikin. Reward offered for her recovery—a shilling and a filagree silver brooch!"

At last, when passing the door of a handsome Romanist church, the sound—for the first time welcome—of a child's passionate roar from within broke on the searchers' ears. No one but Shelah could roar like that.

"Lammikin's inside, as sure as a gun!" cried Bolton.

The guardian, as fast as her weary limbs could carry her, hurried up the broad steps of the church, and through the open door, Miss Petty saw Shelah inside in the grasp of an angry tonsured priest, who held her as a

raven might hold a mouse, whilst the child struggled and roared. Why did the priest thus capture her? What dire offence had been committed by the poor little Irish girl?

"Let her go! Please, Mr. Priest, let her go!" cried Miss Petty, not a little frightened, for a curious crowd was gathering round, and dreadful stories which she had read of the Inquisition flashed through the guardian's mind.

The priest released his grasp, and said something which Miss Petty could not understand, glancing indignantly at a receptacle for holy water near the entrance of the church.

"What have you done, you mischievous mouse?" asked Miss Petty of Shelah. "You are always at something naughty."

"Not naughty. I was only thirsty, and drank out of that thing." She pointed to the marble receptacle. "Wasn't it put there for people to drink?"

"You are always getting me into trouble," said the angry guardian. "The Papists will be wanting to burn you for this. Let's get back to the ship as fast as we can."

Shelah was too young a culprit not to be forgiven, and neither priest nor people interfered to prevent her departure. Heartily glad was Shelah, still more glad was her guardian, when they found themselves again with their fellow-passengers, on the deck of the "Alligator", steaming away from Malta.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRINCESS AND SUITE.

ALEXANDRIA was soon reached. In those days there was no Suez Canal, so the passengers had to disembark, and bid farewell to the "Alligator" and its commander, ere pursuing their journey across the desert, to the port where another vessel awaited them.

Captain Gump stood on the deck of his ship, whilst heaps of luggage were disgorged from the hold, and piled up ready to be carried on shore. It was a scene of confusion and bustle, intermingled with good-byes and kindly words, interchanged between those who would now be separated, some passengers remaining in Egypt, some going on to India. The captain, of course, came in for his share of good-byes, which he received and returned in his own blunt way. But when Mrs. Evendale approached him, the captain walked a few steps aside from the throng, and said to the lady in a low tone, "I spoke of returning that book, but—if you don't mind—I'd rather keep it."

"Keep it as a remembrance from me," said the lady.

"I'm not likely to forget you, the only one for twenty years and more who cared for my soul; and when you're at your prayers, Mrs. Evendale, maybe you'll sometimes remember me." The captain held out his broad, sunburnt hand, which the missionary lady grasped kindly.

"May we meet—in heaven," she softly said.

"I'm hardly likely to find my way there," muttered Gump; "but if I do, 'twill be mainly owing to you. God bless you!" The captain abruptly turned away.

The two were never to see each other again upon earth, but often did the captain, as he studied his book, think of her who had given it to him. It had not been given in vain.

What delightful disclosures will there be in another world, of the results of good done in secret, seeds that have grown up unknown to the sower! If it be not presumption to add a verse to a lay of one of our sweetest Christian singers, one may supplement its delightful chain of contrasts

between present sorrow and future bliss by such hopeful thoughts as the following:—

Joyful surprises,
Flowers after frost,
Greetings and welcomings
Where prayer seemed lost.
Those we have sorrowed o'er
Shining above,
Swelling the harmony,
Sharing the love!

We will not dwell on the land part of the journey, which was, at that season, almost unbearable from the heat. The passengers from England, and others from Alexandria, then embarked in the "Napoli," an Italian steamer, commanded by Captain Cenci, an Italian, and partly manned by Arab Lascars.

Before the vessel was unmoored, Miss Petty came up to Robin in a state of rapturous excitement.

"We shall have a delightful voyage down the Red Sea," she cried, "if only we can escape being fried alive on the way. Only imagine! We have a real princess on board; she and her suite had two whole omnibuses to themselves (which caused our terrible jamming in the third), and now they take up all the best cabins."

"Hardly the thing to make our voyage more delightful, Miss Petty," laughed Robin. "I confess that I was not delighted to find that Bolton was to share with Harold and myself a hole in which we have hardly room to turn round. And that in such grilling weather."

"Mrs. Evendale is squeezed into our cabin," said Miss Petty, fanning herself vigorously as she spoke; "but of course every one must make room

for a real princess. Her name is—let me think—Principessa Lucrezia di—di—Pelipatti—or something like that, it is almost too long a name to remember. She's very charming—of course."

"How do you know? Have you already made her acquaintance?" asked Robin.

"Not yet—not yet; but of course during the voyage we shall meet often," said Miss Petty, who had already built a tall castle of cards or cobwebs on the strength of her coming intimacy with a real princess. "Oh! What splendid jewels she wears! How her diamonds flash in the sun! Principessa Lucrezia, has, I believe, more rings than fingers, and such a necklace—of course all pure gold! They say that the Princess is amazingly rich."

It was no small disappointment to Miss Petty to find, after they started on the voyage, that the Principessa di Peliperiti did not condescend to dine with the other passengers, but was served apart from the rest. The obsequious captain, proud of his freight, gave the best of everything to the grand lady and her companions, leaving the other passengers to fare very badly indeed. Some of the English travellers ventured to express a wish that the Princess had chosen any other ship than that in which they were sailing, or that they themselves had embarked in some other vessel.

"I don't think much of our sleek captain," observed Bolton to Harold in the evening; "he's rather like a fawning courtier than a seaman. I doubt whether he knows how to handle his ship or manage his ruffian-like crew."

"I felt more confidence in our bluff old Gump," remarked Harold.

"As for the elderly Princess, she's cracked, simply cracked," said Bolton. "She's an exaggerated Miss Petty,—Princess Pettier let us call her, for I can never remember her name. I hear that she is as full of fancies as a sieve is of holes. She has had a training establishment for cats and a hospital for dogs; I'm not sure whether rats had not their turn,—for nothing pleases Her Highness for long. The Princess's present fancy is to be a great traveller. She has been to London, Paris, Vienna, Cairo, and I know not how many cities besides. They say that she wished to go to Mecca, but there

were difficulties in the way, such as the probability of having her throat cut. The Princess is about to 'do' India, and be lionised in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta; then, if the travelling mania be not superseded by one for educating elephants or taming snakes, she will probably pass on to China or Japan."

"Time and money wasted in a chase after shadows," thought Harold, but he did not utter the remark aloud, and turned the conversation.

"We shall have a breezy night," he observed, clapping his hand to his broad-brimmed hat to prevent its being carried away by the wind.

"More breezy than pleasant," remarked Bolton, "except that anything is better than the horrible heat. What fierce gusts are coming in from the west!"

"One has an impression, right or wrong, that the steamer has no ballast, or nothing heavier than bladder-balls," said Robin, who had just joined the two. "The vessel seems to dance along whither it will, as lively as Lammikin herself, and as little obedient to orders as she is to her guardian's."

"Of course, we shall all sleep on deck," said Harold.

"Certainly the men will," replied his brother. "Better to be buffeted by the wind than be baked alive below and then eaten up by cockroaches."

Almost all the male passengers kept the deck; but the Princess, her companions, Miss Petty, and her charge stayed below. Once poor Lammikin, making her escape from semi-suffocation, rushed up on deck, bareheaded and barefooted, to get a breath of air; but finding a good deal more air than she liked, and being afraid of being blown over into the sea, she dived down again into the cabin. There was not much sleep on board the "Napoli" that night.

The morning dawned, and daylight disclosed the startling fact that the vessel, instead of steaming down the Red Sea, had been driven by the west

wind right across it. A wide, desolate-looking expanse of sandy shore was ahead, dotted here and there with a few stunted palms.

"Where are we?" asked Harold of the captain.

The poor Italian was as ignorant as his questioner. He only knew—every one knew—that the ship must be nearing the western coast of Arabia.

"What is to be done?" demanded Harold.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, and hurried off to question the pilot whom he had taken on board.

The pilot, when questioned, showed that he did not know anything of the eastern shore, though he might have safely guided the vessel down the Red Sea had she not been driven so far out of her course by the gale.

"Should we not sound the depth?" suggested Harold. "We may run on some unseen shoal."

The suggestion was adopted; the line was thrown out to measure the depth of the water. The result was unsatisfactory; the vessel was getting into a shallow part of the sea. The captain muttered a prayer to the Virgin and saints to get him out of his trouble, and then gave orders to let off steam.

"Perhaps we could get a pilot from Arabia," said Bolton. "There seems to be a little creek into which a boat could go, and, luckily, the wind has lulled."

The fiery globe of the sun had now risen above the sandy waste, bathing it in golden light. Some Arabs were seen on the beach, evidently watching the movements of the vessel, which was about to be anchored only a few hundred yards from the shore. Cenci gave command to some of his sailors to man a boat, and bring, if possible, a pilot who knew the coast. Accordingly, three Lascars, who spoke Arabic, got into the boat which was quickly lowered from the vessel. The boat soon accomplished its little voyage, and was drawn up on the beach. For some time every eye on the deck of the "Napoli" watched with eager interest what appeared like a

conference between the Lascars and their countrymen on shore. The meeting seemed to be friendly, but apparently no pilot was at hand; and it was necessary to seek one inland. In Oriental lands, patience is a necessary virtue, and gradually those who were in the "Napoli" made up their minds to wait quietly at anchor until the pilot should come at last.

The day was Sunday, and Harold held a service on deck for the English passengers under an awning. Two Italians attended, perhaps from curiosity, perhaps from some higher motive. During the singing of the concluding hymn, the attention of Miss Petty was entirely distracted by the approach of the Principessa di Peliperiti herself; but, as soon as the music ended, the great lady walked away. There was some appropriateness in Bolton's description of her as Princess Pettier, for there was certainly similarity in height, restless manner, and gaudy dressing (as there was also in weakness of character), between the Italian and the English traveller.

Mrs. Evendale found no opportunity of conversing with the Princess herself during that long, wearisome day, but had some talk with two of her suite. After dinner, Mrs. Evendale went up to Harold with the question, "Do you happen to have any of your Italian gospels left?"

"One—only one; the rest were disposed of at Malta," was the reply.

"There is an Italian lady here who is seeking for light," said the widow. "I should be so thankful if you would enable me to place in her hands the lamp of truth."

"That lady never loses an opportunity of serving the Master," thought Harold, as he went to bring the book. "What a golden harvest she will one day reap in joy after her night of weeping!"

It appeared to be very difficult to find a pilot, for hour after hour passed, and the boat, with but one man to watch her, lay idle still, drawn up on the shore. A little before sunset the Princess summoned the captain to her presence, and said in Italian:

"I am tired of this monotonous rocking up and down; there is nothing so wearisome as waiting. You have another and a larger boat hanging up

there. I've a fancy to land, if but for an hour. I want to be able to say that I have been in Arabia."

There seemed to be no particular objection to gratifying the wish; and, even had there been one, to Captain Cenci the will of the Principessa di Peliperiti was law. The little expedition was safely accomplished, and the high-born traveller entered into her note-book the fact that she had visited Arabia, with a description of its scenery, and the appearance of the dwellers in the land.

The night passed, and still there came no pilot. The captain declared that should a favourable wind blow from the east, he would start without a pilot, and signal to the three Lascars on shore to return at once. But there was now an absolute calm.

Miss Petty was extremely anxious to do what the Princess had done, and the Hartley brothers and Bolton greatly desired to land in Arabia. The captain gave a courteous consent, and Mrs. Evendale was persuaded to make one of the party.

"They must return quickly," said the Princess; "for if an east wind spring up, or a pilot arrive, we must be off without a minute's delay. We have lingered too long already off this wretchedly barren coast."

Captain Cenci bent over the bulwarks, and, addressing himself to Harold, the leader of the party, said, "If I hoist a white signal from the yard, you must all instantly return."

"All right," was the reply. "We will take care not to wander far off."

"It is such fun to get on shore again!" said Shelah. And scrambling out of the boat before she could do so without wetting her feet, Lammikin had the satisfaction of leaving one of her shoes in the water. As it was more awkward to limp with one shoe on than to run without any, the little Irish girl soon flung its companion into the sea!

CHAPTER IX.

CAUGHT.

HAROLD wished to try his Arabic on one of the Lascars who was near the first boat, and find from him the cause of the tedious delay, but was as unsuccessful as Europeans usually are when trying to extract information from Orientals. Harold knew not whether the swarthy Arab understood him or not; the man's eyes, and evidently his thoughts, were wandering in the direction which the ladies were taking. The Lascar looked like one on the watch for something, and all that Harold could draw from him were the ejaculations common on Mahomedan lips, which seem pious when translated, but which often with them express nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders does with a European.

In the meantime, Robin, who had borrowed a gun from Captain Cenci, was on the sharp look-out for game with which to mend the passengers' scanty fare. But not a partridge rose, not a hare came in view. Shelah, who liked to keep pretty near Robin, and was quite as eager as himself to find some creature that might be turned into food, suddenly exclaimed, pointing to the sand, "Partridges been here—look, look!—Hadrn't they big claws!"

Robin, gun in hand, went up to the spot. "Why, Lammikin," he cried, "you are as good as a pointer! But these marks are left by much larger birds than partridges; these are the prints of ostriches' feet in the sand!"

"Oh! I want to see ostriches!" exclaimed Shelah, clapping her hands.

"I too should like to get a sight of these noble birds running before the wind," said Robin, looking, but vainly, in every direction. "They say that a horseman can hardly overtake this swift bird of the desert."

"Oh! I do so want to find an ostrich's egg," cried Shelah, with sparkling eyes. "There was one in our house, brought from a long way off;

it was as big as this—" She put her clenched fists together. "It would make a famous breakfast. I'll find two eggs, Robin; one for myself and one for you," and off ran the eager child on her quest.

"Don't wander far, Lammikin," shouted Robin after her; "we must look-out for the white signal on the ship."

But to tell Shelah to take any course appeared to be the sure way to make her wish to take another. Her ambition to find a big egg, and her desire to have a good breakfast, made Lammikin run off in the track marked by the ostriches' feet.

"Oh! That child, where is she running, and without her shoes!" exclaimed Miss Petty. "Shelah! Shelah O'More!" she shouted, but the little madcap, hearing her call, only ran the faster. Poor Miss Petty gave chase; and presently, at some little distance from the shore, there was heard the noise of roaring and scolding, and was seen an evident scuffle, showing that the runaway Lammikin had been overtaken by her guardian.

"There's the signal!" exclaimed Harold; "We must be off in the boat."

"Or the ship will be off without us!" cried Bolton. "The Principessa will not wait. There are two boats; I'll row away at once in the smaller; Hartley, you and your brother will look after the ladies, that sort of thing is just in your line; I cannot play squire to Miss Petty, nor nurse to Miss Shelah O'More."

Harold and Robin shouted loudly to the ladies, while busying themselves with the larger boat, of which two men had been left in charge. It had stuck in the sand, and was by no means easily to be again set afloat. The four at first vainly exerted all their strength to move the boat, and some time elapsed before they attained their object. In the midst of his energetic exertions Robin raised his head, and looked in the direction of Shelah and her guardian, who had just been joined by Mrs. Evendale, who went, as usual, to act a peacemaker's part.

"I say, Harold, what means that cloud of dust in the distance approaching as if towards us. It is coming fast!"

"I see camels—mounted camels; yes—a party of Arabs!" exclaimed Harold Hartley, and, with the sailors, he redoubled his efforts to float the boat, whilst Robin dashed off to quicken the return of the ladies.

Mrs. Evendale also had seen the signal, and was urging to speed Miss Petty, who was dragging Shelah towards the beach.

But at that moment Miss Petty made a discovery which seemed to take from her all power of attending to anything else. In the late struggle with Shelah, the pin of Miss Petty's filagree brooch had given way, and the ornament itself had fallen, she knew not where.

"Oh! My peacock! My beautiful peacock! I have lost it!" exclaimed Miss Petty, in sore distress, looking to right and left on the sand.

"We cannot stay—we must not stay;" urged Mrs. Evendale; "the vessel is getting up steam!"

"I must find my peacock!" cried Theresa passionately. "I would not lose it for worlds! It must have dropped where I caught up that child!" And she began hurriedly to retrace her steps inland, notwithstanding the expostulations of her companion and the repeated loud warning shouts from the shore.

"Oh, leave the brooch and let us hasten back to the boat; there may be danger!" exclaimed Mrs. Evendale, who now saw the ominous cloud of dust coming towards them.

Breathless and panting, Robin dashed up to the ladies. He had his gun in his hand.

"Mrs. Evendale, fly!" he gasped. "Take Shelah; I will look after Miss Petty. There is not a moment to lose; the Bedouins are upon us!"

But the precious time in which escape might have been made had already been lost! Harold had just succeeded in floating the second boat (the small one was on its way to the steamer) when he saw that the English party was surrounded. The report of Robin's gun, which accidentally went

off from his arm being suddenly snatched at by Shelah, alarmed Harold for his brother's safety, and made Hartley hasten off to his aid, but only to share his fate.

There was no fighting, for the number of the Arabs made resistance utterly hopeless. The second boat was pushed off towards the ship, leaving the party of travellers in the hands of the sons of the desert.

A wild-looking band they were, Bedouins of the Shararat tribe, with swarthy features and narrow eyes, some of the most uncouth of the warlike descendants of Ishmael. Long shirts, which had apparently never been washed, were surmounted by tattered cloaks, striped white and brown. From leathern girdles hung formidable knives. The head-gear of most of the men consisted of a black kerchief, fastened on by a twist of camel's hair. One Arab, a petty chief, grasped a long-barrelled matchlock; others of the Bedouins were armed with sharp-pointed spears; the band looked like Eastern banditti intent on spoil.

Miss Petty evidently attracted more attention than any other of the captives; a dozen rough hands were laid upon her, and she screamed so loudly and shrilly as to be heard even in the ship. The Arabs eagerly searched her for jewels, and many an angry ejaculation was uttered when it was found that what she wore were of but trifling value.



"A wild-looking band they were, some of the most uncouth of the warlike descendants of Ishmael."—p. 81.

**A wild-looking band they were, some of the most uncouth
of the warlike descendants of Ishmael.**

Indignantly the chief turned towards an Arab in whom the Hartleys recognised one of the Lascars who had been sent to find a pilot. The man, with rapid utterance, seemed to be making some explanations, pointing towards the vessel which was now steaming away.

Harold, partly by catching the meaning of some words, partly by guessing at that of the rest, made out the truth, which was that the Arabs, under the traitor's guidance, had come from some distance in hopes of making a prize of a wealthy princess loaded with jewels, for whom an immense ransom might be exacted, and had lighted instead on poor Miss Petty, whose misfortune it was, for once in her life, to be mistaken for a lady of rank.

Robin indignantly looked towards the Italian steamer, which was now making its way from the inhospitable shore of Arabia.

"Had she been manned by Englishmen, she would never have left us here in the hands of savages! Oh, the ruffians!" he added fiercely, as he saw an Arab tear the wedding-ring from Mrs. Evendale's unresisting hand.

CHAPTER X.

THE DESERT RIDE.

THE Arabs, even the Bedouins, are not a merciless race. Beyond taking away every article of jewellery, three silver watches, a few coins, and the gun, which they thought the best part of the spoil, the Shararat robbers inflicted no injury on their captives. The sons of the desert were puzzled as to what to do with their prize.

The two Hartleys, indeed, could be made something of, for they were evidently strong, vigorous, and active; but the women, one old and the other fragile, seemed likely to be of no use at all. They could neither weave camel's hair nor help to pitch tents; it was doubtful whether they could even skin a sheep and cook it. Would it not be best to leave them behind? But to do so would be to abandon them to inevitable death by hunger and thirst. Though the chief, glancing at Grace Evendale, remarked that it would be easier to make a mashale (water-skin) out of muslin than anything useful out of her, he yet resolved to take her behind him on his camel, and he gave orders to his wild followers to dispose in the same way of the Feringhees (English), putting the mother and child together, such being to him the relationship between Miss Petty and Shelah.

The camels from which the Bedouins had dismounted were at hand, some kneeling to receive their burdens, some standing and throwing long shadows over the sand. An Arab, grasping Miss Petty's arm with one hand and Shelah's shoulder with the other, half dragged them towards his kneeling beast. In spite of tears and entreaties, the Bedouin forced the prisoners to mount, he himself taking his seat in front. Theresa and Shelah's knowledge of camels was small indeed, the only living specimens of the race which they had ever seen, except at Alexandria, having been in the

Zoological Gardens in London. The horrible noise made by the huge creature when in the act of being loaded, the way in which he twisted his long neck to show his wide mouth and formidable teeth, filled both Miss Petty and Shelah with terror.

"Oh, I can't stop on this horrible beast; he is growling like a tiger! He will bite me! He will kill me!" expostulated Miss Petty, her entreaties changed to a scream as the camel suddenly rose and, by the tremendous jerk with which he did so, almost threw her off his back.

The motion of a camel has been likened to that which would be felt by one perched on a music-stool unscrewed to its utmost height, and drawn along in a cart without springs. Miss Petty implored the Arab to stop the beast, jerking out her words, as the jolting almost deprived her of power of speech. But she might as well have spoken to the camel itself. The Bedouin did not understand her words, nor would have cared for them had he understood. Little Shelah was sobbing, her spirit for a while subdued by fear and physical distress, for every mile of that terrible journey made the heat, and thirst, and fatigue, which she endured, more painful to the poor child.

And what of the other captives? What was the effect upon them of their sudden and startling adventure?

Harold met the misfortune as a brave man and a Christian should do. He saw hardship and danger before him, but the one was a thing to be calmly endured, the other fearlessly faced. He was a crusader, prepared for perilous service, a knight of the Cross, and it was not for him to choose his own post; if his Commander appointed that he should serve and suffer in Arabia instead of India, it was not for him to question that Leader's wisdom or goodness.

Harold, mounted on a tall camel, and journeying over what seemed to him to be a pathless desert, was calmly revolving in his mind how it might be possible to do mission work even amongst Bedouin Arabs, to whom, under ordinary circumstances, no herald of the Gospel might have access. True, Harold had not much knowledge of the Arabic language, but he would have opportunity for acquiring more; an open door was before him, it

was not for a Knight of St. John to shrink from crossing the threshold, even should martyrdom lie beyond. Harold had been committing to memory a portion of St. John's First Epistle in Arabic; he had, by steady toil, reached the fourteenth verse of the second chapter, and the last clause in that verse was as a special message of encouragement to him: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Harold Hartley was strong in faith: he had, indeed, fallen back in his school-boy days; the pride of life had then chilled his missionary zeal, and he had, in the excitement of an election, even made a personal attack on a political opponent who had provoked him, and so had got into serious trouble. But that fall had been a turning-point in the life of Harold.

During his college career, malice itself could not find a stain on the character of young Hartley. He had passed through temptations—and had overcome them; he had been looked upon by the religiously disposed fellows of his college as a leader in all that was good. Harold's faith was already as gold tried in the fire; he wore the white cross unstained.

Robin was a great deal younger than his brother, and, partly from his youth, partly from the joyous buoyancy of his spirits, the lad did not take nearly as serious a view of the situation of affairs as was taken by Harold. Had he not felt some anxiety regarding his widowed friend, Robin would have been inclined to regard the capture of the party as a very exciting and amusing adventure. It was something to be talked over and laughed over in future days; for Robin, full of hope as well as of daring, felt no doubt that the strange captivity, which had overtaken him and his companions, would be of but brief duration. Robin did not calculate, he simply hoped; for Robin was naturally full of hope as well as of daring.

What was misery to Theresa Petty was, at first, little more than a frolic to Robin Hartley. The jolting, which had the effect of making her scream, had but the effect of making him laugh. This was Robin's first camel ride, but he hoped to have many others. "I am practising for itinerating in India amongst the villages with my father and brother," thought Robin to himself. He shouted out words of encouragement to the weeping Lammikin, who was in front at no great distance, and bade Miss Petty keep a good heart.

Grace Evendale's position was different from that of the rest of the party; she had less physical strength than the others, and the heat of the sun, constantly increasing as the day advanced, was deadly to the delicate lady; she was withering even as a flower withers under the fiery beams. The rough motion of the camel also greatly tried Mrs. Evendale's sensitive frame, and caused her acute suffering. Yet the meek Christian was not really unhappy, though she felt that the end of the painful journey would probably be the grave.

Mrs. Evendale thought, "Is this like the angel's smiting of Peter, to make him rise and gird himself, and go forth to freedom? Is the messenger at hand who calls to the banquet of heaven? If so—he is welcome, in whatever guise he come. The Lord has borne me through greater trials than I ever can go through again, and His love will surely support me through this."

Grace thought as calmly of the possibility of perishing by heat and thirst as she would have submitted to some painful operation which was to give her future ease. All her best treasures were in heaven already; it would be no affliction to rejoin them. Mrs. Evendale's experience was that which a poet has expressed in the exquisite lines—

"Peace, perfect peace,—with sorrow surging round,
On Jesu's bosom only calm is found.

"Peace, perfect peace; the future all unknown,
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."

The storm may rage around, but how calmly and safely the true believer rests under the extended wing, the downy feathers of love!

On, on, proceeded the party at the tedious pace of about four miles an hour. They were crossing an utterly desolate waste, where, except a few withered-looking lizards, and once, at some distance, a jerboa, no animal

life was to be seen. There was hardly any trace of vegetation. The shadows of the camels grew shorter and shorter, till they seemed to disappear altogether under an almost vertical sun. The mouths of all the travellers were parched with thirst; Miss Petty could only moan out, "Water! Water!" And even that cry was unheeded. Robin had ceased to have the slightest inclination to jest; the sufferings of all were only too real, for the water-skins hung loose and empty by the side of each camel.

After a weary time the huge animals broke into a rough trot, as if they scented water. The Arabs roused up from what appeared to be sleep or stupor.

"I see some trees!" cried Robin. "Low, stunted ones, hardly worthy of the name!"

These, on nearer approach, were seen to be a species of euphorbia, near which some colocynth herbs and a little almost dried-up grass showed that something like a spring must be near. The thirsty camels now increased their speed over what was now a stony and blackish plain. Water had been reached at last.

The Bedouins dismounted from their clumsy beasts, and the Hartley brothers sprang down also, and helped the almost fainting women and Shelah to descend from the backs of the camels. The huge animals were turned loose to graze; there was no danger of their wandering from the wretched oasis where they might glean the scantiest of meals from thorny bushes.

From shallow wells, half choked up with stones, the Bedouins commenced replenishing their mashales, after first satisfying their thirst, but the supply was scanty, and the water brackish. Eagerly, before even wetting his own lips, Robin carried some of the water to Mrs. Evendale, who was lying on the ground exhausted. Her parched lips opened to receive the life-giving fluid, and a faint "Thank God!" followed the scanty draught.

There was a halt at this place for some hours. Almost every one slept, but Grace Evendale was unable to do so, she was too feverish and ill. Her refreshment was silent prayer, and the heart's unvoiced hymn, which could

be heard only by God. Then came the shivering chill of fever. The lady felt like a dying woman when the Bedouins, rising from their siesta, prepared themselves for a start.

The water-skins had been partially, very partially replenished. A few dried dates were brought out, and partaken of by all but the suffering widow. The groaning camels were then made to kneel, and were remounted. The terrible journey must not be delayed, for many and many a weary mile of desert had to be traversed before the weary party could meet with another well.

CHAPTER XI.

A JOURNEY ENDED.

"WILL this dreadful jolting go on for ever—for ever!" exclaimed poor Miss Petty in despair, as the red, fiery sun dipped behind an expanse of sand, almost level as the ocean, flooding it with lurid lights. "Every bone in my body seems dislocated, and my head is ready to burst. Will these horrible camels never stop!"

The hardy camel is able to travel twelve hours in the twenty-four, and to pause where there is not water might be fatal to travellers in the desert. The nearest well was yet more than two hours' journey in front. The camels had been unable to quench their thirst at the last station, the supply had been scanty even for their riders.

Night was just falling on earth—night oppressively hot—yet its darkness would be some relief after the glaring day. The camel on which Robin was seated with an Arab, had fallen a little behind the rest. The nearest to it was that of a Bedouin, to whom the chief had transferred the charge of Mrs. Evendale.

Robin could see through the darkening shade that this Arab ever and anon turned his head to look on what was behind him, and then laid his hand on what, in the dim gloom, looked like a roll of black drapery, with something white hanging lifelessly down.

"Has Mrs. Evendale fainted?" was Robin's thought, and it made him very uneasy, for he could not even question the Arab who had so precious a charge. Presently the dark object—almost noiselessly—fell from the height of the camel down on the ground below. Robin was near enough to be certain that the form of his friend lay extended upon the plain. The Arab must have thought her dying or dead, for, as soon as she had fallen, he urged on his weary beast to rejoin his companions in front.

Almost before he had time to think of what might be the consequence to himself of rashly following the impulse of his heart, Robin managed, he knew not how, to fling himself down from his height, very narrowly escaping a fall, and being trodden under the splay foot of the heavy beast on which he had been riding. He could not, were life itself at stake, go on and leave that dear form to the vultures. The Arab above loudly remonstrated; but Robin could not understand him, and did not choose to listen.

The Bedouin dare not lose sight of his comrades in front; he must press on or their track might be lost. Yet pity for the brave boy who was willing to share the fate of his mother (such the Bedouin supposed the lady to be), touched the heart of the wild son of the desert. The Arab stopped his camel for a brief minute, and, unfastening the limp, almost empty mashale which hung at its side, threw it down, and then rode away.

Robin eagerly seized on the brown bag of sheepskin; what it contained might yet save life, if the spark were not already extinguished. Hastening to the spot where Mrs. Evendale lay, Robin, crouching down beside her, raised her head on his knee, and dashed water over her face. He then tried to make her drink from the almost empty mashale; at first in vain, and Robin feared that life was extinct. But after a while the lady eagerly drank, yes, unconsciously drank, the very last precious drop from the mashale; Robin could squeeze out no more. He made the sufferer's position as easy as he possibly could, and then, realising the terrible situation in which he and his friend were placed, exclaimed, "O God! Have mercy upon us!"

"That's my boy's voice, my Hal's!" said Mrs. Evendale, whose mind was wandering. And feebly, but joyfully, she took Robin's hand, kissed it, and fondly pressed it to her cheek. "Oh, my son, my darling, they said that you were killed by a train, that you would never come back, my Hal! But that was only a dream! I think that I've been ill; I've had such horrible dreams, but they're all over now. Here you are safe—safe, my Hal, and we'll never be parted more!"

Robin's tears were dropping fast; he perceived that he was mistaken by the widow for her son; she had once said to him that he reminded her of one very dear to her heart. The youth felt thankful for the delusion which made the sufferer happy, and the soft, tender touch of her hand made him think of her in whom he had found a mother's love.

"He was dead, and is alive; was lost, and is found," murmured the dying lady. "We will rejoice and give thanks. Will there not be a banquet to welcome him back?"

"Yes, a heavenly feast," said Robin.

"And your father will be there, and your brother—all the family united—we will be so happy!" came from the parched, fevered lips. "What is there written about a feast—I can't remember—my brain is empty, and I can see nothing, it is so dark! Why are the lamps not lighted?"

"All will be bright soon," said Robin, with difficulty commanding his voice.

"Very—yes, very bright! What is said in the Bible about it?" The Christian's well-stocked memory gave out its treasure to cheer the departing soul. "'And they need no candle—neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.' Yes, yes," added Grace in a joyous tone, "the Lord Himself will be there."

"And 'we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,'" exclaimed Robin, who had never so fully realised the blessedness of that hope, as when he saw it irradiating what would have been so fearfully dark without it. Young Hartley could not even wish his friend's life to be prolonged, and

at such a moment he gave not a thought to his own. Robin had knelt before by a deathbed and seen a saint depart in perfect peace, with her senses clear to the last; but he had never seen such a joyous setting of the sun of life as on that dreary expanse of sand, where there was not so much as a pillow on which to lay a dying woman's head.

About half-an-hour passed in silence, the most solemn silence; there was not so much as the sound of an insect's wing. Then again the dying lips spoke.

"They have lighted the lamp," she said. "I think the feast is ready."

The silver moon, little past the full, was rising in calm beauty over the desert.

"Do you not hear the music?" said Mrs. Evendale, whose pale face in the silvery light looked as if she were eagerly listening to what none but herself could hear.

"The angels must be singing," observed Robin.

"No, no, not the angels, that is not the angels' song, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins—'" the verse was unfinished, the spirit joyously fled in the utterance, leaving a smile of bliss on the lovely countenance of the dead.

Robin was left alone with the corpse, thanking God for giving His servant so blessed a departure, and for enabling him to minister to a saint to the last.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BIVOUAC.

WE will now return to the rest of the party, who, mounted on better camels than that which Robin had ridden, had passed on some distance in front.

Heartily glad was Harold when, in the moonlight, he could trace the outlines of a group of black tents. After the long, exhausting journey, the Bedouins came to a halt at last.

A noisy party of men and boys, some of the latter wearing a most scanty amount of clothing, ran out of the tents to greet the party of travellers. The appearance of the white captives excited a great deal of interest, and there was a loud jabber of questions, curiosity being a feature in the character of the Shararat Arabs.

The camels, at a short distance from the tents, were made to kneel, and were then unloaded. Harold dismounted, but he was so stiff and weary from his long ride that he was for the first minute scarcely able to stand.

"Help me down, Mr. Hartley. I won't have these savages touch me," cried out Miss Petty in accents of distress.

Harold hastened to her assistance, and first received poor Shelah into his arms. The child clung to him in a piteous manner.

"Nay, nay, you must let me put you down, Shelah, or how can I help Miss Petty?"

Theresa, terribly exhausted, had to be lifted down like a log.

"Now I must look-out for Mrs. Evendale and my brother," said Harold. Amidst the confusion, camels, sheep, men, boys, mixed up together, Harold looked in vain for a trace of his fellow-captives. The deep shadows cast by the moonlight made the confusion more perplexing, and the young man's brain seemed to be turning round from the effect of heat and fatigue.

"Brother—woman?" inquired Harold of one Arab after another, meeting with no intelligible answer till one of the band who had seized him, pointed to a tent at some little distance. The man had mistaken the meaning of the question, and thought that Harold was inquiring whether he himself had brother or wife in the place.

"I will seek them out," said Harold; and he was about to try to make his way amongst tent-pins and over tent-ropes, when he was caught in the grasp of Miss Petty. It was a desperate grasp.

"Oh, don't leave me, Harold; for pity's sake don't leave me," she cried. "I am almost dead; I cannot walk a single step; my poor head is splitting with pain. Robin is sure to look after Mrs. Evendale—he always does. It is enough for you to look after me, whom you have known since you were a child."

"Please, please don't go away," sobbed Shelah. "These people frighten me so! I think they are Robinson Crusoe's cannibals!"

Harold, smiling, tried to reassure the child. "I see," said he to himself, "that Robin and I must divide the charge of our poor, helpless companions. His share of the work is certainly the pleasanter and the more interesting; but all women and children in distress have a claim on the Knights of St. John."

Harold, having no reason to apprehend any special danger to the other travellers, allowed himself to be drawn by Miss Petty and Shelah into the nearest tent, which was that of the chief. The Arab would fain have sent off the lady and child to the charge of the women of the tribe, but Theresa and her Lammikin, throwing themselves down on the sandy floor, showed such determination not to be separated from their English protector, that the Bedouin did not insist on their going.

A semi-circle, chiefly of boys, squatted down in front of the captives, grinning, laughing, and cutting jibes, which were disagreeable even when not understood, and would have been more so had they been better comprehended.

"See how white she is! That's a kind of leprosy," laughed one, pointing at poor Miss Petty.

"And she wears those black things on her feet to hide it!" said another; a poor joke, which caused uproarious laughter, very unpleasant to its object, though she knew not its import, except that the Bedouins were jesting at her boots.

"Harold—Mr. Hartley, do order those creatures away. They are not fit to come within a mile of a lady," exclaimed Theresa. "The noise, the heat, the smell, make me feel quite sick."

Harold did what he could, but unsuccessfully, though at last a boy, pulling one of Shelah's red locks and making her cry out, brought on him a sharp box on the ear. This made the Bedouins laugh again.

"I want something to eat," cried Shelah, an exclamation which she repeated about every other minute, each time in a tone more doleful. Except a small handful of dried dates, the poor, tired child had been all the long day without food.

The Arabs began to smoke, some of them using a mere perforated piece of bone for a pipe. They could afford to wait patiently for their dinner, for they knew that a sheep was being killed and skinned in preparation for a grand feast. Presently Shelah exclaimed, "There's a dead sheep; look, they are cutting it up with their knives!"

By the light of a large fire kindled outside the tent, the captives could see all that the Arabs could exhibit of culinary art. They watched the Bedouins as they flung fragments of the recently slaughtered sheep into a large cauldron. The boiling seemed a tedious affair, especially to poor hungry Shelah. At last the hissing cauldron was removed from the fireplace, which was formed of nothing but stones. The steaming contents of the flesh-pot were emptied into one large dirty, wooden bowl, and there was a general rush towards it.

"No plates, no knives and forks,—what can we do!" cried Miss Petty.

"We must use nature's implements," said Harold, cheerfully, "and we must use them quickly too, or we shall find nothing but bones."

Hartley bore Shelah in his arms to the place, and managed to make room for the child, while a vigorous attack was carried on by the Bedouins upon the food. So many brown hands—of course very dirty—were plunged into the seething bowl, that Harold had no small difficulty in getting out two lumps of most untempting mutton for his two charges, and then something for his own hungry self. Half-famished Miss Petty and Shelah found it quite possible to feed without knives and forks. The child was closely picking a fragment of bone, when it was snatched away by a hungry dog.

Water, anything but pellucid, was handed round in a small pail, from which everyone drank. Miss Petty declared that she must have a cup to herself, but even the coarsest pottery was not to be found in the Bedouin camp.

In ten minutes the banquet was over.

"Now I can sleep," said Miss Petty; "can't I have a tent to myself?"

With a good deal of difficulty, Harold making the Bedouins understand the wants of their captives more by signs than by words, a small dirty tent was secured.

"Let us have a little prayer together before we go to rest," said the young missionary. "I have unfortunately no portion of the Scriptures with me to read, but I can repeat some verses by heart."

The suggestion was unwelcome to tired Miss Petty, but she merely asked that the prayer might be short. It was so, for Harold was almost too weary to speak. It was a real refreshment to him, however, to pour out his soul to his God, and ask the protection of Him who never slumbers or sleeps. Harold most earnestly commended to God Mrs. Evendale and his brother, little guessing that the one was beyond the reach of his prayer, and how sorely the other needed his supplications. Short as was the prayer, Shelah fell asleep before it was over, and Miss Petty was too drowsy to answer Harold's good-night. The young man then withdrew himself a few

yards from the tent, and, with only his arm for a pillow, soon slept the sleep which exhausted nature required.

Harold's slumber was deep, and when at the first glimmer of dawn, he was roused by the wandering Bedouins preparing for another start, he could not at the first moment of awakening recall where he was and what had happened. His own aching limbs, the snarling of the camels, the shouts of the men, the sight of the Bedouins in their rude striped cloaks hurrying hither and thither, soon made Harold realise his strange situation. He rose, knelt down, and offered up his morning prayer, then was about to go in search of his brother, when Miss Petty, issuing from the little tent, in imploring tones, begged him to keep beside her.

"Are we going to be jolted on again? Oh, misery!" she cried, as she seated herself on a sack, while the Bedouins were filling mashales and loading camels. Shelah crept to Harold's side, looking so unlike her merry mischievous self that his pity was awakened. Harold sat down on the sand, and the child hid her face on his arm.

"I don't know why God deserts us so!" cried Miss Petty in the bitterness of her soul.

"My friend, let not such a word escape your lips, nor such a thought enter your heart," said the missionary, kindly but gravely. "The Lord never deserts His servants. The Word of Truth hath declared that God is love."

"I can't believe it!" cried Miss Petty, disregarding the pained look which her words called up on the face of Harold. "I've had nothing—nothing but trouble since my brother the doctor died; it was hard that he should be taken so suddenly, leaving me to misery and want. Didn't I do my best to get my living, and keep up a decent appearance! I did all in my power to humour and please a selfish, vulgar, ill-tempered woman who called me her humble companion. I studied her fancies, put up with her tempers, nursed her when she was dying, and of course expected something handsome after her death. The stingy, ungrateful creature had not so much as named me in her will!"

Miss Petty's pale face flushed with resentment as she recalled thus to mind what had been, perhaps, the keenest disappointment that she ever had known, though many had fallen to her lot.

"Miss Petty, there is little use in recurring to past trials, unless their remembrance help us to encounter new ones with courage and faith."

"Oh, it is easy for you to talk!" cried Miss Petty peevishly. "You've been cared for all your life; you've had nothing of the wear and waiting and worry that I have met with at every turn. And I've really done nothing to deserve it all; I've led a good, respectable life. I can't think why I'm chosen out for trouble when there are so many sinners in the world."

"Do you not count yourself amongst the sinners?" asked Harold.

"Yes—in a sort of way," replied Miss Petty, with a little hesitation, for she had never known what it is to have a wounded conscience; "but I am not a sinner like thousands and thousands who have not to bear a tenth part of what I have endured. I have done my duty as well as I could; I deserve something better than this."

Harold sighed. He had seen enough of poor Miss Petty to know that she had deliberately and constantly given herself to a world which is at enmity with God. So far from God being in all her thoughts, her Maker and Preserver had had hardly a place in any of her thoughts. In her heart Theresa had set up the three great idols denounced by the Evangelist John—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The young missionary felt that this was no time for a sermon, but he could not help observing, "Miss Petty, it would fare ill with us all if we had only what we deserve."

The Bedouins were carrying with them provisions for the journey. They did not indeed commit the extravagance of killing a second sheep, but a supply of dried dates and a few other things were taken. A breakfast was also brought to the English captives, consisting of camel's milk, and something in a dirty bowl which looked like reddish paste, and which is called by the Arabs samh.

"Disgusting mess!" exclaimed Miss Petty, as she dipped into it her thin wrinkled fingers; but she ate the desert dainty readily enough, and hungry Shelah pronounced it "jolly." Samh is made of the small red farinaceous seeds of a plant which grows wild in Northern Arabia.

Harold wondered more and more at seeing nothing of Mrs. Evendale and Robin. Becoming uneasy, he went up to the chief and said anxiously in broken Arabic, "Brother—my brother—white woman, where?" He could not explain himself further, but he was at once understood.

"Dead!" said the Bedouin, pointing with an emphatic gesture towards the ground.

Harold, aghast, repeated the ominous word, almost hoping that he had mistaken its meaning, it was too terrible to be true. But the Bedouin made it only too clear by signs. It was evident that Robin and his friend had been left behind in the fearful desert, from which no one, without a guide, could ever hope to emerge.

Young Hartley's reason almost staggered under the sudden blow. His father excepted, there was no being on earth whom Harold loved as he did his brother; Robin's loyal affection had been his comfort in many an hour of trouble; Robin's joyous spirit had thrown its own brightness over his life. Harold's impulse was to retrace instantly the weary path so lately traversed, find his brother, save him or perish with him. But to pursue such a course would have been an act of madness. The Bedouin read the unuttered thought in his captive's face, and took instant measures for the prevention of any desperate act.

The chief gave a brief order to two of his men, and the next minute Harold found his two hands bound together by a rope, which was then fastened to the camel on which Miss Petty and Shelah were seated behind an Arab. Harold would thus be forced to keep up on foot with the party, or, should he fall, to be dragged along the ground. The camel rose with its usual violent jerk and Miss Petty's exclamation of terror, and then another long painful march was begun.

"Oh, Mr. Hartley!" cried Shelah, "Why have the cruel men tied you so?" And the child looked down from her height, with pity expressed in her face.

Harold could not reply; the agony of his soul at that moment made it impossible for him to utter a word.

"I hope they've not tied Robin," continued Shelah, who usually dropped any formal title when speaking of the youth. "Where is Robin, and where is the kind woman who made my hat? I haven't seen them for ever so long."

Still silence; but such an expression of anguish passed over Harold's face that Miss Petty's never dormant curiosity was awakened.

"Are they not with us?" she cried.

Harold bit his lip and shook his head.

"They've not been left behind in the desert surely; those wretches have not deserted them?" And reading assent in silence, Miss Petty exclaimed in alarm, "If they have been murdered thus, there is no hope for us!"

"Oh, I hope that they've not killed Robin—dear, dear Robin!" cried Shelah, tears streaming fast down her cheeks. Her childish grief touched the heart of Harold. "Robin was always so merry and so kind; he pulled me out of the water; he carried me on his shoulder, and sang such funny songs! Oh, Robin, Robin!" Shelah's wail brought the moisture to Harold's burning eyes; he could not raise his bound hands to dash it away.

"You may well cry," said Miss Petty bitterly to Shelah. "All this wretchedness to every one comes of your wilful running away. You'll be the death of us all!"

"You stopped to look for your brooch," retorted Shelah, "or we should have got in the boat before these horrid Arabs could catch us. Oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry—most of all for the kind woman and dear, dear Robin. Shall I never, never see them again?"

"Now, Mr. Hartley," said Theresa, "you will never tell me again that God is love?"

It was a taunt hard to be answered, human lips but uttering what the enemy had been whispering within. Harold's lips grew white with the struggle; faith was strained to the utmost, but it did not give way under the strain. "God is love!" gasped the sufferer from his rack of anguish. "I believe it now, and I shall know it hereafter."

CHAPTER XIII.

WEARY AND THIRSTY.

THE same glimmer of dawn which had aroused the Bedouins from their bivouac while stars still shone in the dark blue sky, awoke Robin, as he lay stretched on his bed of sand, near the lifeless form of his friend. The sun would rise ere long, the fierce, cruel sun, the last that he was ever likely to see; but the young Knight of St. John had a duty to perform before he should perish of thirst. He must hollow out a grave after death for her whom in life he had been bound to protect. After a brief prayer, the lad—with no implement but his hands—set to his toilsome but hallowed task. Though his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth with thirst, for the mashale was utterly dry, Robin scraped and scraped, with patient toil, for it was a labour of love.

"God give me strength to finish my work!" faintly murmured young Hartley. "And then I shall die content."

But the strength was failing before the grave was half completed; Robin was almost fainting, and scarcely conscious of anything save that he was to dig and die, when he was startled by a long shadow falling over the

uncompleted grave, a shadow between him and the sun, which was rising behind his back, for young Hartley's face was turned to the west.

Robin raised his head, and saw with surprise that he was not alone; at a little distance was what might almost be called a caravan, consisting both of laden camels and mounted horsemen, well-dressed, and carrying spears. Close beside Robin was one whose tread had been unheard on the sand. The Persian Amir, for such was the stranger, had dismounted from his Arab steed; and, throwing the bridle to a gaily attired attendant, had approached on foot to see who, in that solitary desert, could be engaged in digging a grave.

Robin Hartley could never forget the impression made on his mind by the tall dignified Oriental who had so unexpectedly made his appearance in so very desolate a spot. Anywhere, and under any circumstances, Amir Ali was a man to attract notice. He was almost as fair as a European, with a high nose, rather hooked, and long lustrous dark eyes, fine, but with something gloomy and unpleasing in their expression. The well-marked but delicately pencilled eyebrows were a little drawn together as if in a slight, habitual frown; and the thin lips looked as if they could utter cynical things.



"Robin raised his head, and saw with surprise that he was not alone."--p. 116.

Robin raised his head, and saw with surprise that he was not alone.

A high cap added to the Persian's appearance of lofty stature. His dress was rich, but of less gaudy colours than Persians usually affect, and a silver-hilted sword, a sign of rank, hung by the Amir's side. To Robin's surprise, he was addressed in his own tongue, which the stranger spoke with tolerable correctness, though slowly and with Oriental accent.

"You are an Englishman," said the Amir; "how came you hither?" The voice of Ali was low and rich.

Robin rose to his feet to reply. "I and my party were seized by Bedouins yesterday," he said. "She," glancing at the body, "fell ill, so was left behind."

"And you?"

"Of course I stayed to help her."

"A mother has claims," said Ali in a low tone of voice; "no doubt the lady is your mother?"

Robin shook his head in reply.

"Then a near relation?"

"No; a few weeks ago I did not know that there was such a being in the world."

"What, then, was the tie which made you willing to throw away life for her sake?"

"Christian love," replied Robin faintly. "Oh, sir, if you have any mercy, give me a draught of water, and bid your people finish this grave."

"Hassan, give orders at once," said the Amir, turning towards a Persian, lower in stature than himself, but almost as handsomely dressed. "Bid the slaves bring sherbet, fruit, and other refreshment, this gentleman has evidently not wetted his lips for many hours."

Robin did not understand the language in which these directions were given, but he soon benefited by their effect. He seemed to draw in new life with the cool, copious, delicious draught, proffered to him in a silver goblet. While he partook of food, some of the Amir's slaves with ease completed what had been to the weary youth an almost hopeless task.

Robin, after reverentially raising to his lips the cold hand of the corpse, and then laying a white handkerchief over the lady's sweet face, was able, unaided by Mahomedan hands, to place Mrs. Evendale's slight form in its shallow grave. The youth was loath to leave the spot, now to him sacred, without even a prayer or a text from Holy Writ. Robin therefore repeated in English a few verses from that glorious chapter which tells the Christian of victory over death, and the hope of a bright resurrection. Clasping his hands, the English lad thanked God that his dear friend's soul had been called to bliss, and that the precious seed now sown in weakness would rise to eternal life. Then Robin, rising from his knees, left others to fill up the grave, and slowly turned away.

"You are not like other European Christians,—I have seen many," said Ali in the English tongue. "They are a selfish race; they speak of a religion of love, but you are the first one whom I have ever met with who would risk starvation for the sake of any one merely for being of a kindred faith."

"It was my simple duty," said Robin Hartley; "and it was an honour too," he added, for he felt, and the feeling brought inexpressible pleasure, that he had been permitted to minister to an angel. With less of sadness than of thankfulness Robin looked again on the nameless grave of Grace Evendale. "I should have liked to have made some mark," he said, half aloud; "but God knows where she sleeps; she will awake when the Lord cometh again."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Ali, dryly.

"Quite sure," was Robin's simple reply.

"We must go on our way," said the Amir; "for the sun has power, and we have far to ride. Hassan, bid the sais (groom) bring my fleet Firdosi." The order was instantly obeyed, and a beautiful horse, richly caparisoned, was led to the spot.

"He is of the true Nejdean breed," said Ali to Robin; "swift as the antelope, gentle as the lamb." Ali sprang into the saddle, then, turning towards Hassan, said, "Give the Feringhee (European) your black horse; you can ride on the dromedary yonder."

Hassan turned on the interloper, as he deemed Robin to be, such a look of malice and hatred, that young Hartley intuitively felt that he had an enemy in that man.

Robin had not had much experience in riding, but he delighted in the exercise, and was only too glad to mount a spirited horse, instead of resuming his place on the back of a camel. With another parting look at the grave, which would soon be undistinguishable in the waste, Robin rode away from the spot, Amir Ali on his beautiful steed at his side.

"Where are we going?" asked Robin of Ali.

"I am bound for Wyh on the sea-coast," was the reply. "I have been to Medina, and am tired of Arabia."

"I suppose that you have made a pilgrimage to Mahomet's tomb," observed Robin. There was no profound reverence expressed in the Amir's face at the name of his prophet.

"I went there as I went to Bagdad, Egypt, Syria, India, as I shall perhaps one day go to England, in order to—" Ali paused abruptly.

Robin, who was naturally rather talkative, filled up the uncompleted sentence,— "to amuse yourself, I suppose."

"To get away from myself," was the bitter reply. "English boy, have you never known what it is to wish to do so?"

"Never," said Robin Hartley.

"Have you ever found anything really worth living for?" asked the cynical Persian.

"Much worth living for—and dying for too," replied the young Knight of St. John.

The two rode for a short time in silence; we need not inquire into Ali's subjects of thought, Robin's mind was full of his brother.

"Oh, sir," he suddenly exclaimed, "I owe life itself to your kindness, and now I dare entreat you to bestow on me much more. I would be more grateful to you than words can tell, if you would help me to find my brother."

"Where may he be?" asked Ali.

"In the hands of the Bedouin Arabs. He and I, and others, were seized at the same time. The rest of the party went on, I know not whither, when I stayed behind. Oh, is there no means of tracking and overtaking the band?" There was intense earnestness expressed in Robin's pleading look and tone.

"I should have thought that you had had enough of these marauding Bedouins," observed Ali. "Few meet with them with pleasure, or part from them without bloodshed. Are you so fond of danger, young man?"

"I care not for it—if I can only find Harold!" cried Robin.

"Is he so dear to you, then?" said the Persian.

"Surely—is he not my brother?" was Robin's reply.

Something came over the handsome face of the Persian which reminded Robin, he knew not why, of a thunder-cloud darkening the sun. The youth had evidently unwittingly touched some painful chord.

He changed the conversation.

"Is he whom you call Hassan any relative of yours?" asked the English lad.

Ali silently shook his head.

"Probably your friend?" suggested Robin.

"I have no friend," was the stern reply. "Hassan has been my companion, my shadow, for two or three years. Do not you trust him, boy, for he is not to be trusted."

"Then why keep him with you?" asked the incautious Robin. He wished the unguarded words unspoken; it had brought another cloud to the face of his benefactor. "I am always blundering," thought the youth.

Again the Amir and his English companion rode on in silence.

"What a strange comrade God has sent me!" thought Robin. "This handsome fellow is clearly unhappy in his mind; he must be walking in darkness. Lord! Help me to give some light!"

Presently Ali broke into conversation again, for he hated the company of his own thoughts.

"Are you one of those who think that all things are ordered by Divine wisdom?" asked the Amir, not with the manner of one who holds such doctrine himself, but rather with that of a free-thinker who considers no one religion better than another.

"Of course I am," was Robin's reply, "for I am a Christian."

"Christian. Oh! That's what all your countrymen call themselves," said Ali, with a touch of scorn in his manner. "I've seen a good deal of them in India, where I stayed ten months; I've read their books, even seen worship in their mosques—their churches I mean. I allow that your Prophet Isa (Jesus) was a wonderful moral teacher, though His followers seem to make a habit of disobeying His precepts."

"The Lord was much more than a prophet. God's Book tells us that He is the Word of Life. Oh, I wish that my brother were here! He could explain, and I cannot."

"You can answer plain questions," said Ali. "I do not want you to discourse like a moulvie. You can tell me if there was either wisdom or mercy in God's leaving you to die in the desert."

"I think that God had wise and kind purposes," answered Robin, after a minute's reflection.

"What might they be?" asked Ali.

"A good, sweet lady wanted some one to give her a last draught of water."

"But God abandoned her to a horrible death."

"Oh, no, not horrible!" cried Robin, with animation. "I mean to comfort her relatives by telling them that it was as if a bridge had been made of a rainbow, and the Lord whom she loved had gently carried her across in His arms."

"I never saw any one die in that way," said Ali, half incredulously. "Can your ingenuity discover any other advantage ensuing from your misfortune?"

"Without it, I should not have met you," said Robin.

The vanity of the Persian was gratified. "And how do you regard me?" he inquired.

"As my preserver," was the reply.

"Anything besides?" asked the Amir, who had been fed on flattery from his childhood.

"Yes, but I do not wish to tell you my thoughts; you might not like them," said Robin.

"But you must and shall tell them!" cried the Amir, in the tone of one accustomed to command. Robin was to him so different from any one with whom he had ever met before, that the Persian regarded the English youth with curiosity as well as interest. "After so brief an acquaintance what am I in your eyes?" continued Ali.

"I think that, in one way, you are something like what I was before you found me."

"You speak in riddles; explain your meaning," said Ali.

"You are weary and very thirsty, and you know of no water near," Robin spoke slowly; he did not wish to offend. "And I know of a spring—an abundant spring—a Fountain of Life; perhaps God sent you to me that I might tell you where to find it."

"Your comparison is not flattering," said the proud Persian, contracting his brows. "Boy! Do you presume to think me an object of pity?"

Robin could only answer "Yes," for he thought, "No one is more to be pitied than the man who tries to run away from himself."

Young Hartley expected the angry Amir to bid him instantly dismount, but Ali only urged on his own horse as if impatient to reach the next encampment.

That simple "yes" had startled the Persian more than any eloquence could have done. "Is it possible," he said to himself, "that this friendless, helpless, hopeless outcast can afford to look down with compassion on me? Is this boy a prophet that he can read at a glance secret misery hidden in the depths of a stranger's heart!"

Robin, in the Amir's company, travelled far more comfortably than he had done with the Shararat Bedouin Arabs. Persians know something of cookery, and indulge in the luxury of tea; while Arabs prefer the delicious coffee which their country supplies. Robin could choose between the two refreshing beverages. His need of change of garments was supplied by the generous Persian, and Robin, arrayed in an Oriental costume, was far more picturesquely attired than he had ever been before.

But every kindness shown to the kafir (infidel), as Hassan called the Christian, was as gall and wormwood to the soul of the Amir's "shadow." Everything given to the stranger seemed to this man as if taken from himself, and the wily Persian hated the frank Englishman with a deadly hatred. Hassan had picked up some English in India, though not nearly as much as the Amir had done, and he used it as a weapon of annoyance to Robin, who found it hard to keep his temper when thus offered gratuitous provocation.

Hassan, not contented with insulting one who had done him no wrong, used his utmost skill to poison the mind of the Amir against his English companion. But here the clear, crystal-like transparency of Robin's character proved his defence; much might be thrown on it by malice, but malice itself could not make it stick. Ali could not help trusting the English youth who said out frankly and fearlessly whatever he thought.

And often did Ali ponder over the words which had made him angry when they were uttered: "You are weary and very thirsty, and you know of no water near; perhaps God sent you to me that I might tell you where to find it."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

A FEW days were passed in journeying through the desert, whose dreariness was occasionally broken by an oasis, where water was found, and where the party could gather the red berries of the samh, while the camels cropped the delicate green twigs of the ghada, which form a graceful feathery tuft. Here the Persian travellers would linger for many hours, smoking, lounging on the scanty grass, eating fruit, telling stories, and reciting poems.

"Can you recite anything?" Ali once asked young Hartley.

"Not in Persian. I know nothing of that or any other Oriental tongue save scraps of Urdu; but I have learned by heart a good deal in English."

"That will serve," said Ali, who prided himself not a little on his knowledge of the European tongue. "Repeat to me and Hassan, who knows something of English, the finest thing which you know in the language."

The Persians, seated on carpets, smoked their narghillahs, as Robin, without hesitation or comment, repeated part of the opening chapter of the First Epistle of St. John.

Ali listened in grave silence, Hassan with undisguised impatience and aversion. "May the bones of his fathers be defiled who utters such heresies!" he exclaimed; then rising angrily, and spitting in token of disgust, the Persian walked away.

Ali pushed his own narghillah aside.

"Do you really believe, O Feringhee," he cried, "that the blood of your Prophet purifieth from sin?"

"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin—the Word declares it," was Robin's reply.

Ali shook his head sadly. "Not all—it cannot be," he murmured.

"God hath said it; His Word is true, though all the world should deny it!" cried Robin boldly. "But," he added gravely, "the promise is to those who walk in the light, and have fellowship one with another."

"What is it to 'walk in the light'?" asked Ali.

"To walk with God, love Him and His people," replied the Knight of St. John.

"Perhaps you do so," said Ali, gloomily; "but there are some who neither can nor will so walk in the light. And there are stains which no blood could remove, even were your religion a true one."

"I know not of any such stains," quoth 'Robin.

"Suppose now—just suppose—that a murderer sought pardon from God, could he find it?" asked the Amir.

"David, who committed murder, found grace," replied Robin. "He repented, and though he was punished on earth, we know that he was washed white in atoning blood."

"There you are wrong," said Ali, quickly; "Hasrat David died long before your Prophet was born."

"But not before He existed," said Robin; and reverentially, he added, "Christ's sacrifice was for all the world; it saved believers who lived before His first coming, as well as those who now live before His second coming. The light from the Cross shines all around, behind as well as before."

"You think that even murderers may be saved," said Ali; "but there are different degrees of murder. A man slays his foe in open fight—that is fair; or by stratagem—perhaps stealing on him in his sleep. There may, as you say, be forgiveness for that."

"For the soul, though the body should be punished," said Robin.

"But if the blood on the murderer's hand were not that of an enemy but of a brother?" asked Ali, his face growing livid as he uttered the question.

"I cannot answer such things!" cried Robin, with a look of pain; he could hardly realise the possibility of any one committing the horrible crime of fratricide. "I can only repeat what stands in the Bible: The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Ali turned gloomily away.

It was decided that the Persians should remain in their present place of encampment till two hours before dawn, when the journey should be resumed during the comparative coolness of night. The travellers, in a semi-circle, slept near the tent, not far from their camels, except Hassan, whose turn it was to keep watch. Saddles were used as pillows, the horses themselves being tethered near their riders. Soon most profound stillness reigned around, scarcely broken by an occasional grunt from a camel, or snort from a steed.

But the stillness was not to last long. Robin was startled from a delicious dream of home by sudden yelling and shouting, the clash of weapons, and the cry, "The Bedouins! The Bedouins are upon us!" All was confusion and uproar. Recumbent camels rose to their feet, frightened horses plunged and reared; some men stumbled over tent-pegs in the darkness, some hastily snatched up such weapons as might be at hand. None knew the number of the enemy, who, tempted by hope of rich spoil, had, like wolves, stolen upon them in the night.

"In for an adventure!" thought our Knight of St. John, catching up a staff which lay on the ground.

Robin dashed towards the spot where the struggle seemed to be the hottest; he could only judge by the noise, for the stars, brilliant as they were, gave very ineffectual light. There was just enough to enable Robin to distinguish Ali, bareheaded—for his high cap had been knocked off—struggling on the ground with two Bedouin Arabs. It was a struggle for life. One Arab had got the Amir down and was grasping his throat, the other was brandishing a formidable knife which he was about to plunge into the Persian's breast. The struggle would have been as short as it was desperate, had not Robin dealt such a heavy blow on the head of the man who was grasping Ali's throat that the Arab's hold relaxed, and he fell to the ground.

The Amir thus freed, attempted to rise, but the knife of the second man would have been in his heart but for Robin's interposed arm—it was the left one—which was pierced through by the Bedouin's steel. Before the Arab could draw it back, he was laid in the dust by Ali, who had sprung to his feet. The whole fight was over in a few minutes; the Arabs, who had not expected so stout a resistance, fled, leaving two of their number dead on the ground, and the one whom Robin had struck down, who vainly attempted to get up and follow his comrades.

"Kill the dog! Hew him to pieces!" cried Hassan, who, with a sword in one hand and a torch in the other, now hurried to the spot.

"Don't hit a fellow when he's down!" exclaimed Robin, with an impulse of pity for the half-clad wretch who could make no resistance.

"You are the friend of our foes, false Kafir!" exclaimed Hassan, and his face looked more savage than ever, seen in the red glare of the torch.

"The English boy is no traitor," said Ali, who was calmly replacing the Persian cap on his own head, looking as little perturbed by his late peril, as if a struggle for life were with him an ordinary thing.

"If you had kept better watch, O Hassan, the Kafir had had no need to strike so hard. The brave boy has saved my life."

The Bedouin was clinging to the knees of Robin, whom he recognised as a protector from the weapons flashing around him. Robin had now an

object in view beyond the pleasure of saving a foe, an object so engrossing, that he actually forgot for a while the deep wound in his own arm.

"Oh, sir," he exclaimed to Ali, "ask him—you know his language,—if he can tell us anything of my brother!" It seemed to Robin that on the life of that Bedouin might hang the only clue to the fate of Harold.

"Unhand the wretch; do not slay him," said the Amir sternly to his Persian followers, those who had been most slow to fight, being now the most eager to kill.

"Son of a dog!" he continued, addressing the crouching Arab, "Can you tell us anything of a white man who is in the hands of any of your detestable tribe?"

Ali had to repeat the question, and in a louder tone, before the frightened Bedouin seemed to comprehend it. Then he jabbered something which Robin of course could not understand, though he breathlessly listened.

"Oh! What does he say?" exclaimed young Hartley.

"He says that his band have met with no white man." Robin's heart sank within him, but hope, with him ever at hand, brightened again as the Arab spoke more, and at greater length. Eagerly Robin turned to the Persian for a translation.

"He says that he has heard that another, a kindred, tribe of these Bedouin thieves, have with them an old white woman and a child."

"And a man!" exclaimed Robin. "Surely a man!"

"He says that a tall white man was with them."

Robin could hardly refrain from a shout, but his joy was followed by such giddiness and faintness that he put out his hand and grasped a tent-rope to save himself from falling.

Then first Ali perceived by the torch-light that the youth's sleeve was drenched in blood, while large drops were falling fast to the ground.

"You are wounded!" exclaimed the Amir.

"Nothing—only my arm," was Robin's reply, but he almost swooned as he spoke.

Every care, by Ali's command, was taken of the youth. One of the Amir's followers was a tolerably skilful leech, especially in cases of hurt from bullet or steel. Robin's blood was staunch, his arm bandaged and put in a sling. The wound was not serious, though it had become more painful than it had been at first. Robin, even while his arm was being bound, was anxiously inquiring whether more particulars about the white captives could not be drawn from the Arab. Ali, in this inquiry, had anticipated his wishes.

"The man says that the Shararat Bedouins, with their prisoners, were, he believes, making their way towards Djauf."

"Djauf! Where's that?" cried Robin. He had always had bad marks for geography at school, and, as regarded Oriental names of places, owned himself to be a regular dunce.

"Djauf, in the wadi (valley) of the same name, is a city in North Arabia, lying in the direction of the Syrian desert."

"Is it far from hence?" asked Robin anxiously.

"Very far," answered Hassan in broken English; "ten days of journey; and all way dead camels lie."

"Shorten the number of days by four, and let the camels keep in their legs," cried Ali satirically. "But with all allowance for Hassan's inventive genius, the journey is a difficult one, and not unattended with danger. To undertake it now is not to be thought of."

Robin was silenced for awhile, but a prayer was rising from his heart, "Lord, do Thou help me; enable me to seek and to find my Harold!"

At the command of the Amir, a carpet was spread on the ground for Robin, and cushions were brought from the tent to support his head. A goblet of sherbet was placed at his side, and an attendant gently fanned him. Ali seated himself on the same carpet.

"You saved my life," said the Amir, after some minutes of silence.

"You first saved mine," was Robin's reply.

"But not at the cost of my blood. No one renders such service to Ali without receiving reward. Ask what you will—it is yours; were it the signet from my hand—" he touched a magnificent ring which he wore—"were it even my fleet Firdosi."

"Oh! I do not care for jewels; I do not want horses!" exclaimed Robin, bluntly. "If you wish to show me kindness, take me to Djauf to seek for my brother. He is more to me than all the jewels in the world!"

"You insult my lord grossly by rejecting his gifts," said Hassan. "As for going to Djauf, the idea is worthy only of a madman. We are going to quit Arabia for ever; to my lord the land is hateful. On to Djauf indeed! As well propose to go to Gehannurn."

"Had I but a camel I would go alone!" cried the Knight of St. John.

Ali smiled his own peculiar joyless smile. "I never knew any one so eager as you seem to be to perish in the desert," he observed. But the Persian thought in his heart, "Can it be that there is really such a thing as true disinterested love, such as Christians talk about, and write about, but which I never have met with before?"

"It is time for us to prepare for our start," cried Hassan, "or we shall not reach the sea before nightfall. Is it my lord's pleasure that the camels be loaded?"

"Ay, and let their heads be turned towards Djauf," was the Amir's reply.

Robin uttered an exclamation of gratitude and joy.

"But, my lord," began Hassan in a tone of angry expostulation; but Ali gave him no time to finish his sentence.

"We are going to Djauf," said the Persian, in the tone of one resolved to have his own way.

Hassan left his master's presence, with difficulty suppressing an explosion of anger; no sooner was he beyond Ali's hearing than he swore a deep oath by his Prophet, Hossein, Hassan, Fatima, and all other saints in the Shiah calendar, that neither he nor the Amir, nor the detested white-faced infidel should ever set foot in Djauf.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OFFER.

HASSAN did his utmost to prevent the northward journey from being commenced, and he had as many wiles as a fox. Orientals are skilful in making excuses, and are masters in the art of causing delays. But Hassan's master was more than a match for him,—had experimental knowledge of his devices, and cut through every difficulty by his own shrewdness, and the force of his strong will. It almost seemed to Robin as if Ali took pleasure in provoking the jealousy, and disappointing the efforts of his shadow, as we sometimes see a master wantonly teasing the dog which crouches at his feet. It was clear to the English youth that there was no affection between the Amir and Hassan, and Robin wondered why the former did not dismiss from his service one whom he neither liked nor trusted.

In spite of all that was said about camels being sick and horses lame, of provisions running short and mashales growing leaky, the party started

on the route leading towards Djauf. Robin felt weak from loss of blood, and his arm gave him pain, but he would have scorned to have let weakness or pain act as an impediment in his search after his brother.

The first stage was long, and seemed doubly tedious from its being a going over ground already trodden. Hassan was by no means the only one of the party to look sulky, for no one liked the prolongation of desert wanderings which had been thought near a conclusion. Ali's tent was at last pitched near the first brackish well which was reached; the horses were tethered, the camels unloaded.

As the sun was still high, the Amir kept within the shelter of his tent, reclining on cushions, with his narghillah at his side, refreshing himself with perfumes, of which Orientals are fond. Ali made Robin share his carpet, and while the attendants outside made preparations for the evening meal, the Amir bade Robin beguile the time by reciting more of his English verses.

The wounded youth, struggling against almost overwhelming languor, increased by the heat, began the second chapter of St. John's First Epistle. His was a discouraging task, for Ali looked so dreamy that Robin doubted whether the Amir were listening at all, or whether the faint voice at his side were not merely having the effect of lulling the Persian to sleep.

Thus the first eight verses were recited, but when the following three were repeated, Robin could no longer doubt that Ali was listening. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him: but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness."

Ali raised himself from his cushions, fixed his dark melancholy eyes upon Robin, and made a movement with his hand to stop the recitation; he had heard enough, and more than he cared to hear. There was silence for some time in the tent, and the weary English youth had dropped asleep, when he was roused by a question from Ali.

"What will you do, O Feringhee, if you fail to find your brother?"

"I feel certain that I shall find him," said Robin the hopeful.

"There is nothing certain in this life, in which we are blown hither and thither like chaff before the wind," observed Ali. "Or, to change the metaphor, we are like bubbles floating for a moment over death's waters, only to break, mingle with them, and be lost for ever."

"You take a very dark view of life, and I take a bright one," said the Knight of St. John.

"The better for you," observed Ali, with a gloomy smile. "Pray, what is your view of life, O sage one?"

"That it is a time to work for God here, with His sunshine upon us, and a hope, nay, a certainty, of glory and happiness in His presence when our work is done!"

"I return to my first question," said the Persian. "If you are disappointed—as is likely enough—in your expectation of meeting your brother, what will you do? Will you not let something else fill his place?"

"Nothing; no one can fill Harold's place!" exclaimed Robin.

The tone of decision in which the words were uttered disappointed the Persian, in whose breast there was a secret unacknowledged yearning to have—what he had never yet had—a true friend.

Almost impatiently, he cried, "Why is it that you so set your affections on him whom you call by the name of Harold?"

"Is he not my brother?" said Robin.

"Oh, that is not enough! There are brothers and brothers; some are loved, and some—but let that pass. I want some better reason for your devotion to this Harold than the mere tie of blood, the mere accident of your having been born in the same dwelling."

"There is not a nobler fellow in the world than Harold?" said Robin.

"That is—in your eyes," said the Persian, drily; "you may not be an impartial judge. There may be others as brave, as gifted, as worthy of admiration as he."

"I never met such," observed Robin, who was not made for a courtier. Quite unconsciously, he wounded the vanity of the Persian, who was quite aware of his own personal advantages and mental acquirements.

"Have you any other reasons to give?" asked the Amir coldly.

"Plenty," was Robin's reply. "Harold has been my best friend, save one, since I was a child; I always remember his kindness; it is the first thing that I can remember. Harold carried me on his shoulders, he played with me; and when I went to school he was my protector, he would let no one bully his little brother. Harold helped me with my tasks,—I must have given him lots of trouble, I was such a stupid little chap over my books. Harold was the very model of an elder brother; I always looked up to him, and I do so now."

Ali very imperfectly understood this description of English child life, and school life, especially as Robin spoke faster than usual, as familiar scenes rose to his mind.

"Did you never quarrel?" asked the Persian, and he watched Robin's countenance keenly, as he replied in a slower, more hesitating tone.

"Harold was angry with me now and then, but never for long. I tried his patience sometimes, especially with my foolish tongue."

"Perhaps you try other people's patience too," said the Persian, drily. "But I like you," he continued more graciously, "your tongue has at least no venom or falsehood beneath it. If you find not your brother, what say you to following my fortunes? I could offer you much—wealth, change, amusement, perhaps even a visit to your own native land."

As Robin, taken aback at the proposition, made no immediate reply, Ali, in a tone more approaching to tenderness than he had used for many years, added, "Could you not regard me as an elder brother?"

Poor Robin felt as if driven into a corner. He did not wish to offend his protector, still less was he willing to wound his benefactor, and to speak truth fully would probably do both. The youth's troubled, perplexed look did not escape the keen notice of Ali.

"Answer me," he said, more sharply; "why do you hesitate in accepting an offer which most in your position would close with at once?"

"Because you could not be my Christian brother," replied Robin. "The closest tie of all between Harold and me is this—we serve the same God, we love the same Saviour, and look forward to sharing the same home. All other ties death must break; this, and this only, will last for ever."

"Enough, you will not have the offer twice!" cried the Amir, angrily, and leaning back on his cushions, he tried to sleep, but slumber would not come at his bidding. At last, raising himself on his elbow, Ali looked towards Robin, who was buried in deep sweet sleep. The Amir gazed with an emotion of envy on that pale but peaceful face.

"'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light'—were not those the words?" thought the Persian. "'He that hateth his brother is in darkness'—darkness—" something like a stifled groan burst from the Amir's lips, as there was no ear to hear it.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DARK DEED.

ROBIN was refreshed by his sleep, although it was not a long one. He sat up and watched the Mahomedans at their customary devotions at sunset. Those of Hassan were very ostentatiously performed, as he prided himself

on being a devout Mahomedan. Many were his prostrations, and numerous were his repetitions of the various titles of Allah.

"Perhaps he is a better man than I thought him," said Robin to himself. "He may honestly believe me to be an infidel, and honestly treat me as such; his bigotry may have its root in true zeal."

The manner of Hassan that evening had greatly changed from the sulky approach to insolence which he had displayed in the morning. He was more than usually obsequious to Ali, and almost courteous even to the Feringhee kafir. Hassan politely inquired after the state of Robin's wound, as if feeling a kindly interest in his health. Hassan warned the young Englishman to be on his guard against the evil effects of travelling in the heat after so serious an injury as he had received, as it would be most likely to bring on fever.

"Remain quiet in the tent," continued the self-constituted medical adviser, "I myself will bring to you your repast."

"No, thanks," said Robin; "I will rather eat in the open air like the rest."

Hassan seemed a little disappointed, but by no means offended. Apparently wishing to make up for past rudeness, at the evening meal, he himself helped Robin from a large platter heaped with cakes of unleavened bread, baked upon iron plates over the fire.

Just after Robin had given thanks for the food thus provided for him in the desert, a miserable, half-starved dog, attracted by the scent of savoury curry and piles, made its way into the circle. The creature looked timidly around as if seeking a protector, and then, as if by instinct, went up to the pale-faced boy.

"How comes the brute here," exclaimed Ali; "we look not even for wild dogs in a desert like this!"

"I should think that the poor creature must have been left here by travellers, stopping like ourselves for water and rest," said Robin, patting

the animal as he spoke. "He does not look like a common wild dog."

"Kick out the unclean brute!" exclaimed Hassan, in a tone of disgust.

"He is hungry, poor fellow," said the English lad, and he threw his own unleavened cake to the dog.

"Kick him out! Beat him! Kill him!" vociferated Hassan, starting to his feet.

"No; he has sought my protection," said Robin, understanding the man's gestures though not his words; "I know what it is to be famished," and with pleasure, the kind-hearted lad watched the hungry creature devouring the food.

"Let the brute alone, Hassan," said the Amir authoritatively, as he saw his shadow approach with a club-like stick to dash out the brains of the dog, over whom Robin held a protecting arm.

"I'll not sit down on ground defiled by the beast!" exclaimed Hassan, and in an excited manner, he rushed to the tent.

"I noticed in India that you Englishmen often make companions of the dog," observed the Amir to Robin, as the repast proceeded. "I even saw fine specimens of the race which had been brought by their masters from Europe across the sea."

Robin, who was fond of animals, and especially of dogs, recounted several anecdotes of their sagacity and fidelity, pausing occasionally to give a pat or kind word to the creature he had fed.

"We think much more of the horse," observed Ali, and he told several stories of the Arab race, speaking usually in Persian for the benefit of his attendants, then translating his words into English.

"For speed and endurance, I would match my Firdosi against any horse in the world," said Ali, and he mentioned the extravagant sum which he had given for the beautiful creature. "Firdosi knows my voice, obeys me as if he

were a child, and often feeds out of my hand. What you have told of the intelligence of the dog is nothing to—but what ails that dog!" exclaimed the Amir, interrupting himself in the midst of his sentence.

With a howl of agony, the creature whom Robin had fed had suddenly sprung up from his crouching position; his mouth foamed, his eyes were blood-shot, his tongue hung out, he ran wildly round and round in circles, every one backing out of his way, though the dog made no attempt to bite. He then rolled on the ground in convulsions.

"Poison!" exclaimed the Ali in English. "That chapatti which you threw to the dog must have been poisoned. Oh, that villain, Hassan; he meant it for you!" Then in a loud voice, the indignant Amir gave orders in Persian that Hassan should instantly be brought into his presence.

Two of the attendants hurried off to obey the command, but soon returned with surprise and alarm in their faces. Hassan was not to be found, nor was Firdosi; the would-be murderer had fled with some of his master's jewels, upon Ali's favourite horse.

"Which way has he fled?" asked the Amir, fiercely.

"By the hoof-tracks it appears in the backward track towards the sea, by the way that we traversed to-day."

"Thirty miles to the nearest well, and but the stars to guide—a perilous journey," observed the Amir, "even mounted as he is. But we must give chase; saddle the horses at once; though no horse," Ali bitterly added, "will ever overtake my fleet-footed steed. I would not have lost him for ten thousand pieces of silver. But, let it cost what it may, I will have revenge on that murderous villain!"

It was a bitter disappointment to Robin to have to turn back from the direction of Djauf to retrace the way which, even when he had been incited by hope, he had found so terribly tedious, the horses having had to keep pace with the slow-footed camels. In vain Robin tried to persuade Ali to forego the hope of revenge, to leave Hassan to his perilous ride, and not

attempt to pursue him. Ali was intensely obstinate when once he had made up his mind.

When Robin looked on the carcase of the poor dog, now stretched out in death, and thought of what, but for a merciful interposition, would have been his own fate, he returned fervent thanks to his Heavenly Preserver from the depths of a grateful heart.

The Amir mounted Hassan's black steed, and made Robin ride on a smaller one by his side. Only the horsemen could possibly overtake the fugitive—the camels must follow more slowly. All the animals were tired, and their tedious pace annoyed the Amir, who freely used his spur. All that was savage in Ali's nature was roused, every feature expressed the anger within, his very voice seemed altered, the softness of the Persian tongue lost in the imprecations with which these pages shall not be sullied.

"You shall drink deep of the cup of revenge!" said the Amir to his English companion.

"I do not wish to do so," was Robin's reply; "revenge is forbidden to Christians; we are commanded to love our enemies."

"Another of the commandments of your religion which it is impossible to obey!" cried Ali, with something like scorn.

"Not impossible," said Robin, "since He who gave the command Himself fulfilled it."

Robin could say no more; he was not in a fit state for riding—his bridle arm useless and in a sling, it was difficult for him in his weakness to guide the animal which he bestrode, or even to keep his seat. The chase in which they were engaged seemed to Robin a wild one, and he did not even wish it to be successful, as success would but lead to some deed of blood. The party were only guided by the stars, and the fresh hoof-prints traced in the sand, seen by the light of a torch, for Ali was too impatient to wait for the rising of the waning moon.

But the ride was to be a much shorter one than any of the party had expected. Ali had to slacken his pace, as Robin could not keep up with him; the Amir in an irritable mood drew in his rein, but as he did so, a sound reached his ear from a little distance, which he recognised with joy and surprise.

"A horse's neigh, I believe; I am certain that it is the neigh of Firdosi!" Rising on his stirrups, Ali shouted out a call to his steed in a tone that made the welkin ring.

The neigh was repeated, and from a lesser distance; then the fleet-footed Firdosi came cantering up to his delighted master. By the light of the torch it was seen that his saddle was empty.

Many were the exclamations uttered, many were the caresses given to the beautiful and intelligent creature that had found his way back to his lord. But where was his rider?

As Ali, who had dismounted from the black horse, was stroking the neck of Firdosi, a little warm blood which came on his hand told its own tale.

"The wretch Hassan must have urged on my tired steed with the point of a dagger!" exclaimed Ali. "And Firdosi who is never touched even with a wand, who never felt the prick of a spur, must have suddenly plunged and thrown the coward. Hassan never knew how to ride. And now, my brave, beautiful steed, thou shalt bear me back to the place of encampment. Hassan, in the pathless desert, alone, without food, drink, or means of escape, will get his deserts, and die the lingering death of a starving dog in the burning heat."

"We cannot leave even a bad man to such a horrible fate!" exclaimed Robin. "Whatever else Hassan be, he is at least our fellow-creature."

"You cannot plead for the villain who sought to poison you," said Ali, who had just sprung into the saddle.

"I could not sleep in peace if I thought that even an enemy were dying of thirst!" cried Robin. "Let us find him—he must be near—and take him at least to some place where water can be found. Let us remember that only the merciful can hope for mercy."

"It is not for Hassan that I care to search," said Ali, "but for my dagger with the jewel-studded hilt which the robber has carried away. Let me but recover my dagger, and you may do what you will with the thief."

Again the party proceeded onwards, this time towards the place from which the horse's neigh had sounded. Robin's temples ached, he was almost exhausted, yet he went on. The moon was just showing her silver horn over the waste, and Robin was feeling that he could hold out no longer, when one of the attendants exclaimed, pointing with his spear:

"There—there! I see some one lying on the sand!"

The party rode in the direction indicated, and ere they reached the spot, recognised the red fez and the silken cloak which had been worn by Hassan. The Persian was lying where he had fallen when unseated by Firdosi's sudden plunge—for the Amir's guess had been correct—Hassan had been thrown from the horse. The miserable man, who was of full habit and heavy, had been flung to the ground with such violence that he had broken his spine. Hassan was utterly unable to rise, or even to move; he could only groan in helpless agony on the ground where he lay.

That expression of intense pain made the young Knight of St. John almost forget his own. Robin managed, he knew not how, to throw himself from his saddle and reach the miserable Persian.

"Forgot were hatred, wrongs and fears;
The plaintive voice alone he hears,
But sees the dying man."

Whilst others were stripping the robber and traitor of the jewels which he had carried away, Robin, kneeling on the sand, was attempting to raise Hassan's head to enable him to breathe more freely, but even the attempt increased the sufferer's pain. Robin's own face looked so ghastly pale, that at a sign from Ali, one of the Persians brought to the youth a flask of water, which the man had taken the precaution of slinging from his saddle-bow.

Robin took the flask readily, but he did not raise it to his own parched lips; the drops fell into the gasping mouth of the dying Hassan, and then the would-be murderer expired, with the hand of one whom he had sought to destroy, supporting his head.

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CHAPTER XVII.

ON AGAIN.

"THERE is reality in the religion of Christians, and there is one—if there be but one—whose faith is something woven into the very fibre of his life—not a mere golden fringe to adorn it."

Such were the reflections of Ali the Persian, as he silently gazed down on the group. "I can understand the English boy's loving his brother, though in a way which to me has a touch of a mystery in it; I can less understand the motives which made him suffer much, and risk more, for a comparative stranger; but the extraordinary impulse to requite evil with good, to give drink to a man who, sought his life, this cannot belong to earth. It is like the very reflection of His character, of whom the Christians say that God is Love. If such be the servant, what must the Master be?"

Robin was unable to rise from the spot where he had knelt. The poor lad's brain was reeling, the earth beneath him seemed to be sinking, and the skies above him whirling round. Robin was raised in an almost unconscious state, and, by Ali's command, placed before him on his noble horse.

The cavalcade moved slowly back till it reached the late place of encampment, happily near. Here the unwilling camels, laden with the tents and the baggage, were only preparing for a start. Glad were all the party to secure a few hours repose.

Ali made the best arrangements that circumstances permitted for his English friend, when the journey should be resumed. He gave orders that one of the large panniers which hung on either side of the smoothest-paced dromedary should be emptied of its contents, save of some dry fodder, which would make a couch of comparative softness. It was but a rude sick-bed indeed, but the best that could be hastily provided. It was evident that Robin, who had high fever, was unable to ride a horse. To linger longer than was absolutely necessary to rest the animals, might be death to all, for not

even water was abundant, and there were no means at hand of replenishing the lessening stock of provisions, which had been provided for a journey less prolonged. Scarcely any new supply could be counted on during the long pilgrimage to Djauf.

But the Amir's mind was perplexed by the doubt whether Djauf beyond the desert, or the nearer Wyh on the sea-coast should be the goal of his travels. There was nothing to take him to the Arabian city except a hasty promise made to an English youth who might be now in a dying state.

One of Ali's dependents, approaching him with respect, inquired whether his chief would not return to his former intentions, and quit the land of Arabia, suggesting cogent reasons for taking that course, and glancing significantly at Robin, who lay stretched on a carpet.

"All depends on his state," replied Ali, looking in the same direction; "if he survive, I go to Djauf, if he die, I turn to the sea-coast and quit this hateful land for ever."

Robin knew nothing of what had been spoken, but as clearer consciousness came to his mind, so remembrance returned of what a few hours before had been uppermost in his thoughts.

"Harold—shall we not find him?" murmured Robin like one in a dream. Then opening his languid eyes, Robin fixed them on the Amir and faintly said, "You will take me to Djauf, to my brother?"

"If you can reach it," said Ali.

Robin noticed the slight emphasis on the "if," and the tone which suggested a doubt.

"You think me dying?" said he.

"No, you'll struggle through," replied the Persian; "no one dies at the first touch of fever." But he spoke like one who would soothe a frightened child.

"Were I to die, would you go on to Djauf?" asked Robin, who had no fear of death for himself, but a great fear of Harold's being left in the hands of the Bedouin Arabs.

A few days before, Ali would have uttered an unhesitating lie, but he had difficulty in speaking a falsehood to one so transparently truthful as Robin. "It would be better for us all to turn our faces towards Wyh," he replied.

Robin understood the words as a negative answer to his question. "I do not believe that I shall die!" he exclaimed with animation. "I will pray to God—all is in His hands—if it be His will, I shall yet see my brother on earth. But if the Lord calls me home, if I do not behold Harold—till we meet in heaven, oh! Say that you will not forget my last—my dying entreaty; that you should seek out my brother—and set him free!"

Ali could not resist the appeal, he could not turn away from that imploring look; he remembered that he owed his life to the youth who had suffered in consequence of rescuing him.

"What are your Highness's commands?" asked the Persian attendant.

"That we take the northern route," was the reply.

Robin was lifted into his strange vehicle; the kneeling camel arose, and the journey was recommenced by moonlight.

We will not follow the caravan in its various stages of progress: that progress was necessarily slow, for every animal was tired, and a constant watch had to be kept in case of another attack by roving Bedouins, whilst water had to be carefully husbanded, and provisions meted out. Robin was the only one of the party who knew not how scanty was the supply of both; Ali never suffered his young companion to endure actual privation. The sick lad, suspended in his curious cradle, "like a bird in a nest," as he playfully said, bore the journey much better than anyone had expected, for the pace of the trained dromedary is far smoother than that of the camel. At each halting-place the invalid was lifted down and placed under the shelter of the tent or in the open air, according to the time of the day. Robin had a fine

vigorous constitution which successfully struggled to throw off fever, and the wound in his arm healed rapidly.



"With some of his old agility the English boy sprang from the pannier, which rested on the ground."—p. 161.

With some of his old agility the English boy sprang from the pannier, which rested on the ground.

At the periods of rest, the young Englishman saw much of the Persian who, smoking his narghillah, or occasionally reciting stanzas of Oriental verse, indulged in what the Italians call the dolce far niente, yet without appearing to enjoy it, for Ali took actual pleasure in nothing. If anything

roused him to interest, it was hearing passages of Scripture repeated by Robin; but Ali seldom commented upon them.

At last the halting-place nearest to Djauf was reached by the travellers, and there they had the satisfaction of meeting with merchants who readily exchanged fruit, sherbet, and other much needed supplies for the silver pieces of the Persian.

"We shall be in Djauf to-morrow," said Ali; as he came, as usual, to superintend the lifting down of the invalid. But Robin, who was in joyous spirits, would suffer no one to help him; with something of his old agility, the English boy sprang from the pannier, which, from the crouching position of the dromedary, rested upon the ground. Ali held out his hand to aid Robin, who grasped the hand with grateful affection.

"You have been very, very good to me!" he exclaimed. "I will never forget your kindness. I have found you a friend indeed!"

That warm grasp, that grateful look, those few words uttered from the heart, were to the cold embittered spirit of the Persian, like spring's warm breath on frost. Ali felt that he had not only found one whom it was possible to trust and even to love, but one who could return kindness with disinterested gratitude, and love with unfeigned affection. Ali had been accustomed to flattery, eye-service, ready proffers of assistance, and profuse assurances of devotion, but to him the English boy's look, words, and grasp were worth more than them all.

"Would that I could keep him always beside me," thought Ali; "what a contrast he is to what Hassan was! The one a black shadow, the other a sunbeam!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISCLOSURES.

IT might be the last time that Ali and young Hartley would be alone in that tent together. They were resting through the heat of the day, for the last stage of the journey to Djauf was to be performed at night, that the city might be entered at sunrise. What lay in the future who could tell? Ali felt intuitively that if Harold were found, the elder brother's society and influence would quite supersede his own. The Persian experienced a pang of jealousy in regard to this rival whom he never had seen, and secretly wished that the search for him might be made in vain.

Robin's spirit was buoyant with hope; he was too eager, too impatient to own himself weak. If Robin rested, it was but that with more untiring energy he might on the morrow pursue his search for his brother. Nor were poor Miss Petty and Shelah forgotten by the Knight of St. John. Their helplessness was quite sufficient to make him their champion. Robin's thoughts and hopes took the form of fervent though unuttered prayer, and this made him much more silent than usual.

Ali, on the contrary, felt inclined to be more than usually communicative to his companion. The Amir had for years been supporting a secret burden, all the heavier because he shared its weight with no one. There are times when, even with proud natures, sorrow longs to find a vent, when pain seeks relief in some outward expression; it was such a time now with the reserved and haughty Amir. Perhaps he was even moved by some desire, unacknowledged even to himself, to know whether another would think his case as desperate as he himself thought it. Thus Ali felt impelled to impart his dark secret to a stranger of a different race and religion; the Amir could hardly have done so to one of his own.

"You look more than usually joyous to-day, Feringhee!" remarked the Persian, after he had been for some minutes watching the expression on the face of his English companion.

"Yes; I am rejoicing in hope," was the cheerful reply.

"It seems to be your nature to hope and rejoice," observed Ali. "I have been comparing you in my mind to a stream that goes sparkling in sunshine,

through whose waters one can see every pebble that lies on its bed."

"Because it is so shallow?" asked Robin gaily.

"No; because it was so clear," was the grave reply.

Ali paused, and then went on, not as if addressing himself to Robin, but as if soliloquising to himself, "I have seen a pool, and a deep one, which returns no sparkle to the sun though he shine with noonday brightness upon it. There is a thick mantle of dank vegetation over it, and if it give out anything it is an exhalation which makes men sicken and die."

"I have seen many such pools," observed Robin; "they ought to be cleared out at once."

Ali went on, without taking apparent notice of the interruption: "And if the mantle which covers the pool could be drawn aside—if human eye could pierce its dark depths, it would see a ghastly skeleton below."

Robin looked surprised at this unexpected conclusion to the description. He suspected that it had some horrible meaning, and determined to ask no questions. But his very reticence made Ali less reluctant to speak.

"Did you ever hear anything of my earlier days?" asked the Amir.

"No; hardly any of your party could speak English but yourself," replied Robin, "and I am but beginning to pick up a little Persian. What information I glean must be through my eyes."

"What do they tell you concerning me?" asked Ali.

"That you are not happy," was the reply.

"Happy!" repeated Ali bitterly, as if mockery were in the word. "Listen to the story of my life, and then judge as to my right to be happy. I was the child of very wealthy parents, and as their first-born, and for more than four years their only child, was indulged in every luxury. I was splendidly dressed and richly fed; my very toys were of silver and gold. I knew no law

but my will, and amongst our numerous servants none ever dared to oppose it. I could not cross the room without my movements being watched with admiration, nor prattle nonsense without its being repeated by a dozen mouths, as if every word that fell from my lips were a gem."

"That was bad for you," said practical Robin. "When I was a naughty little chap, I used to be put in a corner or sent early to bed."

"I was my mother's idol," continued Ali, "and if I ever loved any one but myself, I truly loved her. She never denied me anything; I was her one darling, her little Shazada (prince) until—until Faiz ul Din was born."

"I am afraid that you did not welcome your little brother," said Robin.

"I regarded the babe as a dethroned monarch might regard a usurper. I could no longer engross my mother's attention; she seemed to me to lavish it all on a troublesome child who did nothing but cry. Faiz ul Din for some months was sickly, and the restoration of his health seemed to be the first—the one object of my mother's desire. Night and day my mother had no thought but for him. If he fancied my toys, he must have them; if he struck me, I must never strike again. As he grew older, the evil grew worse. When we quarrelled, Faiz ul Din's part was always taken. Once when he kicked me, I hit him, and for the first time in my life, I was overwhelmed with reproaches, my indignant mother even struck me on the face with her slipper! A sense of injustice rankled in my mind; jealousy and dislike towards my brother grew with my years. Faiz ul Din was to me as a rival; and if a rival, a foe!"

Robin silently thanked Heaven that he had been brought up in a Christian home, and by one whose justice and good sense equalled her tenderness and her love.

"The mashale may be filled gradually," continued Ali, "but filled till at last it burst. What followed was but the sudden overflow of what had been gathering long. Faiz ul Din was talented; my education had at first been retarded by my dislike to learning anything which cost me trouble; but I was intensely mortified when my younger brother passed me in the race in which I had had more than four years the start. My father was fond of

manly exercises, and his sons inherited his taste. After our parent's death, Faiz ul Din and I continued to pursue the sports of hunting and shooting.

"On one too memorable occasion, we made a hunting expedition into a wild part of the country. After a very difficult and prolonged chase, I succeeded in killing a small deer; Faiz ul Din, more fortunate, brought back in triumph the skin of a tiger, slain by his own hand. We both presented the spoils of the chase to our mother. The deer skin was thrown aside; but my mother had the tiger's skin made into a handsome rug, with the head stuffed and jewels put in the place of eyes! In a jealous fit, I struck out these eyes with my dagger, and contemptuously kicked the rug into the verandah. Faiz ul Din came in at the moment, and flew at me as if possessed by the tiger's spirit. There was a struggle between us; though the younger, he was the stronger. Enough—I slew him with the dagger, which was still in my hand."

Robin uttered an exclamation of horror, and intuitively drew himself a little farther away from the murderer of a brother. There had been a ghastly skeleton indeed, at the bottom of the dark pool.

A painful, oppressive silence followed; broken at last by Robin's inquiry, "Did you ever see your poor mother again?"

"No," was Ali's reply; "I fled from the palace as soon as I had secured about me a large sum in gold, and some of my more portable treasures. Hassan, who followed me a day or two afterwards, brought me many more things of value. I made it worth his while to keep silent, and began a series of journeys in various parts of the world, partly to carry on trade in horses and jewels, partly—as I once said to you before—to flee from myself."

Robin could understand the latter reason better than the first. It was to him inexplicable that a man with such a burden of guilt on his soul should care to make money by trading. But Robin was not an Oriental.

"Did your mother know who did the terrible deed?" asked the lad.

"She knew all; the dagger which I left behind, and my sudden flight, were sufficient evidence against me," replied Ali. "My mother cursed me in

the presence of her servants! I can never, never meet her again; she is now childless indeed."

"And you can never return to Persia?"

"I do not think that I should incur personal risk by going," replied Ali, in a more indifferent tone; "these things are not looked upon in our land as they are in yours. My countrymen think little of blood being shed in a hasty quarrel, and I have that which would make my peace. But I should hate to return to Persia, bearing with me the weight of a brother's blood and a mother's curse."

Young Hartley felt sickened with horror. He could hardly endure to remain in the presence of one who had committed so terrible a crime. Robin was not sufficiently well read in Oriental history to know how fearfully common fratricide has been amongst Asiatics of the highest rank; nor did he make sufficient allowance for the lowering of the moral standard caused by following a religion that in some cases not only palliates murder, but raises it into a merit. Robin was more given to feel acutely than to calculate deeply. He had not acquired the callousness in regard to sin which often follows familiarity with its loathsome details, like the insensibility to vitiated air which comes from perpetually breathing it. The emotion in the breast of our young Knight of St. John after hearing Ali's story might be well expressed by one most forcible line from Shakespeare—

"Oh! I am sickened with this smell of sin!"

Ali saw the impression made by his words, he had noticed the slight shrinking back from his person, he felt that the only human being whom he had sought to make his friend was lost to him for ever. Tenfold bitterness returned to his spirit. With the haughty air of one who is offended, rather than conscious of having given offence, the Persian rose from his reclining position, and, standing erect, said to young Hartley, who had covered his eyes with his hand, "Enough—you have my secret; can I trust to your honour not to betray it?"

"I will never divulge it; but would that I had never heard it!" was Robin's reply.

The Amir strode out of the tent, heedless of the heat and the glare. His attendants, after taking their noonday repast of fruit, under what shelter the camels and piled luggage afforded, were indulging in a siesta. Ali was the only being awake.

"So it is gone, and never to return, that glimpse of brightness which beguiled me into idle hope!" muttered the Amir to himself. "The very boy who owes his life to me, whom I have watched over, nursed, almost loved, regards me with unconcealed loathing! Well, I will soon liberate him from the presence which he hates; I will keep my promise to take him to Djauf, and then we part, to see each other no more in this world—or the next!"

Ali was not far from the tent, and in the midst of his gloomy reflections, his ear caught low sounds of distress issuing from it. He went nearer and listened. The Persian heard Robin pouring out the anguish of his young loving heart in tones that Ali had never before heard bursting from human lips. The words were uttered between broken sobs, for Robin was too weak to restrain his emotions, and he thought himself quite alone. Ali could distinguish such sentences as these:

"O Lord! Remember Thine own Word; is it not written that, if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and Thou wilt give him life, for them that sin not unto death. I know not whether this sin is such, but, oh most pitying, most loving Saviour! Have mercy—have mercy on my poor guilty brother! Save him, for Thou only canst save. Thou dost hate sin, but, oh Thou dost love the sinner! Let not my brother perish; give Ali eternal life. Didst Thou not die for him as well as for me?"

Robin's tears were falling fast; his were not the only tears that fell. Ali's eyes, that had never wept since the days of his childhood, were moistened now; the knee that had never been bent in real supplication for

mercy was now on the earth, the hard heart was throbbing, and what had been but stern remorse was softening into repentance.

"The Feringhee is pleading for me, God will hear him! The boy calls me brother, the name which he denied to me before, he gives me now! If the disciple think me yet within reach of mercy, will the Master cast me out?"

CHAPTER XIX.

A BITTER CUP.

IT is now time to return to Harold, and those whom circumstances had placed under his care. Harold's was a strong, firm spirit, but it could hardly bear up under the accumulated afflictions which had so suddenly been heaped upon him. All, indeed, would have been calmly endured, but for the last crushing weight of anguish caused by the loss of his brother. It was terrible to make a calculation as to how long Robin's youth, fine constitution, and brave spirit would be able to maintain a lingering struggle against famine, heat, and thirst—how long it would take to transform the suffering mortal into the rejoicing saint. To have known that Robin had actually died would have been a kind of relief, for Harold was of a less hopeful temperament than his brother. The elder brother did not look for miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace, but rather for strength to endure the flames.

In his state of deep depression, Miss Petty's thoughtless tongue inflicted perpetual wounds on Harold, as one with a limb crushed under a fragment of rock might yet be sensible to the petty annoyance of an insect's buzz and sting.

"Where do you think that they are dragging us, Harold? Is not this a round-about way to India? Won't the Queen send an army to free us? Do

you think we'll be sold as slaves? Are there cannibals in this horrid Arabia?" These, and many other such questions, repeated again and again till a brief reply was extracted, tried sorely the patience of Harold. Whilst, with weary limbs and blistered feet, the young missionary paced the desert way behind the camel, he had to endure this infliction.

After hours of walking, Harold was relieved from his bonds and suffered to mount a camel. This was chiefly an alleviation to misery, because, for a while it relieved him from the necessity of closely following his talkative companion. There was no halt until night, for oases were few and far between; but the excessive length of the stage, which had cost the life of one camel, and the exhausted state of the other unfortunate beasts of burden, compelled a longer rest than usual.

The description of the evening meal need not be repeated. There was little variety in the halts. There was here, however, no sheep to slaughter and no tent to accommodate poor Miss Petty. She and her Lammikin had to bivouac on the bare ground, under the sky. Harold, who was not far from his charges, was startled in the night by shriek upon shriek. Were the Arabs murdering their unfortunate captives? Harold hurried to the spot in time to set his heel on one of the small dark reddish scorpions found in the desert, which had crawled on Shelah's dress.

"Horrible creature! And there's another! I declare that I can't and won't sleep on the sand!" cried Miss Petty, furiously shaking her clothes lest one of the hideous reptiles should be concealed in some fold. But there was nothing else on which to sleep!

Harold returned to his own place near Tewfik, the Bedouin who had first seized him, and who consequently seemed to regard the captive as his own special property. Weariness might have enabled the missionary to find some relief from sorrow in sleep, had he not been kept awake by the loud talking of the Arabs near him. From the few words which he made out, Harold felt assured that he himself was the subject of conversation. What Harold could not understand in the following dialogue, his imagination tolerably well supplied, though gaps of ignorance remained to perplex the mind of the hapless captive.

"We have won poor spoil this time," said the chief of the Shararat band. "These kafirs had hardly a piastre amongst them, the jewels are tinsel and glass; two of the party are dead already, and two of those left are not worth a handful of date-stones."

"Kismet" (fate), was Tewfik's characteristic reply.

"What shall we do with the tall Feringhee?" inquired the chief, glancing towards the spot where Harold was lying.

"Sell him, if we can get a purchaser. It will be strange if no one in Djauf be in want of a slave."

"But he is white; slaves in Arabia are usually curly-headed blacks from the African coast."

"He'll be a choice rarity then, like a white camel," was the laughing reply. Bedouins are fond of a joke.

"The worth of a camel is certainly not in its colour but in its power of bearing burdens," said the chief.

"The Feringhee has plenty of bone and muscle, and spirit too," observed the Bedouin robber; "I have felt the strength of his arm. I should say that he could lift three maund." *

* A maund is 80 lbs.

"No, he's slight—not two," said the chief.

"He's worth forty tomauns of any one's money," cried Tewfik.

"I say thirty; we'll be lucky if we get them," rejoined the other.

There was a little squabbling over this matter of Harold's price. The voices became louder, the manner of the Arabs more excited, especially hot grew the dispute when the subject was how far Tewfik was entitled to the

purchase money of his captive, or whether the coveted tomauns should not be divided amongst the band.

"Son of an ass!" exclaimed the chief angrily. "Three such as you could not have mastered that Feringhee had not we been near to aid!"

"A slave! A price to be given for me—an Englishman! This is the last drop in my bitter, bitter cup!" thought Harold. "Was it for this that I left my country and devoted myself to work for souls? Could I not have been spared such misery, such humiliation as this? But I see before me the footprints of One who drank of a cup yet more bitter, who submitted to degradation yet deeper. It was through anguish that the Master passed to glory, shall the disciple shrink back? But is it cowardice to hope that the misery may be short, that I may in mercy be soon permitted to rejoin my dear lost brother!"

The wrangling amongst the Bedouins ended in compromise; Tewfik was to keep a third of the money paid for his unhappy slave, and the Arab's good temper being restored, he laughingly told the chief that he would freely throw the old woman and her child into the bargain.

"I would not give a lame ass for the two," quoth the chief.

CHAPTER XX.

DESERT DANGERS.

IF poor Miss Petty had been wretched when she had at last stretched herself on her hard sandy bed, to be pursued even in her dreams by scorpions, she awoke to a joyful surprise.

"Look, look, Shelah!" exclaimed Theresa, rousing her tired little companion. "We've got to the end of horrid Arabia at last! No more brackish wells, with water not fit for a pig to bathe in; no more barren sand! See these shady trees before us—no doubt they are laden with fruit,—see the clear delicious water! It was horrid to have only a rub of hot dry sand in the place of good soap and water!"

Shelah rubbed her sleepy eyes, then jumped up, clapped her hands with delight, and shouted for joy. No wonder that the poor wanderers over barren wastes, under a blazing, scorching sun, with scarcely any vegetation visible but a few stunted trees, or prickly bushes in favoured spots, should be transported at the beautiful view which now met their delighted eyes. Great was the joy of beholding a large clear lake, dotted with verdant isles, which looked as if they must be the homes of bright-plumaged birds, and butterflies without number!

"It's India—I know it's India!" cried Shelah. "For papa told me that Bombay is an island, and that he would feast me on lots of mangoes and plantains. I'll just go on eating fruit from morning till night, and stuff some under my pillow to take as soon as I open my eyes!"

"And we'll be rowed about in gay boats," began Miss Petty, then, interrupting herself as she caught sight of Harold approaching, she exclaimed, "Oh! Is not this a sight to make one dance with joy!"

"A deceitful joy," said Harold sadly; "you are looking on a mirage. What appears like water is only sand."

"I don't believe it!" cried Miss Petty. "Can't I trust my own eyes?"

"I'm sure that's water!" exclaimed little Shelah.

Harold was at the moment called away by Tewfik, who wanted to make trial of his captive's strength and skill in loading a camel. Before obeying the call, Hartley repeated to Miss Petty his assertion that the supposed island-studded lake was but an optical delusion common in desert lands.

"Harold is perked up with his book-learning," observed Miss Petty, "but he's not so much wiser than his elders. Don't I know a lake when I see one!"

"I'm going to have a dip, a jolly good dip!" cried Shelah, whose spirits rose like an india-rubber ball when pressure is removed. Off she rushed, impelled by charming hopes of splashing about in the water, followed by Miss Petty, who half forgot weariness and misery in her eagerness to reach—what did not exist!

Poor Theresa! That search after the supposed lake was an emblem of what her whole life had been; impelled by vanity, worldliness, selfishness, her hair had grown grey, her years had been wasted in the pursuit of the world's deceitful mirage.

In the meantime, Harold joined the group of Arabs who were standing in a semi-circle round a collection of mashales, filled almost to bursting with a supply of water which was to last the whole party for three long days. Each of these brown water-bags was made of the entire skin of a sheep, the head and legs excepted, the place where the neck had been, serving, when unfastened, as a channel through which the water could flow.



"The Arabs laughed to see the Feringhee take up in his arms what ought to be borne on the back,"—p. 183.

**The Arabs laughed to see the Feringhee take up in his arms
what ought to be borne on the back.**

"Lift that!" said Tewfik to Harold, in a tone of command.

The Englishman's pride rose in arms; he was no slave of a dirty ignorant Bedouin, to do for him the work of a bihist! But common-sense showed Harold that such pride was worse than folly; he was not told to do anything wrong, and he had no power to resist with success. The stately form was bowed, and Harold raised the heavy weight by an effort of sheer strength, for he had not the professional skill of a water-carrier. The Arabs laughed to see the Feringhee take up in his arms, as he would have done a child, what ought to be borne on the back.

"Put another mashale upon him, where a mashale should be!" shouted Tewfik.

As Harold was about to drop the first heavy skin, the Bedouin bade him forbear. "You shall carry a double load!" exclaimed the Arab. "One in your own way and one in mine. Bend your proud back to receive it."

"It is beyond my strength," said Harold, in what Arabic he could command.

"We will soon see if such be the case!" cried Tewfik, raising a staff which he had in his hand, as if with intention to strike.

But the stick did not descend, nor was the double burden lifted by the pale-faced captive.

A sudden exclamation from the chief caused all eyes to be suddenly turned towards the south, from which came a gust of wind so oppressively hot, that it seemed as if it had come direct from a roaring furnace. Every Arab, as if by instinct, muffled his face in his mantle, and then threw himself on the ground; the camels, which had been kneeling, stretched themselves out, and lay with their long necks extended, and their noses resting on the sand. Not a word was spoken save the exclamation, "The simoom! Allah save us!" which burst from the chief, as he placed himself so that his camel should be between him and the poisonous blast which was sweeping towards the encampment. The sky had almost suddenly become terribly dark, with a livid tint of purple towards the south. Harold dropped the mashale, and crouched behind it, resting his brow against the moist skin.

Then swept the deadly simoom of the desert upon the party, almost suffocating them with the burning sand which, it has been said, sometimes not only kills, but so effectually buries its victims that no traces remain to tell where they lie! To Harold the scorching blast felt like the breath of the angel of death, and he was tempted to pray that to him it might be such indeed. But life was strong within the young Englishman still: the rushing simoom came and passed over the prostrate men and beasts, as the heaviest trials sometimes come, and pass away.

The cloud of hot sand went sweeping on, and—though with garments clagged with what it had left behind—the Arabs were able to rise from the ground, uttering ejaculations which—at least from Harold's lips—took the form of thanksgiving. Yes, the poor captive could thank God, he scarcely knew why, that his life was prolonged; perhaps there was some undefined hope that it had been spared for some gracious purpose, if for suffering, still

for service. Some blows might yet be struck in the good cause by the Knight of St. John.

But the simoom of the Arabian desert had had its message for one who had indeed suffered but never served. Theresa Petty, lured by the mirage, had wandered from the encampment, and had been overtaken by the poisonous blast. Being utterly unprepared for it, the unhappy woman had been smitten down, as if laid low by a scythe. The accident, as it seemed, of her lying half over Shelah O'More, and so forming a kind of screen to the terrified child, had been the means of preserving the poor little girl.

It was Shelah's bitter cry which guided the Arabs to the spot, as they were passing on their way towards Djauf. They had indeed missed their captives from the party, but Harold could not persuade the Bedouins to make any search for those whom they deemed of little value. Hartley, who was on foot, went up to the place where Shelah sat crying in helpless distress.

"Where is Miss Petty?" he hastily inquired of the child.

"She's there," said Shelah, pointing to what looked like a low, a very low mound of sand.

Harold hastily removed some of the sand, uncovering enough to ascertain that life was quite extinct.

"Dead!" he said in an undertone, but it caught the ear of Shelah.

"Dead!" repeated Shelah in turn. "The good lady is dead, and Robin, and now she is dead—I think it will be my turn next!"

"I hope not," said Harold gently.

"Would you mind?" asked Shelah.

The artless question touched Harold's heart. "Yes, I should mind very much, Shelah," he said.

The poor child, sobbing, threw herself into his arms, and clung to the only being near who cared whether she lived or died.

Harold had not a minute even to utter a prayer by Miss Petty's corpse. The Arabs, who had been already delayed in their journey by the simoom, insisted on his instantly joining the march, and, had Harold lingered, would have used force to compel submission. Gently young Hartley raised Shelah, so that, without dismounting, an Arab could place her before him on his camel. Harold himself had to go on foot.

The caravan moved slowly on, leaving the corpse of Miss Petty behind. There was a strange similarity between the fate of Grace Evendale and that of Theresa, both dying in an Arabian desert with but a single human being near, both left in unknown, unmarked graves. And yet the difference between them was as that between the convict and the conqueror; one going into endless exile, the other departing to receive a crown. The comparison suggests less of similarity than of contrast.

CHAPTER XXI.

ONLY ONE LAMB.

THERE is a beautiful story, with which many are familiar, of a good missionary who, when too aged to go on with the work which he loved, was found meekly teaching the alphabet to a little child, thankful that he had still power to perform this humble labour for God. Harold was reminded of this anecdote by the position in which he found himself in relation to poor little Shelah.

The child, desolate and helpless in a land of strangers, where the name of Christian was scarcely known, had no one to whom to look for kindness and protection but Harold. He had regarded her as unlovely and unloveable;

Shelah, in her merrier days, had excited no sympathy in his mind; but Christian pity now touched a chord, and that chord wakened something like music in young Hartley's desolate spirit. As he marched on painfully in the heat, keeping as near as he could to the camel on which poor Shelah was perched, Harold thought much of the future fate of the young Irish girl. She was of good family, her father a distinguished officer in the army, and Shelah was his only child. When the news of her having been carried off by Arabs should reach India, efforts, and strenuous ones, would doubtless be made for her deliverance. But Arabia was a large country in which to search, without newspapers for advertisements, or postal system for letters, or wires to flash messages with lightning speed.

"Were I to be separated from Shelah, which is likely enough," thought Harold, "or were anything to happen to me, all trace of the child might be utterly lost. Shelah would be buried in some Mahomedan zenana, and childish and thoughtless as she is, would probably soon forget everything about her family and her language. I doubt whether the poor girl would remember her own name for a month. I wish that I had some means of stamping it—either on her form or her memory."

Harold glanced up at the little girl, who still wore her cardinal's hat, though its colour had almost entirely faded. The motion of the camel made Shelah appear as if being rocked on waves; she was clinging to the large bundles strapped on the camel, in order to feel the motion less. Harold raised his voice that it might reach the child.

"What is your name?" he asked, to see how far she was able to identify herself with the daughter of Sir Patrick O'More.

"Lammikin," cried Shelah, looking down from her perch.

"Tell me your other name," said Harold.

"I don't want another name; I'm just Lammikin; that is what Robin used to call me."

"This will never do," thought Harold. Again he raised his voice:

"Do you know the name of your father?"

"Papa," was the ready reply, and Harold could draw no other.

"Do you know, my child, where he lives?"

"In some island; but I don't like islands—they are nothing but sand."

"And like sand is your memory," thought Harold, realising how short a time it would take to obliterate almost everything from a mind such as Shelah O'More's. The young man compassionated the misery to be endured, perhaps for many long years, by loving parents making a wearisome, never-ending, useless search in these wild regions after an only child, hope growing fainter and fainter, and at last dying away in despair.

A thought occurred to the missionary's mind.

"Shelah, you love singing," he said; "shall I make a little song for you to sing as you travel along?"

"It's hard to sing with the big beast bumping me up and down like this," replied Shelah. "But I do like songs, most of all if they're funny."

Harold, to an easy, popular air, which he had often heard the child humming, gave the following jingling rhyme. How strange it was to find himself singing:

"Shelah O'More; I'm Shelah O'More;
Take me to India's bright, beautiful shore."

The little device had instant success. Shelah for a few moments loosened her clinging hands in order to clap them.

"I like that song!" she exclaimed, and instantly began to sing it. Then she paused to ask a question.

"Shall I find the good woman and Robin on India's bright, beautiful shore?" said the child.

"No," replied Harold, with a quivering lip; "they have gone to heaven's shore, which is more bright and beautiful by far."

"Then I'll change the song!" cried Shelah, and she instantly sang out:

"Take me to heaven's bright, beautiful shore."

Harold took the hint unconsciously given. He who had hoped to gather in a Christian flock from amongst the heathen, had here his charge confined to that of one child, a single lamb to feed for the Master.

"I want you to try something besides singing, poor Lammikin," he said. "I want to teach you a little prayer to be said night and morning. It will, I hope, help you to reach the beautiful place."

Shelah again loosened her grasp, and clasped her little sunburnt hands together.

"Say—'Please, Lord, make Shelah a good child, for Christ's sake,'" said Harold, choosing the simplest petition which rose to his mind.

"I know a better prayer than that," said Shelah.

"O God, teach me to love Thee, for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

"The kind lady taught me to say that, and Robin gave me a verse:

"God is love."

"Keep those two precious remembrances of them!" exclaimed Harold, his dry, heated eyes relieved by unwonted moisture. "Sing them daily, say them again and again, till we all meet on the beautiful shore."

Harold himself was no longer utterly wretched. That calm spirit of submission had come over his mind, which has been compared to the bending down of the ripe, golden corn, the sign that the harvest time is near.

So onward proceeded Hartley with the Arab banditti towards Djauf; whilst Robin, with the Persians, was from another quarter impatiently pressing on in the same direction. But the little delay which had been occasioned by Hassan's flight on Firdosi had prevented the two movements from coinciding in point of time. In the city of Djauf the two young Knights of St. John were never to meet.

CHAPTER XXII.

SLAVERY.

THE pen of an eloquent traveller has thus described the city which Harold and the Shararat Bedouins entered after their painful journey through the desert.

"A broad deep valley, descending ledge after ledge, till its innermost depths are hidden from sight amid far-reaching shelves of reddish rock; below, everywhere studded with tufts of palm-groves, and clustering fruit-trees in dark green patches down to the farthest end of its windings; a large brown mass of irregular masonry crowning a central hill; beyond, a tall and solitary tower overlooking the opposite bank of the hollow, and farther

down small round turrets and flat house-tops half buried amid the garden foliage."

"Is this India, bright beautiful India at last!" exclaimed Shelah, looking on the lovely scene with delight. To her, at least, the sight of houses and fruit-trees gave unmingled pleasure; the child, enjoying the present, neither took thought for the future, nor felt regret for the past.

Djauf presented an unusually gay appearance on the morning when it was entered by Harold and the Bedouin band. It was the day closing the grand festivities with which were celebrated the marriage of the Arabian Governor's eldest daughter. The bazaars were crowded with people in the gayest of Oriental costumes, and noisy with drums and other instruments unpleasing to European ears, with vociferous shouting and gabbling in half-a-dozen different tongues. The inhabitants of the city were easily distinguished from the wild sons of the desert, being taller in stature, lighter in complexion, and franker in manner, with long curling black locks; the Djaufites showed to advantage beside the suspicious-looking Bedouins.

Here Persians went prancing by on their high-mottled steeds, there Arabs, wearing red cotton vests with large hanging sleeves, their heads enwrapped in kerchiefs striped red and yellow, lounged along or chattered at the numerous stalls piled with sweetmeats for which Djauf is famed. Bihistes, bending under their burdens were with difficulty making their way through the crowds, stopping frequently to impart "the gift of God" to the thirsty. Camels, donkeys, cattle, helped to block up the roads, but no one seemed to be in a hurry. The day was one intended for pleasure, and Shelah enjoyed the bright changing scene and the noise, as if all the tamasha had been got up for her special amusement.

The centre of all the excitement and gaiety is the castle in which the governor dwells, and from which the bridal procession is in a short time to emerge. This castle is a large mass of irregular masonry, with a thick tower in the centre, suggestive rather of strength than of beauty. We will enter through the arched gate, and cross the large paved court, which is crowded with the bridegroom's followers and the governor's armed retainers. A hundred sabres flash in the sun, intermingled with guns, and weapons of ruder construction. Turbans of various hues, high caps, the fez, the kerchief

twisted round the head, embroidered cloaks bordered with silver and gold, here a red mantle, there a costly shawl, with glitter of sparkling jewels which, in the East, are by no means left to the exclusive use of women, make the scene suggestive of one read of in the "Arabian Nights."

An inner court brings us into the Governor's large reception room called the Khawah, where the potentate of Djauf sits in state, propped on his gold-striped cushions, to receive the congratulations of his numerous guests. The bride is not visible; we must imagine her dressed in red and gold, and almost weighed down with jewels, the central point of interest in the zenana, which is as densely crowded with chattering women as the court and banqueting room are with men.

But in the midst of the brilliant scene, a cloud is on the Governor's face. He had promised to his son-in-law the gift of a favourite Nubian slave, skilled in music, perfect in the art of preparing coffee, something of a jester withal, and behold! On the very day of the departure of the wedded pair, Barahat has fallen down and broken his leg, after—oh! shameful sound to Mahomedan ears!—too free indulgence in the forbidden!

"Let not his Highness's mind be disturbed," said a courtier, whose head was encircled with a kerchief adorned with a broad band of camels' hair, skilfully entwined with bright coloured silk. "If the Nubian fell, it was kismet (fate), the loss of a slave is more easily supplied than that of a good horse. Some Shararat Bedouins came into the city at daybreak, bringing with them a handsome slave, of the complexion of a Circassian and the mien of a prince, and a white child with hair red as the beard of the Prophet. The slaves are both for sale."

"Of what race? Where found? What price do the robbers demand?" asked the ruler of Djauf.

"They come from some Wiliyati (European) land," said the Arab; "no robber tells where he found his spoil, these slaves may have been taken from some wreck on the coast. Sixty gold tomauns are asked for the young man, and twenty for the girl."

"What can they do?" asked the Governor, after for a brief space turning over the subject in his mind, whilst leisurely sipping his coffee.

The courtier gave a list of accomplishments to which Harold certainly laid no claim. The white slave was a poet, a musician; the girl who accompanied him danced to his playing.

The Arab would not have dared to have declared all this had he not thought that, the bridal party being on the point of starting for a place distant hundreds of miles from Djauf, there was no danger of detection. The sinfulness of fraud and falsehood never troubled the conscience of the Arab, for he could not be said to possess one. He had been nurtured on lies, and felt rather pride than shame at success in cheating his employer.

After obtaining from the governor the eighty pieces of gold, the courtier hurried off to make his purchases from the Shararat Arabs. It brought the hot blood to Harold's pale cheek when, standing silently by, he heard the wrangling, the eager bargaining, the noisy asseverations, the blasphemous appeals to heaven, over the sale of an Englishman. It was humiliating to have his price beaten down, as if he had been some mere beast of burden.

"What are they saying? Why are they so angry? What are they quarrelling about?" asked Shelah. "And why are they looking so hard at me?" Harold could not give utterance to a reply to the questions asked by the poor little slave.

"After all," thought Harold, "I am not the first one of the Lord's people to have to endure the humiliation of having a price put upon me." Harold remembered Joseph; he remembered One far more exalted than Israel's son, for whose sacred person pieces of silver had been counted down. It is only in sin that there is shame.

The courtier was skilful in the art of bargaining, and, after at least half-an-hour given to noisy disputing, he paid down forty tomauns for Harold, Shelah being thrown in as a make-weight by Tewfik, who considered the baronet's child as a thing of no value at all.

The first result of a change of masters was a very welcome one to the slaves. Harold had been unable to change his garments since the day when he had fallen into Bedouin hands; and this, with the impossibility of bathing, had been to the English gentleman one of the most unsupportable of his trials. But, having become a gift from the Governor of Djauf to his high-born son-in-law, the slave must appear in befitting guise, with not a grain of dust upon him. Hartley had at once the luxury of a bath, and then was clothed from head to foot in spotless white, a muslin turban was wound around his head, and around his waist was twisted a kamarband of crimson and gold.

Given over to the charge of some Arab women, Shelah also underwent a transformation. Greatly enchanted with her finery, Shelah met Harold about an hour afterwards. The Lammikin was attired in yellow gauze, spangled with silver, her red locks hidden under a large veil of the same gaudy material.

"Am I not grand?—Like a queen!" exclaimed Shelah. "And are not these people kind to dress me like this! But oh, Mr. Hartley!" added the Lammikin, as she looked up with wondering admiration at Harold in his Oriental costume. "You are quite beautiful! You look like one of the angels in the book of Bible pictures! You want nothing but white wings! Do you think that they will grow?" asked the child.

The faintest of smiles rose to Harold's lips at the artless question. He thought, with a sigh, of the verse:

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away
and be at rest!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PROMISE.

"How beautiful the hour of early dawn,
When the first rays glance up the Eastern sky,
When the bright fingers of the fresh'ning morn
Draw back the veil of dark obscurity,
And give all Nature's beauties to the eye,
Her fairest scenes unfolding to the view;
The lark with buoyant pinion mounts on high,
And on the emerald lawn the pure soft dew
Sparkles with every beam which breaks the bright clouds
through.

"Thus on the night of ignorance and sin
The radiant morning of Conversion breaks,
A beam from heaven seems to shine within;
And, as the lark his earthly nest forsakes
And upward soars towards the source of light,—
From bonds of sin the soul enraptured breaks,
And—winged by Faith—springs on her upward flight
Till that clear day when Faith itself is lost in sight!"

A CHANGE, something like that described above, had come over the spirit of Ali, the Persian. The Amir had never been an enthusiastic follower of the False Prophet, and what Ali had heard and seen during his travels in various lands had extinguished any respect that he had felt for the Mahomedan faith. He had long suspected the Koran to be a tissue of lies palmed upon Arabian credulity by an impostor, a book unworthy of comparison with the Bible, which Ali had sometimes read in a cursory manner. But to leave hold of a false religion is a very different thing from grasping a true one. To extinguish smoky lamps is not a means of calling in the radiant day.

Ali, till he met a simple, true-hearted Christian, was an unbeliever as regarded the power of any faith to change the life. The Amir had been unfortunate in meeting with several nominal Christians, had shrewdly

compared their conduct with their creed, and rejected the latter because inconsistent with the former. Ali had, as many do, found a refuge against the shafts of conscience in carping criticism of others; he was not worse, so he thought, than many who believe themselves certain of heaven through the merits of One whose example they do not follow, whose commands they do not obey.

But Ali's eyes were now opened; he looked on himself as stained with sin, and saw in Christianity, such as the Hartleys had embraced, the only means of being saved from eternal condemnation. No longer the Persian listened to Robin's recitals from Scripture in the spirit of a critic; for Ali was thirsting for the water of life, and could not pause to comment on the form of the cup which held it. Robin was delighted, but not surprised, to find that his prayers had been heard, for had he not pleaded with One whom Scripture describes as the Hearer of prayer?

It was at night, during the last halt made before Djauf would be reached, that Ali confessed to Robin his own desire to become a Christian.

Robin's eyes sparkled with joy.

"I will accompany you and your brother to India as soon as it is possible to do so," said the Amir, "study your Scriptures thoroughly, and then receive baptism without delay."

The expressive face of Robin was suddenly shaded, as if by a doubt.

"How, do you not desire me to become a Christian?" asked the Persian quickly.

"I wish it intensely!" cried Robin.

"And have I not already given myself to the Saviour, has Christ not entered my heart?"

"Have you given yourself to Him out and out?" asked the youth. "If Christ have entered your heart are you ready to do His will in all things?"

"My future conduct will show it."

"But what of the past?" said the younger Hartley, looking on the ground as he spoke, for he felt pain in giving pain.

"The past cannot be recalled—you have said that all is forgiven."

"Yes—as far as regards God; but we must make what amends we can to man also. When Christ came to Zacchaeus, the publican received free salvation, but still he said, 'Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have done wrong to any man I restore him fourfold.'"

"I do not understand you, boy!" said Ali, and very deep grew the furrow on his brow. "I have taken one life, and I cannot restore it; God does not require an impossibility."

Robin was silent, he knew not how to express what was on his mind: but Ali was resolved to have an explanation.

"If you were in my place what would you do?" asked the Amir.

"I do not know what I should do, but I know what I should feel that I ought to do," replied Robin, with some reluctance.

"What might that be?" asked Ali, looking the young Englishman full in the face with his keen, piercing eyes.

Robin met the gaze as he made reply, "Go to my mother, entreat her forgiveness, and then give myself up to justice."

This was so contrary to any idea which had ever been entertained by the Oriental, that his first emotion was that of astonishment at the childish simplicity which could make so absurd a suggestion. However, Robin was evidently in earnest, the warm blood was mantling even to his brow, and he intuitively clenched his hand as if realising what an effort it would cost him, what courage he felt that it would require to do what he deemed to be right in so terrible a case.

Ali did not lose his temper, but his voice sounded harsh as, after a pause of some minutes, he expressed himself as follows:

"There is no justice—I mean according to English ideas—in Persia. If I became my own accuser, I should but be regarded as a fool. I should not be injured in life or limb, but every hanger on at a corrupt court would seize on the opportunity of robbing me of every piastre that I possess. I should be stripped of all that I have inherited, all that I have made by skilful speculations in jewels and horses since leaving Persia. I should simply be reduced to a penniless beggar; unless, indeed, by speaking out my opinion regarding Mahomet, I should be promoted to the rank of a martyr."

"But surely you should visit your mother?"

"It would be more tolerable to me to own myself a murderer in the palace of the Shah, than to face her whom I have bereaved of her favourite son!" exclaimed Ali. "I would rather enter the den of a lion than the presence of my mother!"

"Would you not enter the den of a lion if the Lord bade you do so?" asked the Knight of St. John.

The struggle in Ali's mind was only shown by the deepening shade on his face, and the slight convulsive movement of the lip. Then he demanded, "Does the Lord command me to go to the mother who cursed me."

"She would forgive you—"

"Never; she would trample me under foot!" interrupted Ali, passionately.

Robin would not, could not believe that any mother could act thus to a penitent son. The English youth had been brought up to feel uneasy until he had asked forgiveness of any one whom he had wronged. He could not imagine how it could be possible for a son to remain year after year under the wrath of a deeply injured mother without imploring her pardon.

"Even if she spurned you," said Robin, "if she refused to listen to you, at least you would have the satisfaction of feeling that you had done what you could."

This was as a new light on the dark pathway of the Persian Amir. That feeling would be a satisfaction, and to obtain it was worth some risk. But still Ali shrank back from so painful a test of obedience to his newly found Lord. There was again a pause of silence, and then the Persian said, "I would only go, if you, my young brother, would consent to go with me."

Such a condition startled Robin; it was almost equivalent to asking him for his freedom or life. He had never anticipated a request to go to Persia, and entirely alter the plans for his future career.

Yet it was not strange—nor even unreasonable—that Ali should desire a Christian companion, and it was important that one so young in the faith should have one. Robin did not stop to weigh consequences, any more than he had paused to reflect on the risk before plunging into the sea to rescue Shelah; holding out his hand to Ali, he cried, "Only set Harold and the others free, and I will go with you—wherever you will!"

Ali grasped the proffered hand, and the compact was silently sealed by that action; the Persian felt that the Englishman would never recall his plighted word. Ali quitted the tent to give orders, and left Robin Hartley to his reflections.

Very, very bitter were those reflections. Poor Robin's thoughts flowed somewhat as follows:—

"Oh! What have I done—what have I said? What a mad promise I have made! It was just like me; always blundering and doing the wrong thing! If I have not some one wiser than myself at my side I am perpetually playing the fool! What! When I have just succeeded in finding Harold, in the first joy of our embrace, must I say to him we only meet to part? I am going to a land which I never expected or wished to visit, with an acquaintance whom I met but a few days ago, one whose character I scarcely understand, and by no means altogether like! Go, Harold, go alone to our beloved father, and tell him that Robin has thrown away his freedom,

that he has sold himself to a stranger! And what has induced me to do so?—why have I acted the part of a madman, and sacrificed all my hopes of doing missionary work in India?"

Perhaps Robin's self-reproach was greater than the occasion required. Blundering zeal is sometimes wiser than calculating prudence. Robin's greatest error was that of giving himself no time for reflection, and acting without consideration and prayer. No important step should ever be taken by God's servants without first humbly asking the question, "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

MEETINGS AND GREETINGS.

ROBIN'S painful reflections were broken in upon by a medley of confused noises, first faintly heard in the distance, then coming nearer and nearer, until the whole air was filled with the beating of drums, the harsh sounds of Oriental music, the tramp of horses, the crack of guns fired off in sport, and the uproar of many voices breaking the silence of night.

Surprised at such sounds in the desert, Robin hastened outside the tent, and saw a cavalcade advancing towards the encampment, bearing many torches, which made darkness almost as clear as day. There was a string of camels, the foremost gay with trappings of scarlet, bearing aloft shrouded forms on which the eye of man must not gaze; the animals were connected with each other by a long rope passed through their nostrils, and were led by drivers who, with long switches in their hands, walked beside their camels. Robin admired the picturesque appearance of the bridal procession, for such it was, which had just accomplished the first stage of the journey from the city of Djauf. Little did the English youth guess who they were who travelled in that gay cavalcade.

Ali's party, already encamped by the wells, were by no means inclined to give place to the newly arrived, though much more numerous than themselves. There was great probability of a noisy dispute at least between the camel-drivers, which might end in strife and bloodshed. Scarcely had the head of the procession reached the encamping ground, ere the retainers of the respective noblemen began to engage in noisy wrangling regarding the place nearest to the wells.

Robin went forward to see what was going on. The youth had not gone many steps when he suddenly stopped short with an exclamation, his whole soul in his eyes,—looking like a man who beholds an apparition. Before him, in the yellow torch-light, stood Harold Hartley, clad in snowy Oriental garments, looking even more startled than himself, for Harold recognised in the form before him, dressed in Persian costume, the brother for whose supposed death he had so bitterly mourned! The pause was a very brief one, each of the Hartleys uttered the name of the other, and then the brothers were locked in such an embrace as might be given to a beloved one newly raised from the dead.

Entirely absorbed in the delight of the meeting, neither of the Hartleys even heard the shrill voice of Lammikin calling down from a camel's height, "Oh! There is Robin at last!"

"How is this, Harold? How came you here?" exclaimed Robin, drawing back a step to look in delighted wonder on his brother, so strangely transformed.

"I am a slave; no free Englishman," was Harold's reply.

"But not another hour shall you remain in slavery!" exclaimed his brother, and Robin darted away to find Ali, whom he met with the joyful exclamation, "He is found! Harold is found!"

"Where is he?" asked the Persian Amir.

"Here, close by; you will buy him, you will free him," was the excited reply. "Or let me be a slave in his place!"

"I can neither buy nor free your brother without the consent of his master," said Ali, who foresaw difficulties which had not occurred to the eager Robin. "I promise to do what I can, but I cannot ensure success. Present my salaams, the Amir Ali's salaams to your lord," said the Persian in a tone of command to one of the bridal train.

"My lord is yonder; he has just dismounted," said the retainer, with difficulty making his reply heard above the noises around.

Ali strides towards the indicated spot, and approaches the splendidly attired bridegroom, whose back is turned towards him; but who turns round suddenly to confront the stranger? Why do the Amir's knees tremble, why does his face assume so ghastly a hue? Is it joy or terror that is stamped on a countenance usually so stoically calm? Faiz ul Din stands before him. Has the grave given up the dead?

The recognition is mutual; it is no recognition of fraternal love. With fierce countenance and hand on sword hilt, the Persian bridegroom faces the man who once stabbed him. Very different indeed is the meeting between the Oriental brothers from that between the Hartleys.

There was the silence of surprise; but not for long. Ali looked upon one whom he had wronged, one whose blood he had shed, one to whom reparation should be made and vengeance offered. The Amir drew his dagger, held its hilt towards his brother, and bared his own breast. "Faiz ul Din! Strike if thou wilt; I resist not!" he said.

Faiz ul Din haughtily waved his hand. "We strike not the unresisting," he said. "I take no revenge; for our mother's dying charge was that I should pardon thee, O Ali, as she had done."



"With fierce countenance, and hand on sword-hilt, the Persian bridegroom faces the man who once stabbed him."—p. 214.

**With fierce countenance, and hand on sword hilt,
the Persian bridegroom faces the man who once stabbed him.**

"My mother dead!" exclaimed the Amir.

All's evident grief, intensified by remorse, did more than anything else to soften the resentment felt by Faiz ul Din, who, whatever he might be as a brother, was an affectionate son. For their mother's sake, he was willing to pass a sponge over the past, and make his own bridal festivities an excuse for even welcoming the presence of his only brother.

At command of Faiz ul Din, a magnificent tent was pitched, and the camel-drivers stopped their noisy disputes at the thought of the coming feast, of which all would partake together. Preparing the banquet was now the order of the night as regarded those without the tent, while within it, the Persian Amirs sat down to smoke their narghillahs and partake together of a repast. Robin pressed into the tent; he could let nothing make Ali forget his promise concerning Harold. The Persian was reminded of it by Robin's anxious pleading face before a word was spoken, and turned towards his own newly found brother.

"It is strange, O Faiz ul Din," said Ali, "that I should have at once to ask a favour of him whom I have wronged; yet so it is, for I am bound by a promise. This Feringhee," the Persian glanced towards Robin as he spoke, "has saved my life, and I have vowed to deliver his brother from bonds. That brother is one of your slaves, but he cannot have been so for long. Will you exchange him for my favourite steed, a pure Nejdean, the fleetest and finest to be found in Arabia?"

"My slave?" said Faiz ul Din. "Oh, yes, I remember, the handsome white one whom I received yesterday as a gift from my father-in-law, with a little Feringhee child. Take them both, my brother," continued the generous Persian; "I require neither them nor thy steed."

Ali translated the gracious words to Robin, after expressing his sense of his brother's kindness by pressing his hand on his own heart.

Robin overjoyed, darted off to bear the good tidings to Harold.

Faiz ul Din then inquired of Ali why he had deemed him dead, and had taken no means to ascertain whether the blow were fatal or not.

"It is not every stroke that slays," he observed.

"It was Hassan who told me that thy wound was mortal, and that our mother had vowed never to forgive him who had caused thy death."

"The lying slave!" exclaimed Faiz ul Din. "Brother, thou hast asked one favour of me, grant me one in return: Give that villain the bastinado."

"He is beyond our reach," replied Ali, and he pointed significantly to the ground.

"One villain the less on earth," was Faiz ul Din's phlegmatic remark.

The Persian brothers did not remain long together, or their renewed union might not have lasted long. Faiz ul Din showed neither surprise nor regret when Ali informed him that he himself was going for a second time to India, where he was likely to remain long, perhaps to the end of his life. Faiz ul Din looked upon Ali rather as a rival, than as his nearest living relative. The younger brother was willing that the elder one should go wherever he listed, so that he returned not to Persia.

It was not convenient that the two caravans should encamp at the same spot, as renewed quarrels between the retainers would be almost certain to ensue. Faiz ul Din was secretly glad when Ali gave orders to his followers to renew their march, though from courtesy, he remonstrated against such a speedy departure. The Amir was not now going towards Djauf, but to the south-west, towards the Red Sea, the wants of his party being supplied by the generosity of Faiz ul Din. The course of the two Persian brothers would be in different directions, and their paths were never likely to cross each other again.

Yet, brief as their meeting had been, it had removed a great burden from the mind of the elder; and it was with something like affection that Ali gave to Faiz ul Din a parting embrace. Firdosi remained behind as a fraternal gift.

"How wondrously has my way been marked out for me," said Ali to Robin, as soon as the parting was over. "Had I not met you, I should never have embraced the religion of Christ. Had you not urged me to go to Djauf to release your brother, I should never have known that my own still breathed; I should have gone to my grave with the stain of blood on my soul."

"Not so," replied Robin; "you would have learned the safety of Faiz ul Din when you arrived in Persia. Do you not now rejoice that you had resolved on making a painful sacrifice in obedience to God. Like Abraham

you were spared the sacrifice after you had surrendered your own will and were ready to obey a difficult command, let obedience cost what it might."

"Now let me exchange words with your Harold," said Ali; "he looks a brother to be proud of, but—" the jealous nature would assert itself still—"he must not divide you from me."

"No!" exclaimed Robin warmly. "You will but have two brothers instead of one. Harold owes to your kindness his freedom, as I owe to your mercy my life. Harold, come here!" cried Robin. "This brave Persian has delivered us both!"

"And you, my young brother, have brought me to Christ!" cried Ali.

"Are you a Christian?" exclaimed Harold with joyful surprise.

"I was an unbeliever—an outcast—a hopeless wanderer in darkness," replied Ali, "till my English brother showed me that God is love and God is light, and that in light and love His likeness is borne by His servants even on earth."

Ali mounted a horse and rode on, but Robin declined riding the steed which, by the Amir's command, was brought to him by an attendant.

"Oh, Harold, let us walk together, and talk over all that has happened; one can't converse comfortably when one is in the saddle and the other on the back of a camel!" exclaimed Robin, locking his arm in that of his brother. "It is so delightful to march under the light of the stars; and I am so happy that I feel as if, with you at my side, I could walk on for ever!"

"We will march on a little apart from the rest," said Harold, who fully shared Robin's enjoyment, though he was less vehement in its expression.

"We cannot lose the caravan, even if no light were carried," observed Robin; "for though the camels' tread makes no sound, the horses and men give out enough noise to guide us, even though the night were darker. There is Lammikin up yonder, singing a song in her own honour; but I miss Miss Petty's familiar voice, which one usually heard first of all."

"Poor Miss Petty's voice will never be heard again!" said Harold. "Her form lies under Arabian sand."

"Like that of our saintly friend!" exclaimed Robin, who had already told Harold of Mrs. Evendale's peaceful departure. "Poor Miss Petty!" he added with genuine pity. "I never thought of her being taken so soon. I wish that I had shown her more kindness whilst she was with us!"

"And I wish that I had been less remiss in speaking to her as a minister of the Gospel ought to speak," said Harold, with self-reproach. "It is strange how we often most neglect those with whom we are brought into most constant contact; it is far easier to preach a stirring sermon to hundreds than closely to apply its lessons to one. Perhaps in nothing more than in our familiar intercourse with common acquaintances shall we, upon our death-beds, have cause to cry, like Bishop Usher, 'Lord, forgive me my sins, specially my sins of omission!'"

"And now I have a confession to make to you, Harold," said Robin. "I do not know what you will think of my conduct, but I'll make a clean breast at once, as befits a Knight of St. John. If we had not, most happily, met with Faiz ul Din in this desert, what think you that I had bound myself in honour to do?"

"I'm dull at guessing riddles," replied Harold. "I cannot imagine what you had to do with Faiz ul Din, before you had even set eyes upon him."

"Ali thought that he had killed his brother in a quarrel some years ago," said Robin, "and my poor friend had not the courage to go back to Persia, face his mother's anger, and ask her forgiveness. I urged him to go—I thought that it was his duty to do so. Did I do right, Harold, in pressing this point?"

"As far as you have told me the circumstances, I should think that you did right," replied Harold.

"But the Persian could not consent to return to his country unless I agreed to go with him," said Robin. "So I made a hasty promise one minute, and repented of it the next. I made Ali a promise the fulfilment of which

would have separated me from you, from our father, from the work in which I long to engage. What can you think of me, Harold?"

"I think that you acted very much like—like Robin Hartley," replied Harold smiling, but it was too dark for the smile to be seen.

"That is to say, a foolish, thoughtless fellow, who will grow grey before he learns to grow wise! You should have had a more sensible brother."

"I'm very well contented with my lot, dear old boy!" laughed Harold; and he thought to himself, "I would not exchange my honest true-hearted Robin for any other brother in the world!"

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

IT is unnecessary to detail the incidents in a rather monotonous journey, for one made with camels is necessarily slow. The desert wandering was not even broken in upon by an attack from Bedouin Arabs, though a sharp look-out was kept against them. Yet, though slow, neither the Hartley brothers nor Ali found the journey dull. Long interesting conversations beguiled the way, religion being the most frequent topic. Robin rejoiced that the Persian had now beside him one so far better able to instruct him in spiritual matters than he himself ever had been. Robin rather wondered how it could be that though Ali held the deepest converse with Harold, he should evidently retain the strongest affection for the youth whom he first had known.

Shelah, perched on her camel, enlivened the way by her bird-like songs. The child lived much more in the present than in either the future or

the past. She looked out for ostriches, which she never saw, and her greatest disappointment was that of not finding one of their eggs on the sands.

One day Shelah, who was in advance, shouted so loudly and so gleefully, clapping her hands as she did so, that she attracted the attention of Robin.

"What is it Lammikin,—what are you looking at? Another mirage?" he inquired.

"The sea! The sea!" cried the child, with delight.

It was no mirage this time. Again the travellers were to behold the rolling waves breaking on the Arabian shore, and hear the sound of the waters which told of freedom! Impatiently the cavalcade pressed on; Shelah longed to jump down and run, as if her little bare feet could outstrip the slow stride of the camel.

Lammikin was still full of energy and spirit; an energy which in future life was to make her foremost in good works, as when a child she had been in mischief; a spirit which was to enable her to laugh at difficulties and overcome them. There is many a sweet kernel hidden in a rough unattractive shell, and the wild little Irish girl was to develop into the noble woman, an active friend of missions, especially of that one in which the Hartleys were engaged.

It was some little time before a passage could be secured in a vessel that would bear the party across the Red Sea. The days which intervened before embarkation were partly employed by Ali in selling off his horses and camels, which he parted with at a considerable loss.

"Only ten pieces of silver for that magnificent dromedary!" exclaimed Robin, as he saw an Arab, well satisfied with his bargain, lead away the creature on which his "nest" had been swung. "I fear, Amir, that you have suffered no small loss from your journey to Arabia."

"If I weigh my gains against my losses, the latter will show in the balance as the down on the feather, or the bubble on the stream," replied

Ali, with a smile not cynical, but almost as bright as Robin's. "I have no longer to fly from self, for self is surrendered to Christ, and I have found in Him what is worth living for—and dying for, as you said to me once. The dark stagnant pool now reflects the blue sky, and from it, instead of the miasma of remorse, rises the exhalation of praise. The burden which made life a weariness is laid down; the shadow which darkened it has passed away. Blessed be the day when I set my foot in Arabia; thrice blessed that in which I first met with a Christian friend!"

"We too have cause to be thankful that we were led hither," observed Harold, who had joined his companions. "And yet how mysterious at first seemed that leading; of how bitter a cup we brothers had to drink! Had we known beforehand what we had to endure in Arabia, we might have looked forward with cowardly dread to what we now look back upon with humble thanksgiving."

"Yes, we have had strange adventures in this land which we are now quitting," exclaimed Robin. "I can scarcely believe that not a month has elapsed since the day when we landed in Arabia, to while away, as we thought, but one or two hours! Half a life-time's experience seems to have been crowded into a few weeks. Danger, suffering, hunger, thirst, loss of friends, of freedom, of all that could make life pleasant, and yet light from Heaven brightening, and love from Heaven sweetening all!"

"In Arabia we have kept our night of watching beside our armour," said Harold, "and now the dawn of morning bids us put it on."

"Yes," cried Robin, "for our life's work is still before us! May God enable us to quit ourselves in the Mission battle-field as faithful bearers of the stainless Cross,—as true and fearless Knights of St. John."

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HARTLEY
BROTHERS : OR THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN ***

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