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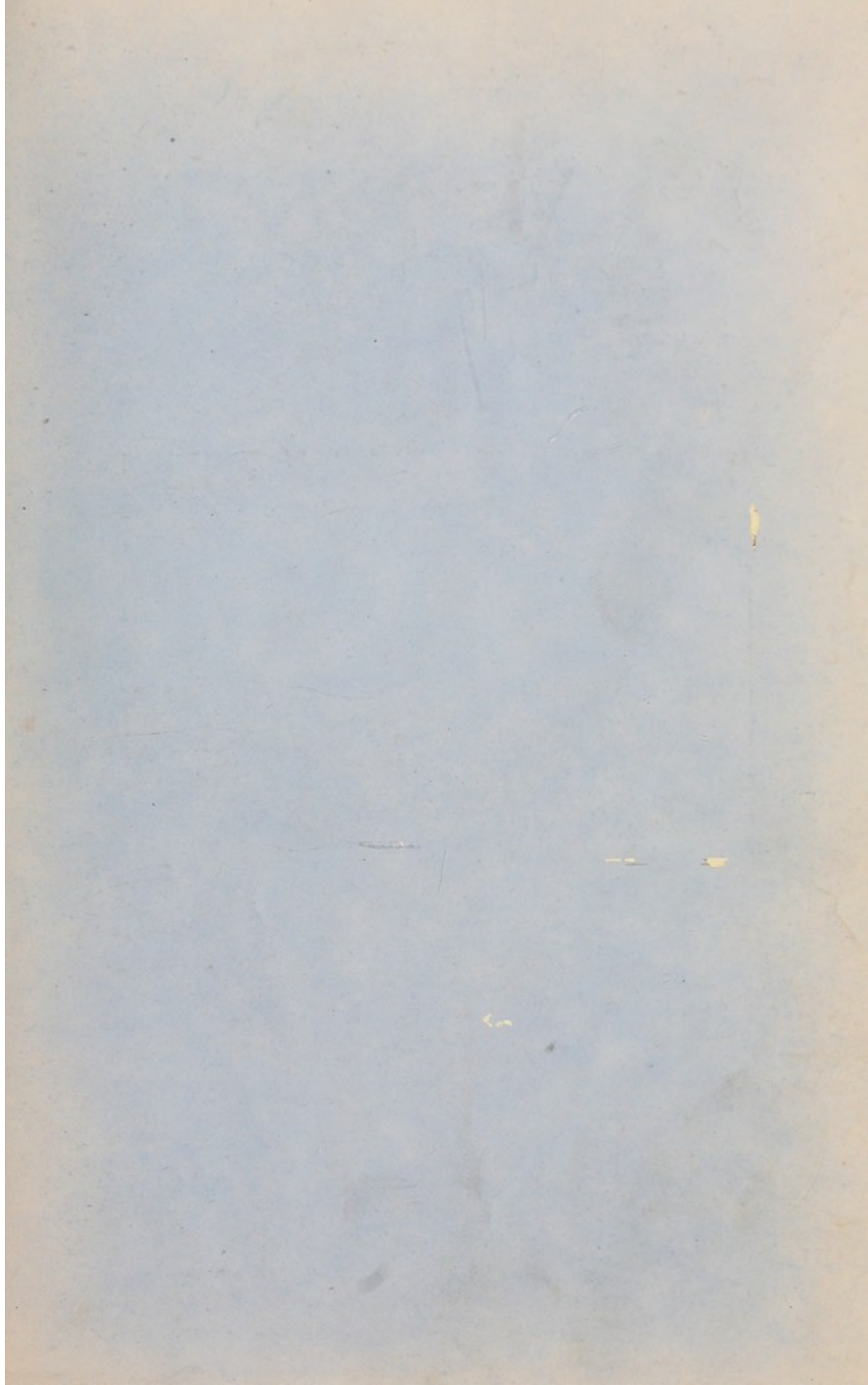
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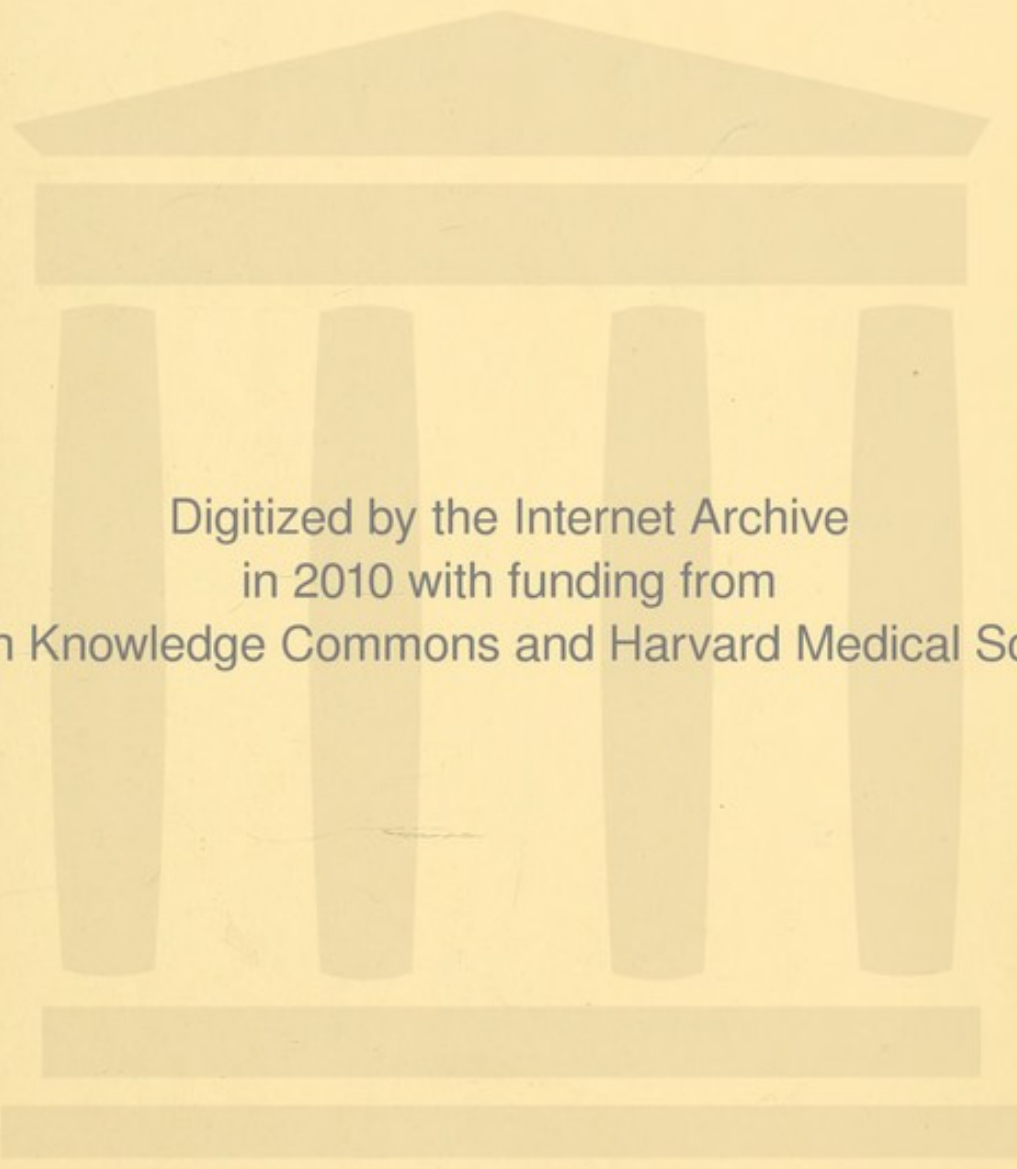
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G H A R D A I A ;

OR,

NINETY DAYS AMONG THE B'NI MOZAB:

ADVENTURES IN THE OASIS OF THE DESERT OF

SAHARA.

BY

G. NAPHEGYI, M.D., A.M.,

AUTHOR OF THE "ALBUM OF LANGUAGE," "AMONG THE ARABS," "THE CAUSE OF
THE YELLOW FEVER," "HISTORY OF HUNGARY," ETC.

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TO
PROFESSOR BUGAT PAL, M.D.,

DEAN OF THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PESTH, HUNGARY.

TLEMCEH, ALGIERS, —, 184—

SIR:—

Upon leaving the University of Pesth, and while bidding you farewell, I promised, you may remember, to write to you as soon as I had landed on the shores of the New World: you will therefore, it is probable, be surprised to receive this letter, coming as it does from the boundaries of Morocco.

I am now among the B'ni Mozab, on my way to the great oasis of the Sahara; and this my first letter to you, announcing my whereabouts, is at the same time a letter of adieu; for it is impossible to say when I shall again have the opportunity to write to you.

Should you see fit to favor me with a few lines, you will please address them to the care of Messrs. R——s & Co., Morocco; for it is my intention, upon my return from the Sahara, to pass through that place.

As briefly as possible I shall explain to you how I fell

in with the tribe of Arabs with whom I am now about to journey to the Great Desert.

During my sojourn in this city, I became acquainted with the former Sapa-tapa of Abd-el-Kader, a German renegade by the name of Ibrahim. This man, a blacksmith by trade, has risen to a position which no foreigner before him has ever been able to attain in Algeria. He was not only the confidant of the Emir when in the zenith of his glory, but he is also his constant and trustworthy friend in misfortune. He administers the property of the Emir; and it is currently believed that to him Abd-el-Kader intrusted his treasures when taken captive by the French.

For six years before Abd-el-Kader was sent to France, he had had in custody, as a hostage, the youngest daughter of Mussa-el-Darkui, a powerful desert chief. This chief, being envious of the vast influence of the Emir, had waged war against him and been disastrously defeated, his wives and baggage falling into the hands of the victor. Abd-el-Kader, however, magnanimously released his female prisoners, with the exception of the youngest daughter of Mussa, and her slave, a beautiful girl, who had but a short time before been purchased by the desert chief in Morocco.

Upon leaving his native soil, the Emir intrusted these women to the care of the renegade Ibrahim, in whose charge they remained until a short time ago, when it was determined that they should be restored to their kindred.

After a proper amount of negotiation, the present Taleb of Ghardaia, the son of Mussa-el-Darkui, arrived at Tlemcen, with a numerous retinue, to receive from Ibrahim his sister and her slave, and convey them to his home in the great oasis of the Desert.

The hostages, having experienced nothing but kindness at the hands of Ibrahim, could view him in no other light than that of a friend; for his bearing towards them had ever been that of a fond parent.

At the time of their capture, the two girls were not more than fourteen years of age. Their helpless condition had appealed to all that was noble in Ibrahim's heart; and he had manifested towards them a solicitude as tender as that of a devoted father, prompted solely by the feeling which is stirred in every generous bosom at the sight of youthful innocence deprived of its natural protectors, and which finds its highest reward in the consciousness of having been able to lighten in some degree the misfortunes of a fellow-being.

The Taleb recognized to its full extent the disinterested kindness of Ibrahim, and was anxious to testify his gratitude in some fitting manner; but the sole favor that the latter required of him was that he should take me under his protection during my stay in the Sahara,—no very difficult task for the desert chief, but a matter of prime importance to my humble self.

The chief having given a cordial assent to my friend's request, I have resolved to place myself in his hands and journey with him to the oasis.

The length of my stay in the Sahara I cannot at present determine; but, as my temperament, although strongly tinged with a love of adventure, inclines me to the society of civilized men rather than to that of barbarians, I may confidently say to you, "*Au revoir bientôt.*"

With profound respect, Professor,

I subscribe myself

Your affectionate friend and

former pupil,

G. NAPHEGYI.

G H A R D A I A.

CHAPTER I.

THE CARAVAN EN MARCHE.

THE morning was cool and refreshing. The purple and golden hues of the eastern sky announced the approach of the orb of day. The long line of mountains, the verdant earth, the duars of the Arabs, the tents of the nomad Bedouins, the herds of camels and flocks of sheep, all enveloped in the rose-tinted mist of the morning, constituted a picture of surpassing beauty, at which it seemed to me I could have gazed for hours without weariness.

Our caravan was already on the march; and as I saw before me the long row of camels, with the fierce-looking Arabs in their train, before my mental vision rose the picture I had oft beheld in childhood of a caravan of pilgrims bound for Mecca. I remembered how I had then yearned to behold for myself the distant, mysterious East, little dreaming that the time was to come when I should

be treading the burning sands of Africa on my way to the heart of the Desert. For a few minutes my thoughts reverted to the peaceful days of childhood in my far-away home, and the emotions excited by the comparison of the past with the present were tinged with regret for wasted opportunities and with anxiety for the future; but soon my buoyant nature reasserted itself, and I was once more the light-hearted adventurer, ready to adapt myself to whatever fate might have in store for me.

In front of the caravan rode three guides, on swift dromedaries. They were young men, not more than thirty years of age, who had already frequently traversed that route, sometimes on their own account with the products of the oasis to be exchanged for those of Morocco and Tripoli, sometimes in their present capacity of guides. They were natives of Tsebit, and, in gratitude for some former services of the Taleb, had volunteered to accompany him on his present journey. The eldest had been with Mussa-el-Darkui on his disastrous expedition against Abd-el-Kader, and to him the desert chief was indebted for his subsequent safety; for after the battle, in which the troops of the Emir were victorious, Mussa and the remnant of his force were conducted to the gates of the desert by his guide, who, having a thorough knowledge of the mountain-passes, was enabled to lead the flying Arabs by a way which precluded pursuit on the part of the victor.

Behind the three guides followed about twenty Arabs or Mozabites, each mounted on a camel and armed with a gun of French manufacture. They were dark, fierce-looking men, the deeply-scarred faces of many of them bearing ample testimony to the nature of the contests in which they had at one time or other been engaged.

These men constituted the advance-guard of the caravan. Immediately behind them followed the equipage-train, consisting of a number of camels and dromedaries carrying the baggage, together with some Mozabite women. On all journeys of this kind it is the duty of the women, at every halt for the night, to attend to the preparation of the evening meal.

The women accompanying our caravan were, however, far from interesting; and even if I had never before seen a Moorish or Arab female, the external appearance of these would have failed to excite my curiosity. They were packed among the furniture on the camels' backs, giving signs of life only when the animals stopped to be unloaded for the night.

By the side of the baggage-camels walked several Soudan negroes. These were the drivers, whose duty it is to load the camels in the morning, walk at their side during the march, unload them in the evening, and watch them while at pasture. These negro camel-drivers lead a wretched life; for, in addition to their hard work, their toilsome journey-

ings through the sand by the side of the animals they are never allowed to mount, and their scanty food, they find very little time for repose after the fatigues of the day. Should weariness or sickness overpower them, so as to render them unable to keep up with the caravan, their doom is sealed: the poor creatures are left alone in the desert, and die of starvation, all that remains of them in a short time being the bleached skeletons, the flesh having been devoured by the jackals and hyenas. These sad memorials are found scattered all along the course of travel in the desert, and serve the purpose to which milestones are applied in civilized countries. Nor are the camel-drivers the only ones liable to this fate: any traveller who, from whatever cause, falls back and loses sight of the caravan, is very likely to find his last resting-place on the burning sands of the Sahara.

Frequently small mounds of bones—both of the human species and of the lower orders of animals—are found piled up at regular intervals, placed there by some tribe or caravan to serve as landmarks, or to indicate the route to or distance from a certain pasture or watering-place. Often a skull or hip-bone is met with, bearing in red an Arabic inscription, giving the name of the chief of an Arab or Bedouin tribe, with the date of their passing the spot, the name of the place whence they came, and that of their destination.

After the baggage-animals followed ten mounted

camels, whose riders, all young, resolute-looking men, were armed with long muskets and seemed to be in readiness to repel any attack on the part of the wandering hordes of the desert.

Not very far from these, mounted on dromedaries, rode four Arabs, near relations of the Taleb; while immediately behind them came the most interesting part of the caravan. This was a litter, carried by two camels, one in front and one behind. The litter itself very much resembled a comfortable European bedstead, and the breeze which now and then stirred the curtains that surrounded it disclosed the presence of a woman.

Close to the camels that bore the litter walked a Soudan negro, whose duty it was to watch every step; while at its side, mounted on a splendid dromedary, rode the Taleb of Ghardaia, the chief of the caravan. On the opposite side of the litter was another camel, with a richly-ornamented covering, bearing on its back a sort of canopy, the curtains of which hung loosely down and by their constant motion served to form a breeze to fan the occupant. This occupant was Zelma, the slave of Deborah.

At a respectful distance behind these three followed about fifty armed Arabs, mounted on dromedaries. In their midst they led two horses,—the only ones in the caravan. These were a present from Madame Ibrahim to Deborah. Knowing the Arab girl's passion for equestrianism, her friend

had provided these for her special use when far away from civilized life. But this was not the only gift by which the wife of Ibrahim had manifested her affection. All such articles as would serve in some slight degree to compensate for the absence of that society to which Deborah had been accustomed at Tlemcen—a set of furniture of French workmanship, the toilet articles so necessary to the comfort of a beautiful woman, a small library of choice French novels, dresses such as are worn by European ladies, in fact, whatever would be required to transform a desert-tent into a fashionable European boudoir—had been provided by the thoughtful friendship of Madame Ibrahim.

Our fifty camels, in addition to this outfit, carried many articles which the brother of Deborah had bought for her comfort. Her wondrous beauty, her grace and education, were sufficient to make her brother proud of her; and he evidently felt that he had a powerful tool in his hands which sooner or later he might use to his or her advantage among his own people. From the moment that this precious charge was placed in his hands, he watched over her with an argus eye, riding constantly at her side, ministering to all her wants in person, and seemingly jealous even of the friendship she manifested for her companion the slave Zelma.

After the baggage-camels came the herds of sheep and goats, behind which followed about twenty

Mozabites, who formed the rear-guard, and whose duty it was to bring up the stragglers and stray camels. The only persons not in some way connected with the Taleb were myself and my servant Yussuf, who constantly rode by my side, and who was the only one with whom up to this time I had exchanged more than a dozen words.

CHAPTER II.

THE B'NI MOZAB.

THE early history of the most important of the inhabitants of the Sahara, the B'ni Mozab, is veiled in the mist of tradition. Herodotus, Sallust, Pliny, and Dr. Shaw all differ in regard to the antiquity of this race. The first-named writer divides the inhabitants of Africa into four races, and calls the Libyans and Ethiopians the aboriginal races, while the Phœnicians and Greeks he considers as foreign settlers, thus, apparently, forgetting the principal race, the Arab, to which belongs the entire nomad population of Northern Africa.

The Gœtuli are placed by Sallust, more correctly, in the southern portion of the Sahara; while Pliny and Ptolemy rank the Libyans of Herodotus among the Berbers or Kabyls, the Mozab, Waregla, and the inhabitants of the Wed R'hin chain of the oasis. Still, the Mozab are very distinct from the Kabyls, not only in language, but in manners, customs, and dress.

The Kabyls, it is now generally believed, are descendants of the ancient Numidians, who were driven into the mountain-fastnesses by successive

conquests. They are in general much taller than the B'ni Mozab; their lips are not so thick, their cheek-bones are more prominent, their eyes are more closely set, and the nose is larger and more aquiline.

While among the B'ni Mozab, I heard from themselves several theories as to their ancestry. Some think they are the descendants of a Berber sect of the Atlas, who separated from their parental stem on account of a schism from the faith of Mohammed, and settled in the Sahara, in a region rendered impregnable by its isolation and barrenness.

The Jewish historians say that the B'ni Mozab are lineal descendants of the Biblical Moabites, of whom the greater part migrated to the west, and that they speak a dialect of the Hebrew. To me, however, their language seemed far more like a corrupted Arabic than like Hebrew.

Others affirm that the name of their patriarch was Messeb, the brother of Hammam, and the fourteenth in succession from Noah. They assert, also, that the Mozabites came originally from the north-east coast of the Red Sea, but were obliged to leave Arabia on account of the hostility of the Wahabees.

They do not claim that their patriarch was the nephew of Abraham, but merely that he was distantly related to him. The name of his father, they say, was Jabir ben nou Dzidin; *i e.* "the light of the faith."

During the early years of their history, they were constantly at war with the aborigines of Northern Africa, whom they designated as the Hharrar and Hh'mein; but they are unable to give any accurate data of their settlement. All that seems certain is that for several centuries they remained in Upper Egypt, gradually migrating thence to Morocco.

At the time of their emigration, one portion settled in the island of Djerbi, lying between Tunis and Tripoli; and here they are still to be found in small numbers. Another portion pushed on to the frontiers of Oran and Morocco, where they formed a permanent settlement under a king named Lucian Fleah, whom they called "Baba," from the Hebrew "Abba" ("father"), and whose dynasty ruled for several generations.

"Baba" among the present B'ni Mozab is equivalent to the "Sidi" of the Arabs, or the "Cid" of the old Spanish chroniclers.

We begin to have positive dates concerning the B'ni Mozab about the year 970, when they first settled at Waregla and to the south of the desert country. They did not, however, remain long at that place; for the aboriginal Wareglans, their former allies, actuated by religious prejudice and sectarian jealousy, drove them into exile once more, and again they became nomads.

For many years after this, they searched in various directions for a thoroughly isolated country,

where they might be secure against molestation by their enemies. After many wanderings, they discovered a spring in the ravine now known by the name of Wed M'zab, and there they settled, busying themselves at once in sinking wells and planting date-trees.

Hitherto they had been living in duars and tents; and it was not until the year 1012, Hegira 402, that El Alf, the first city, was founded. The present city of Ghardaia came into existence some forty years afterwards.

Here they have remained unmolested for nearly eight hundred and fifty years,—a result due partly to the isolation and barrenness of that part of the desert which they inhabit, partly to the rugged character of the mountains which form natural breastworks to protect them against the attacks of Arab *gourns*, or cavalry.

The B'ni Mozab, although Mohammedans, are held in detestation by the Arabs, on account of their religious schism, the difference being in the *semmâa*, or religious practice.

In their discipline they are very strict: all sin is held in detestation; and no man who has died in a state of sin can hope to be pardoned hereafter.

Like the Jews, they wear a peculiar dress for prayer. Every thing that savors of luxury or superfluity is forbidden; whence, probably, their prohibition of tobacco, snuff, and coffee.

By the rest of the tribes that populate Africa,

the B'ni Mozab are termed Khramsia, or the fifths, on account of their belonging to the sect of the assassin of Ali.

Among the Mozabites there is no Khouan, or religious order; nor do they tolerate the presence of dervishes. They have, however, an established order of "Talba," or priesthood, whose life is very austere, and whose sole support comes from the scanty revenues of their mosques.

In general, the character of the people is mild and gentle, entirely distinct from that of the Arabs; nor have they any of the Ishmaelite in face, habit, or language.

They resemble the Jews much more closely, but still are very different from them in many respects. They are fruit-buyers and fruit-sellers, live quietly, profess a dislike to Bedouin wildness, are unimpassioned, calculating, money-loving, shrewd, and careful.

The use of coffee and tobacco is forbidden by their creed; but they never refuse it when offered to them by a stranger, nor will they decline to smoke the pipe when they are not likely to be detected.

They are averse to warfare, never carrying arms except when on the highway, and then only for self-defence.

The Mozabites travel everywhere, penetrating to the remotest parts of the desert, and being met with from Timbuctoo to Asia Minor, serving in all

sorts of capacities, connected with every caravan in Africa, from its central and unknown regions to Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Egypt.

Their form of government is republican, with a considerable infusion of theocracy. Their young men are nearly all abroad, but almost invariably return with a competency in their old age to their barren but cherished native home.

In their social intercourse they are cold and reserved. Integrity is the characteristic feature of their commerce, truthfulness marks their conversation, and morality their domestic life.

What has here been said about the B'ni Mozab will suffice to give the reader a superficial acquaintance with the people in whose company I was travelling. Farther on in my narrative an opportunity will be afforded to see more of them, their government, social life, and domestic habits.

CHAPTER III.

THE GATE OF THE DESERT.

WE had already travelled for two days, and nothing worthy of note had occurred. The journey was any thing but agreeable. My intercourse thus far with my fellow-travellers had been so limited that I could form no definite opinion regarding them. They answered all my questions politely, and at every resting-place gave me my ration of meat, water, and kuskuska in such abundance that my boy Yussuf could afford to earn a reputation for generosity by distributing the remainder among the half-starved negroes. The caravan resembled a funeral procession much more than it did the triumphal march which it really was.

During these two days of our journey the Taleb had hardly exchanged a word with me; while as to those under his charge, Deborah and Zelma, I had not more than caught a glimpse of them. I was thus as thoroughly isolated as if I had been travelling alone, having no one to talk to but my boy Yussuf.

Among those composing our retinue was one whom I omitted to mention in my detailed state-

ment of the members of the caravan, in the former chapter. This was Juanette, the servant-maid of Deborah, who for nearly three years had been attached to her household. She was born in Algiers, of French parents, and therefore was looked upon as a European; so that she and I were the only persons in the caravan who did not belong to the Mozabite tribe. My acquaintance with her commenced on this day, as, while she was preparing the meals for Deborah, she had sent me, by Yussuf, a portion of the dainties intended for her mistress; for which mark of attention I felt deeply grateful.

The reader may feel tempted to smile when I state that this French girl, the servant of Deborah,—a person without any education and with very few personal attractions,—became, during this monotonous journey in the desert, my most confidential friend. Nay, to her I was indebted on one occasion for the preservation of my life, on my journey from Ghardaia to Morocco.

It was, as I have said, the second day of our journey. The country through which we were passing was very slightly cultivated, although here and there was to be found a straggling settlement, where the land seemed hardly to repay the labor of the husbandman.

On the road which we traversed, leading towards the northwest, we met with but two villages, which were inhabited chiefly by Arabs, a few Spaniards constituting the residue of the popula-

tion. Besides these, we saw some isolated houses; and in the distance I could discern indications of European settlements. At the time of my journey, the conquest having been so recent, foreign emigration had made very little progress in the vicinity of Tlemcen.

On our first day's journey we pitched our tents at about eleven o'clock, the Taleb having resolved to travel in the morning, rest during the scorching heat of the day, and resume the march when the shades of evening had rendered the air cool and refreshing.

During the halt, which lasted from eleven A.M. till five P.M., I spent some hours in rambling about the hills in the neighborhood of our camp, being partially protected from the burning rays of the sun by the dwarf-palm and lentisk, which grows to the height of six feet.

Among the windings of these hills I came upon a small Arab village. The gumbis were all of straw, and the soil around seemed to be cultivated in patches of from two to three acres. The inhabitants of this village suffered great inconvenience from the ravages of the wild boars, which, making their lairs in the uncleared brushwood, generally destroyed their crops while green.

As it was a Friday, I had the opportunity of witnessing a grand wild-boar hunt. This day is the Sabbath of the Arab, and the villagers had, on this occasion, dedicated it to the chase.

Having formed a cordon of beaters, they drove the boars into a gradually decreasing space, until finally the animals broke cover, and afforded the chance of a shot to those who had come provided with firearms. During the few hours that I witnessed the sport, six wild boars were killed.

The Arab hunters do not eat the flesh of this animal: therefore the product of the day's hunt was sold to the European settlers in the neighborhood. I purchased a couple of steaks, which I conveyed to my tent, in anticipation of a dainty supper, superintending the culinary operation in person. Although my appetite was somewhat sharpened after my day's ramble, my hopes were doomed to disappointment, owing partly to the want of proper ingredients wherewith to spice my repast, and partly to the extreme toughness of the flesh, which I found to be similar in all respects to that of the European boar.

That night I slept well: my bedstead, which served me during my entire journey, was of my own invention, prompted thereto by stern necessity. I had never before shown much mechanical talent; but I think I may say that this contrivance displayed considerable ingenuity.

Some four years later, I found a similar invention, very slightly modified, patented in the United States. Ere leaving Tlemcen, I had devoted considerable thought and time to the preparation of this substitute for the bedstead of civilized countries;

for, although I could endure fatigue, I had found that, in travelling, a comfortable night's rest was absolutely required to enable me to endure the wear and tear of the following day.

I shall endeavor to give my reader an idea of this my first attempt at mechanical construction. The framework of the bedstead consisted of eight poles, four of which formed the posts, while the remaining four, placed transversely, served as braces. These were all cut from a wood as hard as *lignum-vitæ*, and, although very slight in appearance, were strong enough to support my weight. Upon these transverse poles was stretched a tanned hide attached by rings, somewhat in the manner of a hammock. The posts passed through glass saucers placed midway between the transverse poles and the floor, and so constructed as to hold water, with which they were filled when the bedstead was in use, to prevent the white ants or other insects from crawling up and disturbing my rest. The whole apparatus could be arranged in five minutes, and in as short a space of time be again rolled up, strapped and packed in readiness for the march. The four posts served also to support the curtain, which was made of German chintz; and I can assure my readers that on this simply-constructed bedstead I slept more soundly and comfortably in the Sahara than ever I did in after-years on the luxurious couches of the sumptuous hotels of Europe and America.

On the morning of the second day of our journey, I rose early, and went, with a party of the B'ni Mozab, to a little spring, to fill our bags with a supply of fresh water. Upon returning to the camp, I found my companions stretched on the ground, engaged in their morning prayer; and I could not help admiring the fidelity to their religious observances which this early devotion displayed.

Soon the caravan was on the march, with promise of the same monotony as had characterized the journey of the preceding day. I began to think the B'ni Mozab must be a very quiet people. Sometimes we travelled an hour without any human sounds being heard save those made by the Soudan negroes as they urged their camels to greater speed. The women, as soon as they were in their saddles on the camels' backs, fell asleep; while the men rarely exchanged a word with each other, much less with me.

"This will never do," said I to myself. "If things go on thus, I may forget how to speak at all." And my camel, as if divining my thoughts, carried me in the direction of the baggage-animals, immediately behind the litter of Deborah.

"Bon-jour, monsieur le docteur!" suddenly exclaimed a silvery voice; and, looking in the direction of the speaker, I discovered the countenance of Mademoiselle Juanette peering out from something that looked for all the world like a great demijohn broken in two. There was the poor

girl stowed away on a camel's back, among bundles, boxes, and packages, the travelling *nécessaire* of Deborah.

"Well, how do you amuse yourself? How do you like this kind of travelling?" asked I, striving to repress my laughter at the ludicrous position she occupied among the objects that surrounded her.

"Like it!" she answered. "You will very soon see. Let us once get to Merlouk, our first station, and I shall show you how I like it. Mademoiselle will then have to travel alone, or else suit herself with one of her own race for an attendant."

"Why, do you intend to return, Juanette?"

"Return! Just as soon as possible. I am only sorry I was ever so foolish as to allow myself to be persuaded to start at all."

"But what is it," asked I, "that makes you repent already, when we are scarcely two days on our journey?"

The poor girl then told me that during the previous day she had begun to reflect that, although she had the promise of being the first maid of honor to Deborah after her arrival in the oasis, there seemed no very inviting prospect in store for her; and, besides, she could not see how she would be able to endure a ride of thirty or forty days on a camel's back, under a scorching sun: so she had resolved to stop at Merlouk, await there a returning caravan, and return with it to her home.

Here, thought I, was a magnificent opportunity to make myself amiable in the eyes of Deborah. I could easily imagine how much Deborah would miss the maid to whose services she had been accustomed for more than three years,—the only female companion—if such she might be called—with whom she could converse unreservedly of the reminiscences of the place where she had lived since the age of fourteen. Perhaps, also, Juanette belonged to that class who generally, if not the confidantes of their mistresses, at least know something about their secrets. She had been constantly at her side for three years, at the very time when Deborah, the desert child, was ripening into womanhood, in what may be called a European society. Who could tell but that she, and she alone, was the one to whom Deborah had intrusted the secret of her grief at leaving Tlemcen? and surely that of itself would be enough to make the loss of Juanette a terrible blow to her. It seemed to me that I would be doing an essential service to my fair travelling-companion should I persuade her maid to remain with her. I found the task a comparatively easy one, after all: a little reasoning, some flattery, and a promise to take her back in my company on my return, overcame all her objections, and she promised to remain. I was heartily glad to find her so tractable; for, possessing to its fullest extent the vivacious spirit of her nation, she was well calculated to re-

lieve the tedium of the journey by her cheerful and harmless gossip.

The greater part of that day I passed in the company of Juanette, parting from her only when we halted for the night.

Our ride was dreary enough: a few scattered *duars*, each with a wretched-looking Arab sitting cross-legged in front of it, smoking his pipe or sipping his muddy coffee, were the only objects that had broken the intolerable monotony of the journey.

To escape the heat of the day, we stopped and pitched our tents near a desolate-looking Arab cemetery on a hill-side, the graves of which were marked, not, as is generally the case, by headstones, but by a collection of rough-hewn slabs surrounding each, and so placed as to prevent the hyenas and jackals from feasting on the dead. Some tattered rags were fluttering in the wind, apparently intended to mark the resting-place of a sheik.

The plain which we crossed between the hours of five and eleven A.M. was intersected by the bed of a stream, now dry except in a few deep holes. The water of this stream could not be used for drinking, on account of its being brackish.

Layers of rock were here and there met with, seemingly forced through the soil: in some places they were in horizontal beds; in others they were shattered and lying in various inclinations, as if

thrown up by an earthquake. The whole length of the route was intersected by low ranges of rolling hills.

After our noonday repast,—which, on my part, consisted of some rice boiled in fresh goat-milk,—and the enjoyment of a good siesta, at five P.M. we again set out. We had to traverse a large plain or steppe, bounded on the south by the Jebel Tedla, or the Atlas Mountains.

Shortly after sunset, we encountered flocks of thousands of sheep and herds of hundreds of camels, browsing over its area, which, at first sight, looked like rows of white stone scattered in groups through the plains.

At this spot cultivation has entirely ceased. The rude Arab dwellings no longer present themselves to our view: the black tents of the Kedars have disappeared. The absence of these insignificant huts, which hitherto have not been deemed worthy of a glance, seems to leave a painful void, now that we are on the confines of the great desert.

The solemn wastes of sand are before us, and an indefinable sensation of overpowering vastness and solitude seizes upon the traveller as he finds himself at the gates of the desert.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAHARA.

IT was my third night with the B'ni Mozab. Our tents were pitched at the side of a sand-hill. My companions seemed to have lost the taciturnity that had hitherto characterized them, and were chatting among themselves with surprising volubility. They felt that they were on the threshold of home; for on the morrow we were to enter the great desert of Sahara. How different were their feelings from mine! Up to this time I had been annoyed at the evident disinclination on the part of my fellow-travellers to enter into conversation; but now they might with justice have found the same fault with me. The sight of the joy which animated the bosoms of these barbarians at the idea of speedily reaching their home had a depressing effect upon me; for I could not but feel that I was constantly getting farther away from my own.

The camp-fires had been lighted, the women were preparing the evening repast, and the animals had been turned out to pasture. The elder Mozabites lay stretched on the ground, enjoying

the cool evening air; while the younger ones were beguiling the hours by songs and boisterous, merry conversation.

The tents were arranged in a circle around a large fire, whose glare brought out with picturesque effect the various attitudes of the recumbent Arabs. At a short distance from the rest stood an isolated tent, much larger than any of the others. This was the tent of the Taleb; but thus far it had not been occupied by him: it had been devoted entirely to the use of Deborah, with her two companions, Zelma and Juanette.

Yussuf, at a hint from Juanette, had pitched my tent directly opposite this one,—an arrangement of which I had been in ignorance until the horn sounded which summoned the members of the caravan to their evening meal.

My supper was served by my attendant in my own tent. Deborah and her companions, likewise, had their repast brought to them; but the rest gathered round one spot and ate their meal in common. First came the seniors of the caravan; then the younger men; after these the women; and last of all the negroes, who were obliged to content themselves with what the others had left.

Before proceeding to eat, however, the assemblage carefully performed their ablutions, the water being handed around by the negroes. This being a ceremony which is never neglected by these

people, I was a little curious to know how they would manage when in the desert, where water is so exceedingly precious.

During the night I rose once or twice from my couch and looked out upon the wild grouping of our caravan at the Gate of the Desert. The dim watch-fires half revealed the stalwart forms of the Mozabites, as, enfolded in their burnouses, they reclined cross-legged, half awake, over the dying embers.

Rising at four o'clock, I found that Yussuf had already prepared my coffee; and, after partaking of the refreshing beverage, I mounted my camel and pushed on with the caravan, which had just taken up the line of march.

About six o'clock we passed a few solitary stone-heaps, intended to designate the graves of some unfortunate wayfarers. Nearly all the Mozabites dismounted, and each reverently contributed a stone to some one of the little mounds.

On this day I saw for the first time a herd of gazelles. They were going in a direction opposite to that of our caravan; but I had a good opportunity to observe the grace and agility of their movements.

Although the morning was very fine, every thing portended an excessively warm day; and I was beginning to understand the nature of the heat of the Sahara. Even thus early the sun was scorching my face; and a south wind—the fore-

runner, probably, of the simoom—made my discomfort greater.

For mile after mile nothing that possessed life, with the exception of a few insects, was to be seen. All that presented itself to view was sand and rocks, with here and there the bleached bones of a camel or perhaps of a human being,—I did not stop to ascertain which.

As we penetrated into the desert, I noticed a peculiar kind of stone, as hard as granite and of a light slate color,—sometimes varied with a beautiful green. The farther we went on the sandy road, the more hideous grew the aspect of the country. Sometimes, though very rarely, a little coarse herbage was found, which was at once picked off by the camels. Towards noon the hills increased in number, and we were in the heart of a region of sand.

Wishing to reach Merlouk as soon as possible, we dispensed with our customary mid-day rest, and did not halt until about an hour before sunset. The road we had been travelling all day was coarse and heavy, and now led directly to a wady, where we concluded to stop, hoping to find some herbage for our camels.

In a short time our scouts returned with the sad news that they had not been able to find either wood or herbage, and that we must encamp in the dark, our only light that of the stars. Wretched prospect! I was told that frequently no wood is

to be met with on the road; but I think it likely that in this instance our guides had mistaken the path; for they had seemed quite sure of finding some underwood or shrubs at the place where we were to stop. Making a virtue of necessity, we pitched our tents on the sandy waste late at night, to await, with what patience we might, the coming of the day.

I left my bed with the first rays of the morning sun; and, as I saw in the distance the sand-hills gleaming like heaps of burnished metal, I rejoiced that the gloomy night was gone.

The road this day was very difficult, especially for the camels, who upset their loads at almost every step as they had to descend or ascend the groups of hills. In some places all hands had to smooth the abrupt ascent by forming an inclined plane of sand, and in the descent pull back the camels, swinging with all their might on the tails of the animals.

Towards eleven A.M. a strong wind sprang up from the north. As far as the eye could see, clouds of sand were rising, which effaced the footprints of the camels almost instantly after they had passed. So dense was the volume of dust that I was unable to discern the forms of my fellow-travellers immediately in advance of me, and I found it necessary to tie a handkerchief across my mouth, to avoid inhaling the silicious particles. My eyes were covered with green goggles, my ears

were stuffed with cotton; and, as I rode along, half suffocated, I fervently prayed for the cessation of the sand-plague.

At four o'clock in the afternoon we came to some dwarfish palm-trees; but they were of the species that does not bear fruit. The camels appeared particularly glad to see them; and, having nothing else to eat, they began at once to feed voraciously upon the dusty foliage. It was now evident that our guides had missed the way, and that we had lost at least one day's journey; but the best that could be done was to make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the night.

It was the work of but a few minutes to pitch our tents on the most eligible spot,—eligible spots not being in superabundance; and, that done, the next task was to search for water. Dividing ourselves into parties of five or six, twenty camels being allotted to each party, we were soon all busily engaged in well-digging. This operation, however, was by no means so laborious as the reader might suppose; for, in the place where we then were, all that is needed is to make an excavation in the sand to the depth of five or six feet, whereupon the water slowly collects in the hollow. These wells, of course, are choked up by the next sand-storm: so that each caravan is obliged to dig for itself. The result of this digging is not always satisfactory, however; for oftentimes the water is so brackish that nothing short of the

direst necessity would induce man or beast to drink of it.

The place where these pits are sunk by caravans is about half-way between Tlemcen and Merlouk. My Mozabite companions assured me that the remaining half of the journey would be much pleasanter than the first,—that is, as pleasant journeying goes, in the desert.

The sun was sinking in the west, and the fatigues and discomforts of the day had begun to tell upon my usually buoyant spirits, when my newly-acquired friend Juanette sent me, by the hand of Yussuf, a few date-cakes, which were peculiarly grateful to my appetite, whetted as it had been by the desert air; and the thoughtful solicitude for my comfort betokened by the offering had an effect on my mind not less reviving than that of the gift itself on my bodily frame.

After my frugal repast, I stretched myself on the sand at the door of my tent, gazing at the setting sun and noting the gathering in of the shades of night. The sand-hills, which under the full blaze of noonday are of a dazzling white, now looked like dark and dreary mounds of earth. A remarkable smoothness, also, seemed to characterize them, as though they had been composed of blown glass. Except these dismal objects and the receding orb of day, there was absolutely nothing to arrest the eye, outside of our little camp,—no sportive insect enjoying the brief summer of life,

no bird winging its way homeward, no verdant herbage or graceful tree,—nothing but a vast ocean of sand, stretching far away on every side to the remote horizon, with a silence brooding over it which seemed more oppressive even than that of the grave. It was as though I had left forever the bright, gay earth I had known but a few days before and had entered the gloomy realms of Death.

CHAPTER V.

MIRAGE.

BOK ! bok ! bokka !" —the coaxing exclamation used by the camel-drivers when they are urging their animals to resume the labors of the day—resounded on all sides, and we were once more on the march.

After we had been travelling nearly two hours, the Taleb, the chief of the caravan, rode up to me and seemed inclined to enter into conversation. From the time of our leaving Tlemcen he had shown me the most studied politeness, inquiring each day, sometimes in person, sometimes by his lieutenants, whether my wants were fully supplied or if I needed any thing ; but he had as yet manifested no disposition towards any thing in the shape of friendly intercourse. Now, however, his manner had completely changed ; and the first few words he spoke convinced me that it was not to mere caprice that I was indebted for this sudden alteration in his demeanor.

After a few general remarks on travel-experience in the desert, he asked me how long I intended to remain at the oasis, picturing at the same time in

the most glowing colors at his command the happiness and tranquillity of a life spent there.

I frankly told him that the experience of the last few days had not tended to shed roseate hues on the prospect of a protracted stay in the heart of the desert; to which he replied that I ought not to judge hastily,—that once I had reached his garden-home, as he styled it, I would find occasion to change my opinion very materially. “Ah, well,” thought I, “time enough for that when I get there: in the mean while I must beg to be allowed to put as far away as possible the idea of spending my life in this dreary waste:” but I was careful not to offend him by any show of incredulity or distaste for the Arab style of living.

After he had ridden alongside of me for at least half an hour, talking all the while on indifferent subjects, he disclosed the purpose of his unusual familiarity and friendliness.

It seemed that Deborah, his sister, whom I had not even seen since we had left Tlemcen, was desirous of conversing with me, and that he had promised to take me to her. From his manner while informing me of this, I could easily perceive that he had undertaken the mission sorely against his will, and I felt certain that some very powerful motive must have been brought to bear to induce him to permit an interview between his idolized sister and the European stranger of whose existence he had hitherto seemed scarcely conscious.

This man, under whose protection I was travelling to the oasis, and who had promised Ibrahim to care for me as for one of his own household, was far from being, now that he was in the desert, the frank, generous-hearted chieftain I had taken him for when I placed myself in his hands at the outset. Had the opportunity been presented beforehand of studying his character and reading the expression of his stern features as I now saw them, I should never have accompanied him. But it was too late to draw back, and the manifestation of fear or distrust would very probably have been attended with disagreeable results,—would perhaps have endangered my life: so I resolved to put the best possible face on the matter, quietly bide my time, and confront the future with unblenched face and resolute heart.

Throughout our march, thus far, I had observed that the people of the caravan not only showed the Taleb a marked respect, but approached him with a sort of awe. He hardly ever deigned to converse with them, never ate in their company, and seemed, indeed, to hold himself aloof from all but his sister Deborah. The most ordinary expression from his lips had the tone of command habitual to those who are accustomed to be implicitly obeyed. I had seen and heard enough already to satisfy me that in his domain in the oasis he was an absolute despot, one who would brook no contradiction or opposition, and who considered himself the ruler

of his people by divine right rather than by their consent to accept him as their sovereign.

During our conversation we had slowly drawn near to the litter in which reclined the beautiful object of our thoughts. As we rode alongside of it, the Taleb raised the curtain; and there lay the lovely desert-maiden, leaning on one arm, and so absorbed in the book she was perusing as to be utterly unconscious of our presence until her brother spoke to her. Then, after the Taleb had formally introduced me, she acknowledged my salutation and addressed me in French.

As I gazed at her lovely face, I saw that a great change had come over it since our departure from Tlemcen. Then her grief at the prospect of parting from the companions and associations of her girlhood had seemed to throw a halo around her features, enhancing their marvellous beauty; but now I beheld the traces of mental suffering and bodily fatigue clearly depicted on her countenance; and a feeling of deep pity took possession of me as I thought of the dreary years in prospect for her.

She asked me how I liked travelling in the desert, accompanying the question with a sad smile which left me in no doubt as to her opinion of the matter. Then she went back to the past, and spoke of the dear friends whom she had left behind, never, probably, to behold their faces again. Afterwards she adverted to the fatigue and misery in store for us before we could reach our destina-

tion, at the same time reproaching me with having studiously avoided her since we had left Tlemcen. I assured her that my seeming remissness was not the result of forgetfulness; that I was obliged to conform to the customs of the people among whom I found myself, and therefore could not venture to approach her until an invitation had been extended to me.

Deborah, however, refused to admit my excuse as a valid one. "I belong to Europe rather than to the desert," said she; "and I intend to submit no longer to the tyrannical customs that exclude the women of our race from the society of men." As she spoke, I saw by her flashing eyes that her spirit had risen in rebellion, and I became convinced that she had thrown down the gage of battle to her brother, who, rather than take it up, had come to invite me to the presence of the wayward girl.

As we conversed, my beautiful friend became more and more like what she was when I had first been presented to her by Madame Ibrahim; and the hours which hitherto had lagged so painfully now passed with what seemed magical swiftness. Zelma, also, began to take part in the conversation; and even Juanette—whose delight at once more hearing her native tongue knew no bounds—now and then made some sprightly remark. I began to feel myself fully indemnified for the tedium of the past week, in the manifest preference

of the two Arab girls, who looked upon me as their countryman, while they considered their own kindred as strangers.

After I had ridden by the side of the litter for nearly two hours, Deborah requested her brother to have one of her horses saddled. This was soon done; and in a short time she was on the animal's back, looking like one of the fair Parisian Amazons who attract such universal admiration as they take the air in the Bois de Boulogne.

Of the exact character of the reflections that must have been excited in the minds of the Mozabites when they thus beheld her, dressed in European fashion and mounted on her spirited charger, I am not competent to speak, nor did I give myself much concern about them at the time; but I could not help noticing the cloud that every now and then overshadowed the stern features of the Taleb, as he glanced towards his sister, whose *ennui* had been beyond his skill to dispel, but who now was all animation and joyousness. Not a word, however, escaped his lips, to mar her present happy mood, galling though it must have been to see one of the despised Christian race accomplish in a few hours what he had failed to do in a week.

One circumstance, probably, was grateful to her countrymen: her face was covered with a veil. But this was by no means a concession to the national prejudices which she so heartily despised:

it was merely to protect her face from the scorching rays of the mid-day sun.

We formed quite a unique little party,—Deborah in the centre, Zelma on her left, myself on her right, and Juanette bringing up the rear, packed in among the articles devoted to the comfort of her mistress. The chief and his lieutenants rode immediately ahead of us, but took no part in the conversation, which was carried on in French,—a language which, even had they been thoroughly versed in it, they would have scorned to use, so intense was their hatred of the Gallic invader.

As we rode along, the countenance of my fair companion expressed her entire abandonment to the pleasure of the moment: her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were tinged with a roseate hue, and I could see that she had some project in view, which probably nothing but a want of entire confidence in me prevented her from disclosing on the spot. However, the ice of Arab reserve had been broken, and all things gave promise of our soon becoming thoroughly acquainted.

“You must stay near me all the time, doctor,” said she; while Zelma reminded me that I had promised Madame Ibrahim, on bidding her farewell, to do all in my power to alleviate to Deborah the miseries of desert-travel and the pangs of separation from the friends of her youth.

Had it depended alone on my inclination, the promise should not have lacked fulfilment in the

strictest sense of the word; but there were keen eyes scrutinizing my every movement, and I could not be too cautious to avoid arousing the suspicion, or, what would be still worse, the jealousy, of my travelling-companions, whose thin mask of hospitality would soon be thrown off should I be so unfortunate as to incur their displeasure.

It was now about three or four o'clock in the afternoon. So enchanted was I with my two fair companions that I had taken very little note of the passage of time,—had almost forgotten, indeed, that I was travelling in the desert. My eyes were no longer fixed on the monotonous line of sand-hills, but were resting with delight on the face of Deborah, and the charm of her conversation had made me forget all the miseries of my situation. Suddenly I was awakened from my blissful reverie by a shout, as though from the entire caravan in chorus,—“*Elhamdullah!*” while Deborah and Zelma, seemingly taking up the cry, exclaimed, in joyous tones, “*Grace à Dieu!*” Looking in the direction in which every one was gazing, I beheld a sight which would require a much abler pen than mine to describe adequately, but which, nevertheless, I must attempt, in my own feeble fashion, to picture to the reader.

At that moment the caravan was in the centre of an immense valley. On our right were huge pyramids of sand, resembling in the sunlight great heaps of glass. Some were of a pure white; others

were blue striped with yellow ; still others seemed to reflect all the colors of the rainbow ; while at intervals a few presented the appearance of translucent fiery masses, their lustre slightly dimmed by the shadows of the neighboring hills. On our left was an apparently mountainous region, stretching as far as the eye could reach, while here and there an immense sandy pyramid, as mathematically exact in its proportions as if raised by the hand of man, reared its lofty head towards the firmament.

Directly in front of us, and seemingly not more than a mile off, we beheld a verdant plain, offering to the enraptured vision of the weary travellers the aspect of a landscape of surpassing beauty. In the centre of the plain stretched a broad lake, on whose silvery waters we could see vessels of all sizes, some, with sails distended, moving gracefully along, others lying quietly at anchor. The farther bank of the lake was bordered with trees, the reflection of whose foliage in its peaceful bosom we could distinctly perceive.

To the right of the lake, and a little distance beyond it, lay a large city, its golden minarets glancing in the rays of the afternoon sun ; while on the left rose a majestic chain of mountains, covered to their summit with a luxuriant forest-growth. Nor were the signs of life wanting to complete the beauteous picture : long lines of camels were swiftly coursing their way towards

the distant mountains, as though eager to reach the haven of repose offered by their umbrageous declivities.

For a few moments we gazed spell-bound at the scene ; then every one spurred his animal forward. The camels, seemingly impelled by the same feeling as that which animated their riders, required no urging. On swept the caravan, every eye fixed on the glistening waters ; but, with all our speed, the goal seemed no nearer. Still on we pressed, hope lending strength to our wearied frames, when suddenly, as with the wave of a magician's wand, the tranquil lake, the wooded mountains, the resplendent minarets, and the swift-moving caravans, grew dim in the distance : a moment after, and they had all vanished into thin air, and nothing was to be seen but the boundless expanse of sand. We had been pursuing a phantom. It was the Mirage of the Desert.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SIMOOM.

UPON the disappearance of the phantom fields and mountains, our exhausted caravan had halted for the evening,—to find that we had lost the track and were several miles away from the road we were to follow.

I could not avoid expressing surprise that men like the Mozabites, who so often traverse the desert, should be misled by the mirage; but the most experienced member of the caravan assured me that experience had nothing to do with it; “for,” said he, “even after our disappointment this afternoon, should the same sight present itself to-morrow, every man would follow it.” So real does every thing appear that the mind refuses to entertain the idea of illusion, and men and animals press on until either the object towards which they are hastening vanishes, or they are unable, through fatigue, to proceed farther.

Many of the stories of these nomads concerning the mirage are full of romance, and not without a spice of poetry; and, fatigued though I was, I mingled that night with the group which gathered

around the camp-fire, listening to their theories and to their narrations of the various adventures they had met with while traversing the great desert.

Ben Enoch, one of the oldest members of our caravan, was urged by the assemblage to relate some of his adventures. After a little coaxing, he consented, and all, old and young, prepared to give him their attention.

Drawing closely around the fire, each man secured a position as near as possible to the narrator, the saddles from the camels' backs serving us as pillows. When all were seated, and the bustle of arrangement had ceased, Ben Enoch began, as follows:—

“I was a young man, not over eighteen years of age, when my father was engaged in the caravan trade between the oasis of Ghardaia and Timbuctoo. He had made the journey once before, traversing the desert from Ghardaia to Waregla, thence over the sandy steppe to Insalah, from which place it took him more than forty days to reach the Wells of Asin, crossing the mountains at Asben to Agades, and thence, following for some distance the course of the Quorra or river Niger, to Timbuctoo. On his return his route was more direct, from Timbuctoo to Arawan, Mabruk, Aulef, Timimum, Golea, and Ghardaia.

“At the time of which I am about to speak, the caravan I was engaged in was to go from Waregla

to Timbuctoo,—a distance of I cannot tell how many miles. I know, however, that we were more than one hundred and thirty days in going and coming; while with my present experience I could make the journey in half the time.

“A rich trader from Tripoli, the owner of the caravan, came once a year to Ghardaia with from two hundred and fifty to three hundred camels, exchanging his goods for the dates and other products of the oasis. Thence he went to Insalah, and sometimes to Timbuctoo, where he met other traders, who came with droves of slaves from Soudan, bringing also ostrich-feathers and similar articles which find a ready market, at remunerative prices, in Tripoli.

“My father being engaged partly as a guide and partly as overseer of a portion of the caravan, he permitted me to accompany him, thus affording me an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a part of the desert, and at the same time teaching me a trade,—namely, that of a caravanist, which at that time was much more lucrative than it is now.

“Nothing of special interest occurred on the road from Ghardaia to Timbuctoo, at which place we arrived after an exhausting journey, having buried on the way two camel-drivers, and lost eight camels which had succumbed to fatigue.

“In Timbuctoo we met the merchants and slave-traders from Soudan. They belonged mostly

to the Tuarick tribe, who for years were engaged in the trade and made regular annual journeys from Soudan to Timbuctoo with slaves, for whom they found a ready sale at the latter place, merchants from Tripoli coming there with goods to exchange for the human commodity.

“The slaves, on their arrival at the mart, were packed into stalls in no respect better than those set apart for the camels. Men, women, and children were huddled indiscriminately together into these pens, with perhaps not more than five or six Tuarick Arabs to keep guard over the seething mass of humanity and prevent the strong from crushing out the lives of the weak in the selfish struggle for comparatively comfortable places in their temporary abode.

“We remained at Timbuctoo fifteen days; and from the instant of our arrival until our departure, from sunrise to sunset, the traffic in human bodies never flagged. Each man was bargained for separately; while the women were sold in pairs, and the children by tens. My duty during these two weeks was to go to the slave-pens before sunrise each morning, with the rest of the camel-drivers of our caravan, and carry away the bodies of those who had died during the preceding night. Sometimes we would find a dozen lying stiff and stark, who had thus, by giving up life, outwitted the avaricious men who had torn them from their homes and kindred. A large trench was dug for

the reception of the bodies; and it occasionally happened that among the dead would be thrown in some from whom the breath had not yet wholly departed; but, as the poor creatures were so prostrated by disease and suffering as to render it merely a question of a few hours, the brutal camel-drivers would coolly bury them with the rest, deaf to their feeble appeals for mercy.

“The burying-operation for the day having been concluded, we were next loaded with bags containing the food for the slaves. This consisted of cakes in the form of biscuits, each weighing about a pound, and made of black meal mixed with a paste of dates and dried in the sun. In the morning each slave received the half of one of these cakes; at noon a whole one was served out to each, and in the evening the same amount as in the morning. Three times a day the slaves were let out of the pens, and conducted, under an escort, to the nearest brook or other body of water, where they quenched their thirst, lying flat on the ground and lapping the water with their tongues like dogs. Very few of them ever entered the water, although there was nothing to prevent their doing so if they desired it: hence they soon became covered with filth and vermin, and the odor of their stalls was intolerable.

“At the end of the fifteenth day all was in readiness for the march. Our camels, having no merchandise to carry back, were loaded with food

for the slaves in sufficient quantity to last us until we should reach Insalah; and by daybreak of the next day we were on the homeward road. First in order went the guides; then the merchant, followed by the slaves whom he had purchased, numbering about fourteen hundred; close behind these were the slave-overseers, each armed with a *corbatsch*, or whip made of strips of cowhide; and last of all came the camels that carried the provisions.

“We soon found that our journey was likely to prove an exceedingly tedious one. It was impossible to progress rapidly, on account of the slow motions of the slaves, especially the children, who at a very early stage began to drop down by the roadside, the victims of fatigue and hunger or of their constantly-devouring thirst. From the first day of our march, the course of the caravan might have been traced by the dead bodies of those who had thus found freedom in the desert. It was the custom of the merchant to count his slaves every morning, so as to ascertain how many he had lost during the preceding day.

“We travelled in this fashion, as nearly as I can remember, for eleven days, without any special cause for alarm; for the mortality among the slaves was a thing reckoned upon. On the morning of the twelfth day, however, we found, to our dismay, that the stock of water was exceedingly low; and we had still a four days’ march before us. The

whole caravan—slaves, overseers, camel-drivers, and merchant—was instantly put on half rations; and in all likelihood, had no other calamity befallen us, we would have succeeded in husbanding our store of the precious fluid sufficiently to enable us to reach a spot where we were tolerably sure of finding wells and being able to replenish our depleted water-skins.

“At the time of our setting out, on the morning of which I speak, the heavens were completely overcast with heavy clouds. But, although the rays of the sun were thus shut out from us, the heat was intolerable. The sultry air seemed to come directly from the mouth of an oven. Man and beast suffered alike: the exhausted camels, with lolling tongues, appeared hardly able to creep along; while the wretched slaves lagged behind until they formed a straggling line at least three miles in length.

“The gloom steadily increased, until, about nine o’clock, a frightful darkness prevailed. The heat had become, if possible, more oppressive than ever; and the slight breeze that was stirring seemed to scorch the skin and parch the throat, rather than afford any relief.

“As to myself, I had never witnessed any thing of this kind before, and was at a loss to know what the unusual phenomena portended, when my father came up to me and told me, with an agitated air, that the *Ghibee* was coming,—the terrible wind

which is known to us as the Simoom. Every moment now seemed to add to the violence of the storm, until, by ten o'clock, the *Ghibee* was on us in all its strength.

“The sand, driven in vast clouds before the furious wind, darkened the air, giving the sky a dusky brazen hue. The howling of the storm, mingling with the cries of the affrighted men and animals, made the situation to me, unaccustomed as I was to the life of the desert, an extremely frightful one. To add to my misery, in a few minutes my eyes became so swollen and inflamed that I could not see my nearest companion; my lips began to chap, my tongue to burn in my mouth; a dreadful sense of constriction oppressed me, so that I could scarcely breathe; while at every inspiration I drew into my throat and lungs a quantity of the heated sand. And still the heat increased, until it seemed as though all the fluids of my body would be dried to their sources by its blighting influence. To quench my intolerable thirst, I drank freely of the tepid water in my flask, but to no purpose. My throat seemed on fire, my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth; and, as my camel sank on his knees, I lay on the burning sand, awaiting in agony the coming of the death-angel. My overstrained mind began to wander: I saw bubbling brooks, deep-flowing rivers, and cool, never-failing wells, but far beyond my reach; and while striving to rise and attain the

coveted boon, utter darkness seemed to surround me, and my senses were steeped in sudden oblivion.

“How long I lay thus I know not; but, when I opened my eyes, the storm had spent its fury. My father, assisted by two of his countrymen, was washing my body with vinegar, and seemed overjoyed to find that life was not extinct. As soon as I was fully restored, I mounted my camel, and our little party, consisting of eight or ten individuals, started in search of the main body. When a caravan is overtaken by the simoom, each one thinks of himself, and it becomes impossible for the leader to exercise any sort of authority. Our troop had undoubtedly been scattered in every direction; and now, several hours having elapsed, we were very anxious to find some trace of their whereabouts. The problem, however, seemed a hopeless one. The surface of the desert, which before the coming of the storm had been quite level, was now broken up into ridges, looking in the distance like a body of water whose waves had been petrified in mid-fury; and the looseness of the sand thus furrowed by the wind presented a powerful obstacle to any thing like rapid progress.

“We had not travelled a great distance when we fell in with a few other stragglers; and this circumstance tended to fan the hope of soon coming up with the main body. On we went, with all the speed of which our tired animals were capable, but failing to find the slightest clew to the route of the

caravan. After travelling at least six miles, without having discovered a single living being, we halted, and an anxious consultation was held to devise some better way out of our difficulty. After considerable deliberation, it was decided that we should divide ourselves into three parties, which were to separate in various directions, at the same time taking care to keep each other in sight.

“It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon, and, after our three parties had scoured the country without any result, we united once more, and rode on together for another hour. There were still no signs of the object of our search, and we were just about to give up in despair, when suddenly we beheld the entire caravan on our right, not more than two miles off, the men resting in the shade of the date-trees, while the camels grazed quietly at their sides.

“We could scarcely credit the evidence of our senses; and yet there they were, encamped alongside of the wells which we had not expected to reach for four days at least. As we gazed, we saw that our fellow-travellers must have fallen in with a caravan travelling from the north; for there was a greater number of both camels and men than had belonged to our party.

“We did not spend much time in vain conjecture, however, but started off at our quickest pace to rejoin our friends. Whether it was on account of the looseness of the sand impeding our progress,

or the exhaustion of the camels, or our own impatience to reach the goal, I know not, but certain it is that the distance between us and them did not sensibly diminish. There they were, clearly in sight, near enough, almost, for us to hear their voices; and yet, though our camels were kept constantly moving, it seemed impossible to overcome the narrow strip of desert that lay between.

“At last our animals stopped, and refused to go a step farther. Even this did not dishearten us; for still the caravan was in sight, and with a little exertion we would be among them. It was resolved that some of us should stay with the camels, while the rest should continue the journey on foot and bring back aid from our more fortunate companions. The idea of remaining behind was very distasteful to me, and I was permitted to accompany the party which was to push onward to the resting-place. When we started, the caravan had not seemed to be more than a mile away; but on and on we went, until we had travelled at least four miles, and, to our astonishment, the distance was still as great as it had been at first.

“Being by this time thoroughly exhausted, we resolved to rest a while; and a sort of waking stupor seemed to come over us, in which we remained passive for a short time, until the urgency of our mission once more aroused us. Then, bending our eager gaze on the spot where we had last seen the caravan, we were horrified to find that it

had entirely disappeared. In vain we scanned the horizon: neither man nor beast was visible; and, what seemed even more mysterious, the date-trees had vanished as utterly as those whom but an hour before we had seen quietly resting under their branches. With heavy hearts we retraced our steps; but we were spared the necessity of communicating the sad news to our companions: they also had witnessed the sudden fading-away of the caravan.

"Night soon overtook us; and although the hot breath of the simoom had not yet entirely lost its power, the absence of the glare of daylight was grateful to our wearied senses. One of our party, fortunately, had about a dozen date-cakes with him. These, being fairly shared out, served in a measure to restore our exhausted frames; and, after concluding our scanty meal, we decided to encamp. No one was in the mood for conversation: our thoughts were too gloomy for us to seek relief in mutual intercourse, and each retired in silence to his couch on the sand.

"As for myself, my sleep was any thing but refreshing. I passed the night in an uneasy doze, disturbed by frightful dreams; and when the first rays of the morning sun appeared in the east I felt even more exhausted—if that were possible—than I had done when I lay down. Nor had my companions fared any better than myself. Their faces were haggard and pale, as though they had

undergone a night of torment. Anxiety concerning the future had left its impress on their features; for we were destitute of water, and had no idea of the whereabouts of the wells; and of all deaths, that by thirst in the desert is most terrible. However, should the worst come, we could kill a camel, and quench our thirst with its blood; but this is never done except in the direst extremity.

“Taking advantage of the comparative coolness of the early morning, we set out once more, each man fully occupied with his own thoughts. Our little party was under the leadership of my father, as the most experienced in desert-travel; but even he was sorely perplexed, and in doubt as to the best course to pursue.

“Since then I have often traversed the desert, and many a time have braved the fury of the simoom; and I have observed that on the day after a storm of this kind the sun appears to shine with redoubled heat and brilliancy. And so we experienced it on this occasion. Scarcely had the sun made its appearance above the horizon when the sand-hills began to glow as if dipped in a fiery varnish; and before an hour had passed the heat was as intense as it had been on other days at high noon.

“Our poor camels had not tasted food since the morning of the preceding day. How long they would hold out was unknown to us; but we shuddered to contemplate our fate should they suc-

cumb. We moved on in silence, every one filled with gloomy forebodings, until, by the position of the sun in the heavens, we knew that it was mid-day. On our right were high sand-hills; and towards these my father led us, his idea being to rest a short time in the shade at their base and afterwards to climb to the top of one of them and obtain a more extended view of the country.

“After a weary march of an hour, we reached the hills; and we found the shelter from the sun’s scorching rays exceedingly grateful. As to my father, he seemed endued with supernatural strength; for, with an activity which would have done credit to a much younger man, he clambered up one of the hills, to endeavor if possible to discern some landmark by which we might conjecture our whereabouts, or some trace of our missing companions. We followed his motions with eager eyes, expecting every moment to hear the welcome exclamation, “There they are!” But no such joy was in store for us. He gazed intently towards every quarter of the horizon, until at last the glare of the sand dazzled his eyes so that he was compelled to refrain. Then, waving his hand, to give us to understand that he was about to try his fortune on another and a higher elevation, he descended the hill on the farther side. It was not without a certain feeling of dismay that we thus lost him from our view; for, besides the feeling of desolateness that at once overcame us, we feared

we might become separated from him in that terrible desert; and without his guidance our case would be hopeless.

“After he had been gone about an hour, he reappeared, coming through a small pass between two hills that lay at no great distance from our stopping-place. When he had approached sufficiently near for us to distinguish his features, we could see that his expression was that of hopefulness; and in his arm he carried a bundle of some kind of herbs. We ran eagerly towards him, feeling certain that he had found the long-sought caravan; but our joy was soon dashed by the tidings that he had seen no trace of it. One cause of rejoicing there was, however: we need no longer feel apprehensive of dying of thirst in the desert. We were not more than one mile from the Wady el Gheber, where we would find food for the camels and water in plenty for ourselves. This token of the protection of Providence revived our drooping spirits and imparted fresh strength to our debilitated frames. We might yet be restored to our wandering companions, and with them find the way back to the home and kindred whom but a short time before we had despaired of ever again beholding. The bundle of herbs which he had collected was divided among the hungry camels; and the poor beasts seemed almost conscious of being near a place where comparative plenty was in store for them.

“As we could not take a direct route to the wady, on account of the steep acclivities in front of us, we were compelled to go in a circuitous direction; but, although greatly fatigued, and, above all, parched with thirst, we moved forward in high spirits, cheered by the thought of soon reaching a spot where our immediate necessities would be relieved.

“Before we had reached the wady, the sun sank in the west, a few fleecy clouds, lit up by his parting rays, serving by their reflection to keep off the shades of night a little longer. We had ridden, perhaps, a couple of miles, when directly in front we saw the Wady el Gheber. A few stunted date-trees marked the spot; but there seemed to be a plentiful supply of herbage and abundance of water. The camels quickened their pace at the inspiring sight, and soon we were in the haven of rest so opportunely discovered by my father.

“The tired beasts were relieved of their burdens, and led to the pasture; while we, with thankful hearts, partook of our evening repast, consisting of some dried-up dates, accompanying it with hearty draughts of water, which on any other occasion I would probably have turned from in disgust on account of its brackishness, but which now seemed as palatable as the purest spring-water I had ever tasted.

“Our immediate bodily wants having been satisfied, we proceeded to collect firewood, piling it up

in readiness for lighting and in sufficient quantity to last through the night. This done, we began to deliberate as to the best plan of operations in the future. The only one who volunteered no suggestion was the most experienced among us,—my father; but, when asked for his opinion, he replied that he had hopes of finding during the night some clew to the whereabouts of the caravan.

“After we had rested a little while, he directed us to gather still more firewood, with which, he told us, he intended to make three or four signal-fires on the tops of the highest hills in the vicinity, so that, should there be any stragglers within sight, they might be notified of the presence of human beings at no very great distance. This idea met with unanimous approval; and we at once set about carrying it into effect. In an incredibly short time we had collected the firewood, and had lighted the beacon-fires on the hills; and soon the cheerful blaze was sending its ruddy gleams far and wide over the sandy expanse.

“One source of anxiety still remained. Would our signals find any answer? Even supposing the members of the stray caravan to be in sight, might not they be utterly destitute of the means of returning our signal and notifying us of their presence? Our anxiety, however, was soon dispelled. Not more than twenty minutes had elapsed, when, far to the left, we thought we descried a feeble light. It was so faint that for a little while it

was uncertain whether it proceeded from a fire or not; but ere long it began to grow brighter, and kept on increasing in brilliancy, until there could be no doubt that it was intended as an answer to our signals.

“We hurriedly returned to camp, and again mounted our camels, leaving two of our number behind to replenish the fires, so that in case of need we might not miss the way back. With hearts bounding with joy, we rode out into the darkness, my father taking the lead. Nearer and nearer we came to the now waning blaze which had been our goal from the outset, and after a journey of a few miles we reached the spot. As we approached, however, we could perceive no signs of life; and even when we had arrived within fifty yards of the fire all seemed still as the grave,—not a single welcoming voice being raised to greet those who had come to their assistance. Yet surely, we thought, there must be human beings there; for the fire by which we had shaped our course thither could have been kindled by no hands but those of man. Whence, then, this extraordinary silence?

“In a few minutes we reached the spot where the fire was smouldering. Glancing around, by the dim light we could see a number of reclining forms, whose apathy excited our astonishment. Throwing on some fresh wood, we soon had the fire burning brightly,—when a horrible spectacle

presented itself. We had indeed found a portion of the caravan; but, alas! in a fearful plight. Stretched on the sand lay more than five hundred of the slaves, the greater number of them dead, while those who still breathed seemed just ready to gasp out the last sigh.

“Taking from the fire several lighted brands, we at once set about ascertaining how many of the unfortunates were still within reach of human assistance. Here and there, as we slowly threaded our way through the ghastly rows of bodies, we would see the face of an acquaintance, whose features took on an unutterably hideous expression by the dim light of the brands. No one who has not seen it can picture the change that is wrought in the human countenance by a death of such agony as that by thirst. The features are fearfully distorted; the eyes start from their sockets; the lips swell to extraordinary dimensions; blood oozes from the mouth, the ears, and the nostrils; and the whole expression is of such a character as to haunt the memory of the beholder for months,—nay, for years. Many suns have risen and set on me since that eventful night, yet still the remembrance of its dreadful sights is as fresh as though I had witnessed them but a week ago.

“We had brought some water with us, but, unfortunately, a very small quantity. With this we succeeded in restoring to consciousness several of the almost inanimate forms. One of the first thus

brought back as it were to life was the trader himself; and after he had regained his strength sufficiently to speak, we found that he had been the last to succumb. He had observed the fires which we had kindled on the hills, and, summoning up his failing energies, had succeeded in getting together some brushwood and lighting the beacon by which we had been guided to the rescue. Before our arrival, however, his overtaxed frame had sunk under its burdens, and he had swooned away.

"All that night we were so fully occupied in searching out those in whom life was not yet extinct and endeavoring to restore them to consciousness, that we did not realize the extent of the calamity. But when the first rays of the new day shot up from the eastern horizon, and the dim gray light of morning permitted us to take in the whole scene, we were appalled by what we beheld.

"Gathering up with all possible speed the dried-up water-skins that lay scattered here and there, we despatched our camels to the wady, in charge of one of our number, who was requested to be as expeditious as possible in his return with the blessed life-giving fluid, the party remaining behind, in the mean time, not remitting for an instant their humane labors. But we had come too late for the vast majority of the poor wretches: out of the five hundred and eighty who had lain down in despair on that desolate spot, we succeeded in re-

storing but twenty-two, the rest having expired, some from fatigue and some from thirst.

“It was not without difficulty that we succeeded in removing these twenty-two from the places where they had fallen and collecting them in one place, before the remainder of our little company had arrived with a full supply of water; for the putrefying bodies of those who had been dead for some days had poisoned the air to such a degree that no one could go near them without being overpowered by the effluvium.

“As soon as the rescued men had recovered themselves sufficiently to converse, they told us how the simoom had dispersed them, and how they had afterwards wandered aimlessly about until, reaching the spot where we now were, they had sunk down in mute despair, to await the coming of the death they knew to be inevitable. It turned out that we had really been close to them on the preceding day, and that what we had afterwards concluded was a mirage had been only partially such. We had, it seemed, really beheld them; but instead of finding a shelter under the trees, they had lain down to die on a spot where neither food nor drink for man or beast was to be found: it was a caravan, indeed, but—a caravan of the dead.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE WELL IN THE WADY.

BEN ENOCH'S story was by no means calculated to induce a cheerful frame of mind; and I felt that could Juanette have heard it she would have refused to move a step farther. I fervently hoped that we might not be overtaken by the simoom; but, to be prepared for any contingency, I directed Yussuf to place a filled water-skin on my camel, and a small stock of provisions, so that in case our caravan were dispersed as Ben Enoch's had been, I might have the wherewithal to sustain life for a few days.

I found it impossible to drive from my thoughts the picture of the dead and dying slaves; and that night my rest was disturbed by frightful dreams, in which I fancied I heard the howling of the dreaded Ghibee and felt its baleful breath on my fevered cheek. From these visions I would start up in terror, and take long draughts from the water-skin, to allay the thirst that was consuming me. I was suffering in anticipation all the horrors I had heard so graphically related a few hours before.

Long before daybreak I left my uneasy couch and applied myself to the task which had occupied the early morning hours ever since my setting out with the caravan. I found the quiet of that part of the day the most favorable for this purpose; for in the evening I was always too fatigued and my imagination too much excited to allow of my making a coherent record.

At breakfast I found that my faithful attendant had procured for me, as a great treat, some camel's milk. It was with some difficulty that I brought myself to drink it,—feeling the same aversion that one experiences when for the first time he tastes goat's milk, from which, however, it differs very materially in flavor. Nevertheless, as I did not wish to let Yussuf imagine that I was not grateful for his attention, I was careful to avoid any semblance of repugnance to my draught.

The caravan seemed this day to be in high spirits,—the reason of which I soon found to be that they expected to arrive at a well before five o'clock in the evening, where they would find a good supply of fresh water, as well as plentiful pasture for the wearied camels.

By ten o'clock in the morning we could perceive a few dark spots in the distant horizon. These spots indicated the position of that range of the Atlas Mountains which in a few days we would have to cross. The mere hope of soon being on *terra firma* (for to me the dreary waste of sand

over which we were travelling seemed more like an ocean than like the solid ground) had an inspiring effect: I was no longer incommoded by the scorching rays of the sun, no longer felt as though I were forever separated from home and kindred. My only trouble was that the camel I rode did not go fast enough; for I yearned to breathe once more the invigorating air of the mountains.

We encamped during the Kailah,—that is to say, from twelve o'clock till three of the afternoon. This is the usual hour for the *siesta* among the Spaniards,—a custom introduced into Spain, in all likelihood, by the Moors after their conquest of that country, whence it was carried into Italy as the *mezzo-giorno*. In Spain, South America, and Italy, however, the siesta signifies the time of repose after the mid-day meal; but among the travellers in the desert its purpose is that of escaping as much as possible the terrible heat that reigns supreme in the middle of the day.

The siesta hours having passed, we once more mounted our camels, and the caravan was headed due south,—in a straight line for the distant mountains, the faint spots in the horizon being our guiding-points, so that it was impossible for us to miss our way.

Night was drawing on apace; but, according to the calculations of our guides, we could not be far from the wady, which we had expected to reach before dark; and a conclusive proof that they had

not erred was that we could already hear in the distance the monotonous wail of the jackal, or, as the Arabs style him, the Dheep,—a sure indication of a fertile spot being in the vicinity. I strained my eyes to get a glimpse of the haven of rest, but in vain; and I was forced to possess my soul in patience until, after we had ridden a few miles farther, I was told that we had arrived at our goal.

Yussuf, more accustomed than myself to distinguishing objects in the dark, shouted, “See, master!—there is the Nukhlah!”—the first palm-tree he beheld. Looking in the direction he indicated, I could barely perceive, by the aid of the feeble light of the moon, a dark object, which might or might not be a palm-tree. The entire caravan now united in the exclamation, “Elhalallah!” and the order was given to dismount and bivouac for the night.

A quantity of dried camel-dung and wood having been hurriedly gathered, a fire was lighted, and the guides were sent out to bring fresh water from the nearest well. The Taleb decided that the caravan should rest at this place the whole of the following day, so that the camels might have an opportunity to graze and drink to their hearts’ content; after which we would replenish our water-bags and set out for the mountains.

As to myself, I could not see much difference between the place where we had halted and any

other part of the desert; for, as far as my observation extended, there was nothing to denote fertility beyond the dark object which my boy had pronounced to be a palm-tree. I was forced to content myself for the night with that amount of knowledge concerning the place, but determined to be stirring betimes next morning and make a thorough exploration of the wady.

My tent was pitched in a few minutes, and, having arranged my portable bedstead, I threw myself upon it and was soon fast asleep.

In the morning, true to my resolve of the preceding night, I was up before the sun. I was thoroughly refreshed by my night's rest, and was ready to satisfy my curiosity concerning this little green spot in the desert, the sight of whose verdure would be to me a luxury greater than any that could be conceived by one who has never been for a week surrounded by an apparently illimitable expanse of sand.

Before I was dressed, Yussuf made his appearance, bearing in one hand a bowl of fresh goat's milk and in the other a piece of black bread. His face was perfectly radiant with joy as he approached me and offered his dainties, exclaiming, "*Le voilà, monsieur,—le premier tribut de la civilisation.*" Although I felt rather hungry, I looked at his offering without feeling much inclined to touch it, and experienced far greater pleasure in witnessing the boy's tender care for my comfort than in the

result of his catering. However, I drank the milk, and tried the bread, but could not swallow a mouthful of it. It was as hard as a stone, and looked more like a piece of an exploded shell than like something to eat.

This bread is made from a species of grain which in shape resembles wheat and is grown in small quantities at the foot of the Atlas. I saved the piece which Yussuf had given me, intending to keep it as a memento of my experience in the desert, but, unfortunately, lost it some months afterwards, with many other articles which I had collected during my African journey, in a shipwreck on the coast of Florida.

My repast concluded, and the customary morning entries in my note-book attended to, I started out on my tour of observation, armed with a double-barrelled gun and a large hunting-knife, and taking Yussuf with me, partly to assist me in making discoveries, partly with the view of having some one near me in case I should be attacked by wild beasts, which, I had understood from my fellow-travellers, are very frequently found in the vicinity of these little spots of green isolated in the sandy wilderness.

I found the wady to consist of a few date-trees scattered hither and thither on the sandy surface of the desert, with a pool of sluggishly-moving water. Along the banks of the pool grew a number of palm-trees, under whose branches were the habitations of from fifty to sixty people. About

four hundred yards from our camp were three or four clumps of vegetation, looking in the rays of the morning sun like masses of emerald adorning the tawny surface of the desert.

The inhabitants of the wady are as black as negroes, but their features resemble those of the Moors. Their habitations are mere caves burrowed out under the palm-trees above mentioned; but during the greater part of the time they live in the open air, seeking shelter only during the extreme heat of mid-day.

As we walked past their rude dwellings, the occupants greeted us very civilly, and in two or three instances invited us to rest in the shade,—a degree of hospitality which I had hardly looked for in this little desert island, so far from the world of civilization.

The principal means of support of these poor creatures consists in selling to the caravans which stop there for water such articles of necessity as they can manage to collect among the mountain villages of the Atlas. Their dress, so far as I could observe, was almost as primitive as were their dwellings,—men and women alike being clad in a sort of skirt or frock reaching from the hips to the knees, except that those worn by the women were a little longer than those of the men.

At the farthest end of the village was a dwelling somewhat more pretentious and comfortable than the others. This was the residence of the chief;

and, ascertaining that he always claimed the privilege of first offering goods for sale to caravans or strangers, I entered into negotiations for the purchase of provisions, and soon concluded a bargain with him for some eggs, a couple of fowls, and a quantity of fresh dates, a fruit I had by this time learned to hold in high estimation.

I was anxious to see the well from which our camel-drivers were filling the water-skins; and, a party of them chancing at that moment to pass the hut on their way thither, I followed them, taking leave of the chief, with the request that he should keep my eggs and fowls for me until I returned. I found the well situated at the bottom of a ravine, the water bubbling out and coursing along merrily under the shade of a few palm-trees, which drank in life from its never-failing flow. The well itself was not deep; but near it several large holes had been dug, in which the water was collected for the use of the camels. The water I found to be fresh, clear, and good, my only objection to it being that it was not cool enough.

On our road thither, we met a party of the women of the village, carrying home the daily supply of the beneficent fluid. This is the sole task of the unmarried women and young girls. The married women attend to the preparation of the meals and the cultivation of the small patches of vegetation; while the men journey back and forth between the wady and the mountains, en-

gaged in their business of collecting goods for sale to the caravans.

By ten o'clock in the morning nearly the whole of our caravan had gathered in the vicinity of the well, the women availing themselves of the opportunity for washing such of their clothes as required the purifying influences of the cleansing fluid, the men attending to the camels or engaged in conversation. Even Deborah and Zelma had thrown aside their customary reserve, tempted by the prospect of a draught of pure water fresh from a never-failing fount.

The gathering resembled a picnic-party ; and, as we were to take our dinner there, I determined on preparing an agreeable surprise for Deborah. I at once sent Yussuf back to the village for the fowls and fresh eggs which I had bought of the chief and left in his keeping till called for, and apprized Juanette of my purpose, requesting her to prepare the fowls *en fricassée*, and on no account to neglect to inform her mistress that they had been purchased solely for her.

Juanette entered heartily into the spirit of the affair, and began immediately to make as many preparations for the culinary operation as though some great banquet were in question ; and, not to be without any of the European concomitants, she begged me to draw up a bill of fare, which she could present to her mistress as she set the unlooked-for dainties before her.

In certain circumstances the veriest trifle assumes an importance which at other times would never be accorded to it: the reader must therefore not be astonished to find me taking a deep interest in the culinary art on this occasion, and preparing the bill of fare with as much care as though my life had depended on it. Before a great while I had it fairly drawn up, as follows:—

Omelette à la Parisienne.

Soupe de poulet.

Poulet fricassée.

Poulet au riz.

Dessert.

De dattes fraîches.

All that was necessary now was for Yussuf to arrive with the materials for the feast; and I believe both Juanette and I looked forward to his coming with greater anxiety than we did to the completion of our desert journey.

At last he came, but, to my surprise and disappointment, he was empty-handed. In reply to my excited questions, the boy stated that on his arrival at the chief's house he found that that dignitary had disposed of my property to the Taleb, at a slight advance on what I had paid him, without thinking it necessary to inform him that it was no longer his to sell. However, he was honest enough to refund me the money I had paid him.

When I related the circumstance to Deborah,

she laughed heartily, but accepted the will for the deed; and, to comfort me in my disappointment, she invited me to partake of the mid-day meal with her. The fowls, therefore, still served us that day; and the only fault I had to find with them was that they were not quite as big as sheep.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SIGHT OF THE ATLAS.

ON the morning after the feast described in the preceding chapter, the *ghafalah*—or caravan—was once more on the march, with a tolerable stock of provisions and a full supply of water. Every one but myself appeared to be in good spirits; and I would probably have been so had it not been that for a few days back my eyes had been paining me considerably, and I was just now suffering from a severe attack of ophthalmia, brought on by the reflection of the sun's rays from the sandy surface of the country we had been traversing.

After a ride of about two hours, we came to a halt at a place where a considerable growth of vegetation afforded an opportunity to feed the camels once more. They were allowed to eat as long as they chose, since after this they would find no green thing until our arrival at the foot of the mountains,—a five days' march at least.

There being very little for these poor beasts to choose from, they browse the herbage wherever they find it along their course; and nothing seems

to please the drivers more than to watch the staid, quiet animals as they feed. Ordinarily, the camel is allowed to linger over his repast until he has satisfied his appetite or devoured all that he can find; but some drivers, less considerate, urge them forward after a short stoppage.

It is remarkable with what intuitive perception the camel selects the edible herbs and shrubs of the desert; and when he happens to find one specially to his liking, it is with great difficulty he can be induced to proceed without at least securing a good mouthful of the dainty.

The camel has been called by many writers "the ship of the desert;" and the term seems singularly appropriate to those who have travelled by its aid. No one who has ever crossed the desert on its back can think of it with any other feeling than the most kindly one,—just as one remembers with a sort of friendly sentiment the ship that has carried him safely across the ocean. To the caravanist in the desert the camel is the ship whose slow but never-failing step carries him across the hideous wastes of heated sand, where life seems unknown, and where to lose sight of the track of the patient beast is to fall inevitably into the jaws of death.

Our journey was now much more agreeable to me than it had been a few days before. The great Atlas range, although still far off, began to assume a well-defined outline, stretching far away to east

and west in sublime curves, and its peaks tinged with various shades according as they were hidden in shade or reflected the rays of the morning sun.

With the mountains in sight, and knowing that we were marching towards them, my spirits gradually became more buoyant, despite my smarting eyes and enfeebled vision; and the desert seemed to lose in a great measure its repulsive aspect. When one is in the heart of the desert, with nothing but sandy plains and hills in sight in whatsoever direction he turns his eyes, he finds it hard to resist the feeling that he is hopelessly lost in the melancholy waste,—that he has bid adieu forever to the busy world of life. Day after day the monotonous march continues, until the dreary stretch of sand becomes unutterably loathsome, and the tired traveller feels as though life itself were a burden. How different the feeling inspired by the view of the mountains! At last there appears a limit to the region of death,—there is an object on which the eye can rest with delight; and it is inspiriting to reflect that, once there, one will be again in the kingdom of life, where nature seems to have put forth all her powers for the delectation of the senses.

The day, taken all in all, passed very agreeably; for during a great part of the time I was in company with Deborah, who had that morning mounted a camel for the first time since our leaving Tlemcen.

The more I saw of this beautiful creature, the more enigmatical did she become to me. Frequently her utterances were quite beyond my comprehension. Sometimes, in the course of our conversation, she would seem to forget herself and to be about to give free expression to her feelings; and while I would be attentively listening, thinking that she was about to confide some weighty secret to me, she would suddenly break off, and say, "*Oubliez, monsieur, ce que je vous ai dit,*"—as though reproaching herself with having unwittingly disclosed something that she had wished to keep concealed,—when in fact she had told me nothing. Her ideas, as well as her words, seemed incoherent. I felt assured that she must be suffering great mental anguish, but that she was too proud to acknowledge it to a stranger; and I determined to find out the cause. If all other means failed, I could rely on Juanette, who at every halt was found at her mistress's side.

On this day Deborah informed me that her brother was not at all satisfied with her,—that he wished her to consider herself as having thrown off the shackles of civilization and as being once more a Mozabite girl, and to display a spirit of amiability towards her countrymen. The task was too difficult for the poor girl; for how could she, who had so long mingled with cultivated European society, and who had received a thorough education in European schools, find happiness among

her barbarous and ignorant countrymen? And if such was already the character of her feelings towards them, how would it be with her when buried hopelessly in her desert home?

She remembered her native land with great difficulty, she told me, and that she considered her mission to be that of a civilizer of her people, if they would lend themselves to the project; and if not—— And here once more her sentences became incoherent, and her manner clearly indicated that some idea lay near her heart which she dared not express.

Zelma was in all respects the opposite of her mistress. She laughed, chatted, and now and then broke forth into a merry song. “By the laws of Europe,” she remarked to me, once, “I am free. I am accompanying Deborah in the capacity of a friend alone; and should I chance not to like the life of the oasis, then——” “Then what?” I asked. “Je retournerai avec vous, monsieur le docteur.”

A by no means disagreeable prospect, this, for my return-voyage; and if I had been quite sure that the girl was serious, and that it would not be too heavy a blow to poor Deborah, I am not certain but that I might have taken her at her offer and returned at the first opportunity.

That evening, as the darkness closed in upon our little company, the aspect of the heavens was one of surpassing beauty. For the first time since our setting out, the caravan had continued to

journey after nightfall, since there was now no possibility of missing the road. I was riding alongside of Deborah, who seemed unwilling to lose any opportunity of conversing with me; and, as the myriad jewels of heaven threw their soft light on our path, it was sometimes difficult to believe that all was not some pleasant dream. For a while my fair companion appeared to take pleasure in calling my attention to the various brilliant constellations, which in that part of the world shine forth with a splendor unknown to the skies of the West; but at last she grew silent, and, as she gazed fixedly at the sparkling canopy overhead, a deep sigh now and then escaped her bosom, and awakened in my heart certain chords which till then had never been struck. Whether it was sympathy, or a deeper, holier feeling, I could not tell. One thing, however, I knew: that night sleep refused to visit my eyelids; the image of Deborah constantly rose before me, and I longed for the morning, that I might once more gaze on her lovely countenance, once more hear her musical tones, and forget in her presence the horrible monotony of the desert.

I rose at daybreak, after having restlessly tossed on my couch all night. The usual bustle of preparation for the day's journey was going on, and in a short time the caravan was again in motion. Our road now lay over a vast level plain, across which the mountains loomed distinctly into view;

and, as my eyes fell on their majestic outlines, I involuntarily saluted them, as though I had recognized some dear friend.

Our caravan did not at any time present a very imposing sight, nor was it at all remarkable for the observance of the order that is usually supposed to characterize such bodies; but just now, when in full view of the mountains, so that guides were rendered for the time superfluous, the disorder and seeming disorganization were sublime. Some eager spirits were far in advance of the main body; others were lagging carelessly behind; and still others were to the right or the left, a mile or two apart. Our party looked like an army of invaders, bent on storming the mountains *en masse*, so eagerly were they pressing towards their distant base.

From the second day of our journey, I had noticed that the Mozabites paid very little attention to the discipline of the march, never troubling themselves about keeping in a compact body or marching in a straight line,—the consequence of which was that the camels traversed nearly double the extent of ground that they would have done had their masters listened to the dictates of common sense.

On this morning I paid scrupulous attention to my toilet; and as soon as I could do so without a glaring violation of the laws of etiquette, I guided my camel towards the litter occupied by Deborah, the charm of whose company was now irresistible,

and in whose manner I fancied I detected—pardon my vanity, reader—a slight spice of coquetry.

Soon after I had ridden up to her litter, she ordered a saddled camel,—saying that she wished to take advantage of the morning air; but I was vain enough to flatter myself that it was to avail herself of the opportunity of riding in my company.

Her eyelids were slightly swollen and reddened, but not from the usual cause in desert-travelling. She had been weeping, it was very evident.

We were soon deeply engaged in conversation, on various desultory topics; but soon she appeared to grow unwontedly serious, and all at once she asked me to explain why it is that in Europe we take such pains to educate our youth. The question came so abruptly, and was so unexpected, that I was unprepared with a suitable answer. Mere commonplaces and truisms would be of no avail: I could see that Deborah, in asking me the question, looked for an answer which would fully respond to her secret thought.

Education, I told her,—speaking in the pictorial phraseology of the East,—is the greenhouse in which the tender plant is raised, for the purpose of bearing rare fruits, of which the generality of its kind are devoid.

“Doctor,” said she, impatiently, “put pictures to one side, and answer me directly. Does education make one happy?”

"Undoubtedly," replied I. "It elevates the mind; it makes man understand his mission on earth, enables him to rise above the vulgar herd, and leads him to forget that he is of the earth earthy,—teaching him that there is a nobler source whence the soul, and, consequently, its daughter the mind, have emanated."

"And is that consciousness sufficient to console one through a life of disappointment or misery?"

"It is, in a certain degree. It mitigates the intensities of moral suffering, while it also tends in a great measure to blunt the keen edge of mere physical pain."

"Let us put physical pain out of the question for the present, doctor," answered she, impatiently; "or do you think that pain of the body is more to be dreaded than the anguish of the soul?"

"By no means," replied I. "What I mean is that whereas the bodily suffering of the educated man is exactly the same in degree as that of the ignorant, he has this advantage over the latter,—that from his own resources of mind he can draw a consolation which the other can never know; while in mental troubles the vulgar and illiterate are totally bereft of any sustaining power."

"But therein consists your error," said Deborah. "The mental ailments of the ignorant can never be like those of the educated,—can never lead him to the awful brink of despair: he is armored in the apathy to intellectual things in which he was

born, which has surrounded him all his life, and which will accompany him to the grave."

"Then am I to consider you one of those who hold to the doctrine that 'ignorance is bliss'?"

"Yes," replied she, unhesitatingly: "there can be no doubt that it is a true doctrine in the vast majority of instances; and we do not need to go far for a practical exemplification. Look at the women of my nation,—those wives of the Mozabites yonder, whose sole purpose in life seems to be to prepare the meals of their husbands, attend to their clothing, and cultivate their fields,—to be recompensed by the treatment of slaves, happy to be allowed, after their labor is over, to lie down at the feet of their masters, like the dog which licks the hand that strikes him. Yet you can see for yourself how happy they are, without a shade of the care that so often poisons the lives of their more educated but less fortunate sisters."

"True, they are happy, as far as they can comprehend happiness; but they can hardly be said to rank with intellectual beings. Surely you would not place them for a moment on a level with yourself?"

"Why not, doctor? Are they not of my own sex, endowed with a soul like myself, born on the same soil, educated in the same religious faith?"

"Yes, but nevertheless you are infinitely their superior. It is not the mere circumstance of your birth, or your present position as the sister of the

powerful chief of one of the greatest oases of the desert, that places you above them: it is education, culture, which makes you different from them,—as the diamond that has been subjected to the skill of the lapidary differs from the rough stone just taken from the bowels of the earth,—and which causes them instinctively to acknowledge your superiority.

“Even granting the truth of all you say concerning my position, it is not a direct answer to my original question. I now ask you plainly, do you believe I am happier than the meanest of my countrywomen yonder?—yes or no.”

“You certainly ought to be happier, Deborah. Your advantages are immeasurably greater than theirs. Their sphere is an excessively circumscribed one; while yours is broad as the world. They would be out of their element in any other place than the desert; you would shine in the most brilliant circles of European society. You cannot but perceive the difference between their condition and yours; and I am at a loss to comprehend how it is that you fail to recognize the fact that to education alone is that difference to be attributed.”

“Answer me frankly one question, doctor,” replied the fair girl. “Suppose one of your hot-house plants, reared among her kindred, were suddenly, and without any desire on her part, transplanted to the midst of the desert: think you that

she, with her fine organization and delicate structure, accustomed to the tender assiduities of civilized culture, would find a congenial home in the sandy waste, among the coarse herbs fit only to be the food of camels?"

I was about to answer at some length, having now before me, as in a mirror, the thoughts of Deborah's heart, when the Taleb rode up to us, saying that we should be compelled to go at once into camp, and travel by night only, for that his scouts, whom he had sent out the evening before, had just returned with news that a band of Arab marauders were encamped some distance to our left, adding that, in the event of their attacking us, it would be far better for us to be in camp, with our forces concentrated, than to be surprised on the march, with our forces scattered over a mile or two of desert.

The news was sufficiently alarming to cause a suspension of conversation on other topics; and Deborah and I parted, mutually promising to renew our discussion at the first favorable opportunity.

CHAPTER IX.

PREPARATION FOR THE ATTACK.

THE bugle sounded, the stragglers came up in haste, the men dismounted from the camels, the tents were pitched in a semicircle as closely together as possible, the camels and the rest of the animals were placed in the centre, and all the necessary preparations were made to stand on the defensive in case of an attack.

Deborah requested me to remain near her, for she had very little confidence in her countrymen; and I, although not much of a soldier, summoned up my courage, and promised to defend her with my life and to do all in my power to shield her from harm. I was provided with two good double-barrelled guns and two six-shooters. I ordered my tent to be pitched near to hers, and instructed Yussuf in the measures to be taken in case of an attack. The lad seemed to relish the idea of a fray, and waited with boyish impatience the approach of the enemy.

A great bustle now pervaded the camp. The men were busily engaged in loading their long carbines and looking to the keenness of the edge of

their rusty old sabres; but, as far as I could see, my weapons would be likely to prove more serviceable than theirs in case of need.

Although I could not foretell the result in this instance, I was nevertheless somewhat curious to witness an Arab fight; for, if there was to be any combat, it would be at close quarters.

A few of our number were sent out as skirmishers, to report on the approach of the Tuaricks, while the rest were placed in the most favorable position for defence. The women were ordered to assemble in a designated tent at the first appearance of the enemy, and to remain there until victory had declared for one or the other party. The baggage was piled up in front of the semicircle, so as to form a sort of breastwork; while behind it armed men were stationed, to be ready for the enemy on their first onslaught.

While all this was going on, on the part of the men who composed the caravan, I and Yussuf dug a trench, in the form of a half-moon, in front of Deborah's tent, but at a considerable distance from it; and in front of this trench I piled up sand to form a breastwork for myself and my reserve, Yussuf. This done, I returned to Deborah's tent, where I found her, Zelma, and Juanette occupied in making lint. I appointed Juanette surgeon-general, and intrusted to her the medicine-chest with which I had provided myself before setting out from Tlemcen; while Zelma, more courageous

than many a man would have been in the same circumstances, requested me to allow her to remain at my side in case of an attack, that she might aid me by loading my revolvers.

Every thing having been got in readiness to give the marauders a warm reception, quiet once more reigned in our camp; the women went on with their ordinary occupations, while the men, stretched on the ground, awaited the signal for the attack.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. Our scouts had not returned, and we began to grow rather impatient; for so well prepared did we consider ourselves that a skirmish would have been welcomed as an exciting break in the wearisome monotony of our daily life. For my part, although I knew nothing of the style of Arab warfare, I felt not the slightest trepidation on my own account: all my anxiety was for Deborah and Zelma, who, if it should be our fate to be overpowered, would be carried off as trophies by the enemy.

Deborah begged me to be careful in exposing myself should there be an attack; for, if the marauding band whom our scouts had discovered should prove to be Tuaricks, the fight would be accompanied with great peril to us, since that tribe use poisoned arrows, a wound from one of which is certain death.

I thanked her for her friendly solicitude, but remarked at the same time that in any event it

was consoling to reflect that should I fall in the conflict there would be few hearts touched by my misfortune.

She made no reply; but her beautiful eyes became dim, and the tears trickled down her pale cheeks. Vainly did she endeavor to conceal her emotion. I had seen enough to convince me that I was not an object of indifference to her; and the consciousness of having won the regard of that lovely being made me inexpressibly happy.

The hours dragged on in anxious expectation until, about six o'clock, our scouts were descried in the distance, galloping rapidly towards us. All was now commotion. The women retired to the tent assigned to them, the men took their posts under the direction of the Taleb, the animals were secured in the centre of the camp, the matchlocks were freshly primed, and every thing was put in readiness for a stubborn contest.

On came the scouts, the rapidity of their pace leading us to believe that the enemy was close upon their heels; and, when the foremost of them had drawn rein, the men eagerly crowded around him to hear the tidings.

Scarcely, however, had he uttered a dozen words when the whole party sent up the joyous shout of "Enhalallah!" We had nothing to fear, it seemed; for the supposed band of Tuarick robbers had turned out to be a caravan of nomadic Bedouins, peacefully pursuing their way towards the south. I at

once ran to communicate the joyous intelligence to Deborah, who heard it with a pleasure which she made no attempt to disguise.

As darkness would now soon be upon us, the Taleb issued an order to remain in camp until ten o'clock, at which hour we would have moonlight to guide us on the road.

The threatened storm having thus blown over, Juanette resigned her office of surgeon-general, returning me her commission in the shape of the medicine-chest; while Deborah and Zelma packed away the lint for future emergencies.

The Taleb being occupied in making preparations for the march of the caravan, at a considerable distance from us, I endeavored to resume the conversation whose thread had been so abruptly broken by the tidings of the approach of the supposed Tuarick bandits. But Deborah could not be drawn into discussion: she sat silent, her eyes bent on the ground, her features betraying that a conflict of some kind was raging in her bosom. Believing that she desired to be alone, I turned to go back to my tent; but at that instant she grasped my hand, and, although she uttered not a word, I understood perfectly that she wished me to remain.

I obeyed; and for some minutes the silence was unbroken. Suddenly, with a look like that of a frightened gazelle, she rose from her seat, saying, "Go—go, doctor. For creatures such as I, solitude

is most fitting. My sadness is contagious, and makes those around me sad also. Go, now; and do not approach me during our night's ride: wait until I send for you in the morning." And, without another word, she glided into her tent.

Those of my readers who belong to the fair sex will require no explanation of this seemingly mysterious conduct of Deborah; while to those of my own sex I may remark that at the time of the above occurrence I was a little over twenty years old, impulsive, impressible, and full of life. No wonder that a feeling which till then had lain dormant was aroused within me. Far away from home, kindred, and friends, shut out, as it were, from civilized society, in the midst of the great Desert of Sahara, with a few semi-barbarous companions, the only person with whom I could unreservedly converse being Deborah, and she a creature of surpassing loveliness, endowed with a mind of unusual power, how was it possible for me to remain indifferent, unless I had been like that saint of old, who, according to tradition, when the devil wished to tempt him, appearing in the guise of a beautiful woman, thrust his head into a wasps'-nest, seeking to forget in bodily pain the snares of the evil one?

There being no wasps'-nest to be found in the desert, I was compelled to seek some other mode of resisting temptation: so I requested Juanette to obtain from her mistress permission for me to use

her charger for a few hours. I yearned for solitude; and that solitude I was sure to find by a ramble in the desert, away from the camp and from Deborah.

In a short time Yussuf came to me, with the announcement that Deborah's horse was at my service. I immediately mounted, and, letting the bridle fall loosely over the animal's neck, started off for a ride in the desert.

Absorbed in thought, I rode on and on, forgetting time and place in the contemplation of the one object that was uppermost in my mind,—the fair being whose lot in some respects so strongly resembled my own,—until, before I was aware of it, night had set in. Suddenly becoming apprised of my position, I checked the onward movement of my horse, and looked around me. I could see nothing of the camp; whichever way I turned my eyes, all was darkness; and it was with difficulty that I managed to ascertain the time by feeling the hands of my watch. When I left the camp, it was a little after six o'clock; I was horrified to find that it was now eight o'clock. I had been two hours on horseback, and, by the most moderate computation, must be at least eight miles distant from the caravan, alone in the trackless desert.

I at once comprehended the dreadful nature of my situation; and the idea of being lost in the desert made me forget for the moment every other

earthly consideration. A feeling of terror seemed to creep through my whole body; my head grew dizzy, my sight became dim, and my tongue felt as though it had been transmuted into a piece of cold metal. The perspiration started from every pore; and I should have fallen from my horse had I not grasped his mane. This feeling of abject fright, however, soon passed away, and, my natural presence of mind asserting itself, I felt ready to brave the dangers of the terrible position in which I had been placed by my culpable negligence.

Whither to turn, which way to go, what to do next, I knew not. The conviction that I was lost, with the horrid prospect of death by starvation, was by no means conducive to a tranquil frame of mind; and, as I stood there silently thinking, there rose up before me in hideous distinctness the vision of the bleached bones of strayed and lost travellers which I had noticed in the early part of our journey, and which had then excited in me so many gloomy reflections.

“Will my absence from the camp be remarked?” thought I; “and if it is, will the Taleb exert himself to find me? Will he continue his journey, or wait till I return?” One idea gave consolation to my troubled mind: it was that Deborah, the only one who had the slightest influence over her brother, would insist on his doing all in his power to find me. Besides, he had promised to Ibrahim, on leaving Tlemcen, to take care of me; and was

he not therefore to a certain extent responsible for my safety?

Reassuring these reflections certainly were; but considerations of a less cheering nature obtruded themselves. What would the Taleb care for his promise to Ibrahim, now that he had his sister with him in the desert? And, even should he choose to regard the promise to take care of me as binding, would he not have the excuse that my riding off into the desert was my own voluntary act,—a piece of suicidal madness for which it would be impossible to hold him responsible? These, with other considerations of the same character, made me feel excessively uncomfortable. Besides, was it not very likely that the Taleb—shrewd and penetrating as he was—had looked with displeasure upon the friendship between myself and his sister as a probable obstacle to his plans for the future? and if by my own folly I was removed from his path, why should he trouble himself to search for me?

Thoughts of this kind soon had the uppermost in my mind, especially as it occurred to me that if he had desired to aid me in retracing my steps, his plan would have been to kindle a large fire, that its glare might serve as a guide by which I could find my way back safely. As I vainly scanned the horizon for a single ray of light, I bitterly cursed the Taleb; but with greater bitterness I cursed myself for the caprice that had in

the first place impelled me to venture into the Sahara at all. What was the motive for my insane freak? Was it the thirst for discovery, the feeling that prompts a scientific explorer? No: it was simply the love of adventure; and I had yielded to its first impulse, without pausing an instant to weigh the dangers of the journey. Then why should I complain? Here I had an adventure worthy of the name. What could be more thrilling than to be lost in the great desert of Sahara, to pine for a few days, suffering the excruciating pangs of hunger and thirst, and then give up an agonized life, leaving one's body to be devoured by jackals and hyenas and his bones to bleach on the surface of the desert, to serve as a landmark for some tribe of barbarous nomads!

My thoughts next turned to Deborah, but no longer with the tender feeling that had driven me from her presence. Now I asked myself how she would view my disappearance. Would she bewail the loss of her friend more than she would that of her horse, the animal she valued so highly as the gift of her beloved friend Madame Ibrahim? Absurd though the question appeared, I could not get it out of my mind; and I actually began to feel a sort of jealousy towards the poor animal, now my only companion, and compelled to share my wretched lot.

How long I remained thus, pondering my gloomy situation, I know not; nor can I say how much

longer I might have stayed there in fruitless communion with myself, had not my horse grown tired of the inactivity, and, without a word from me, struck out in what seemed to be a sort of path. Looking on this sudden impulse of the animal as perhaps a providential interposition in my behalf, I let him pursue his course without an effort to guide him, trusting that his instinct would be the means of my deliverance. Soon, however, his evident excitement and the uncommon rapidity of his gait caused me to check him: I began to think that he had simply been startled by the howling of some wild beasts, and, if so, it was fruitless to be rushing over the desert at this mad rate. But ere many minutes I found out my mistake. The horse, endowed with keener vision than myself, had seen and was now bearing me swiftly towards a faint light, which might proceed from a camp-fire or might be but the delusive twinkle of a star low down in the horizon. Being unable to do any thing of myself, and grasping eagerly at any hope of deliverance, however slight, I allowed him to take his course; and soon I had cause to rejoice at my determination; for what had but a few moments before been a mere speck I now beheld grow larger and larger, until at last I felt assured that it was a camp-fire.

A great load fell from my heart at the discovery. "Saved!" shouted I, at the top of my voice, at the same time patting the neck of the

noble animal: "saved, and soon to be once more among my fellow-beings!" and in my gratitude I felt as though no kindness could repay the service the dumb brute had rendered me.

The spirited animal seemed to redouble his exertions. Already I could discern the dark forms of the men and camels belonging to our caravan; and as we drew nearer I could distinguish the sounds of conversation. Oh, how musical to me at that moment were the tones of the human voice! On dashed the steed, nor paused until we had arrived in the very centre of the camp. Then, and not till then, did I discover that the faces around me were faces I had never seen before,—that the party into whose presence I had been so unceremoniously ushered were not the Mozabites with whom I had set out from Tlemcen.

I had no sooner halted than several of the men rushed towards me with menace in their eyes, and fiercely demanded, "Who are you?" I of course answered at once, giving at the same time the description of the caravan to which I belonged. No sooner were the words out of my mouth than I was roughly dragged from my horse, and in a twinkling I was bound hand and foot; after which I was carried to a dark-looking tent at some distance from the camp-fire. My faithful steed had rescued me from death by starvation, but only to carry me into the heart of a band of the fierce Tuaricks, the terror of caravans.

CHAPTER X.

THE BANDITS OF THE SAHARA.

MANY of my readers who have patiently followed my narrative thus far may be tempted at this point to throw down the book with the exclamation, "Nothing but fiction!" To such I would simply say that, so far from there being any exaggeration, I have found it impossible to give an accurate picture of the horror of my situation. Writing as I do in a tongue which is not my vernacular, I cannot employ language of sufficient force to describe adequately my feelings upon the occasion; and as to the truth of the narrative, I have only to remark that I have given but a small part of what actually happened.

As I lay on the floor of the tent into which I had been thrust, my situation was pitiable indeed. The fearful revulsion from the hope that had inspired me on seeing the camp-fire, added to the mental distress of the hours when I had believed myself lost in the desert, seemed to have deprived me of the power of thought. Besides, the physical pain I was suffering was enough to drive me to distraction. My hands, arms, and legs had been

tied with thin, strong cords made of a sort of rough grass, which seemed to cut into the flesh, and so impeded the circulation as almost to deprive those members of sensation. I felt as though the veins must burst if the cords were kept on much longer; yet I dared not utter a word of remonstrance, for fear of adding to the miseries of my situation. I was overpowered by fatigue, and longed for sleep; but sleep was utterly impossible while I suffered pain so excruciating.

Half an hour, perhaps, had elapsed, when a dirty-looking Arab, entering the tent where I lay, untied my feet, and, fastening a rope around my neck, as though I had been some savage beast, ordered me to rise and follow him. He conducted me past several tents, in which, by the light of the moon, now struggling fitfully through the clouds that had hitherto obscured the heavens, I saw some of the men who composed the caravan. They were a fierce-looking set, the expression of their features bespeaking at once their trade of highway-robbers.

When we had arrived near the camp-fire, my guide halted, and bade me sit down, but without relaxing for an instant his grasp on the cord around my neck. In front of the fire sat eight or ten men, engaged in earnest conversation, but speaking in tones so low that it was impossible for me to distinguish a single word.

After considerable deliberation, one of the Arabs,

—seemingly the chief of the tribe,—addressing me with the flattering title of Christian dog, ordered me to state the object of my intrusion among them. Before making a direct reply, I besought him to order the cord around my hands to be taken off, for that until that was done I would be unable to answer a single question.

At a nod from my interrogator, an Arab approached to untie the knot; but it was so tight that he was forced to cut it,—the pressure of the knife as it passed between the muscle and the cord producing such intense pain that I could not repress a cry of anguish. Paying no attention to this, however, he went on cutting, until the cord was severed,—an operation which, owing to the dulness of the knife, required several minutes. The cord removed, the sensation was more painful than I can describe. The pressure had partially checked the circulation, and now a creeping sensation was experienced, so unpleasant that it made my head dizzy. I begged for water in which to bathe my aching hands; but the unfeeling reply was that I should have brought water with me, since they had none for Christians. This answer gave me an idea of the treatment I might expect from my captors; and I tried to moisten with my tongue that part of my hands where the cord had been tied, which had left an impress that would have admitted a child's finger.

While thus engaged, I heard a mocking laugh,

which seemed to say that this was but the beginning of my troubles. Summoning up all my fortitude, I now told them who I was, and how I had happened among them. When I had finished, they sat silent; and the suspense added another torment to those I already experienced.

Having cogitated the matter for what appeared to me like an age, they called the Arab who had brought me into their presence, and, after a whispered conference, during which I vainly endeavored to read in their faces my future fate, my jailer once more approached me, and, first making sure that the rope was securely tied around my neck, bade me get up and follow him.

As I was led, or rather dragged, along, I once more passed the tents; but this time I was taken behind them, to the place where the camels and the rest of the animals that belonged to the caravan were kept. Here I saw my horse tied to a stake; and I could not help envying the dumb brute the advantage he possessed over me. There stood the beautiful charger of Deborah, partaking of his evening repast; while nobody had thought it worth while to inquire if I had broken my fast since the morning.

In the centre of the camp a strong stake had been driven into the ground, and to that were tied, by a long cord, the animals that would otherwise have been likely to stray away.

My jailer, or, rather, tormentor, now took the

end of the cord by which he had held me, and fastened it to the stake, drawing me so close to it that there was scarcely room for a sheet of paper between the back part of my head and the pole. This done, he unwound a rope from around his waist, and began with it a new operation.

He passed a sling under my arms and around my body, and by means of another sling tightened my arms to the pole; then, as if his barbarous nature was not fully satisfied, he repeated the operation around my knees, tying one knee to the right side of the pole, and the other to the left.

In vain did I beseech him to have mercy: I might as well have sought mercy of an infuriated tiger. He did not even deign an answer to my entreaties; and, as if to punish me for the audacity of my request, he sat down in front of me and divested me of my boots and stockings.

More than once during this operation I was tempted to strike him down, though at the risk of instantly losing my life; but I would have been unable to do it even had my arms been free, for my hands were so swollen and so painful that I was powerless.

As he was about to leave me, having completed the tying operation to his entire satisfaction, I begged him to let me have a drink; but he heeded not my request, and walked leisurely off, feeling, in all probability, that he deserved credit for having thus treated a dog of a Christian.

There have been many before me who have written about their adventures in the Sahara; but I do not think that any of them ever experienced sufferings comparable to mine throughout that fearful night. The hours seemed to drag themselves out into years, the minutes into weeks, the seconds into hours.

At the height of my suffering,—I cannot say whether before or after midnight,—when a raging fever was devouring me,—when I felt as if a fiery liquid were coursing through my veins,—when my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, parched by a consuming thirst,—when I could hear every throb of the pulse in my temples, and when it seemed as if the next movement of the heart must drive the life-blood to my throat and suffocate me,—at that moment, when for a draught of water I would have been willing to give a year of my life, I saw, not more than ten feet from me, a she-camel suckling her young one. The sight seemed to augment my thirst,—if that were possible; a film covered my eyes, and the next instant a myriad flashes of light passed before them. My mind wandered, and I beheld a mirage such as no explorer, no traveller, no Bedouin, has ever witnessed,—the mighty desert, its broad plains and sandy waves wrapped in fire, while numberless caravans swept past me, in such close proximity that their fiery breath appeared to dry up the life-blood in my veins.

Then, as I gazed in awe, the flames enveloped me, and I was dragged into that dreadful arena, hurried onward with the speed of the wind, suffering untold agonies, until my senses failed, and I saw and heard no more.

When I opened my eyes after recovering from my fainting-fit, I felt a cooling breeze playing around my face. I looked around, with the bewilderment of one who awakes from a nightmare. The day was just beginning to break ; and I found myself stretched on the ground, bruised and exhausted.

It must have been about five o'clock in the morning. The tents were all packed on the camels' backs, and the greater part of the tribe were already on their journey, only a few remaining in my vicinity. I was lying, as I have said, on the ground, the hardness of which I felt very sensibly ; for during my fainting-fit I had been stripped of every particle of outer clothing ; my fez had vanished ; and my hair had been cut close to my head, to render me the more sensitive to the rays of the fierce African sun.

My keeper (for such I suppose I may call him), giving me a kick, ordered me to rise. I attempted to comply, but found it impossible, my arms and knees being utterly disabled. Seeing my inability, he thought fit to help me by another kick ; and he would probably have gone on kicking until he had entirely disabled me, had he not been interrupted

by a commanding voice, which came from a group of five or six men engaged in helping to place some baggage on the camels.

I was now assisted to mount a camel, and, when fairly on it, I was once more bound,—though this time they left my arms free. The precaution of my captors was a needless one; since, even had I been left perfectly untrammelled, I would have been as unable to escape as though I had been loaded with chains; for my body was so greatly exhausted by the delirium of the past night, and my limbs were so fearfully swollen, that I could not have gone even had they given me the liberty to do so.

The camel on which I had been placed was led by means of a rope, one end of which my jailer fastened to his saddle, and, with a swing of his corbatch, we fell into the line of march.

I now had an opportunity to see the men into whose power I had fallen. The caravan presented a truly formidable appearance. In front rode the chief, or sheik, accompanied by three guards who were a few paces behind him. He was mounted on my charger, or rather the one I had borrowed from Deborah. A gun was slung across his shoulders, the long barrel of which looked in the distance like the pole of a lance.

Next followed a number of camels, laden with tents, firewood, water-skins, and household utensils, and guarded by a troop of armed men.

My attention was drawn particularly to several camels bearing what looked like rude tents, formed by stretching some white material over a set of semicircular hoops. These were the carriages of the younger women of the tribe, as I surmised from seeing a youthful and good-looking face peep from behind the curtain, apparently to steal a glance at the stranger. Neither her toilet nor her features, however, made the slightest impression on me: I could think of nothing but my aching limbs and burning throat. I envied her the tent that covered her; for, being deprived of the greater part of my clothes, without a head-cover, and my hair cut off, I suffered excruciatingly from the burning rays of the sun.

Behind these travelling-tents came the oldest and poorest women of the tribe, driving a host of asses, some laden with baggage, others with strings of live poultry, others with baskets of fresh dates.

The reader may faintly imagine how I felt, consuming with thirst, burning with fever, not a drop of water with which to moisten my parched lips, and yet all around me an abundance of food and drink,—skins full of water, baskets full of dates,—almost within reach, now and then the fruit dropping from the baskets, lost in the sand, trampled down by the camels' hoofs, and yet a drop of water, a morsel of food, mercilessly denied me.

Following after these provision-laden animals

came herds of goats and flocks of sheep, driven by men on foot; while immediately behind me came the cattle of the tribe, guarded by a couple of hundred fierce-looking warriors. To one who could have looked on the scene from a distance and with no sense of personal danger, the train would have brought to mind that of the patriarch Jacob on his way to meet and make peace with his brother Esau.

My sufferings now were principally in the back and the upper part of my head. The rays of the sun were like fiery darts, and, to protect myself from them, I tore my silken undershirt from my body and tied it around my head.

During the march, one of the women, who had fallen to the rear on account of the beast she was driving having become unmanageable, came quite close to the camel on which I was tied. I implored her to give me one—only one—date; and, moved either by pity or by the caprice of a barbarian, she put her hand in the basket as if to give me some; but at that moment my keeper, perceiving the movement, struck her over the back with the corbatch, so that she dropped the treasure which I nearly had in my hands. I could no longer doubt that it was their intention to let me perish with hunger.

Towards eleven o'clock, the caravan halted. I was untied, but not until the burden had been removed from all the rest of the camels: and I did

not alight, but was dropped down on the sandy ground as one would drop a bag of goods. Still, in spite of the brutal treatment I had thus far experienced, I felt a faint hope that now, as it was meal-time, my captors would have compassion on my extreme misery, and that I was about to have an opportunity to relieve the pangs of hunger and—joy of joys—be vouchsafed a few drops of water.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR CHANGE.

THE camels having been unloaded, the tents pitched, and the animals made secure in the centre of the camp, the distribution of the water and *bazeen* commenced.

The caravan, as nearly as I could judge, numbered upward of six hundred souls. As each received the daily ration of *bazeen*, accompanied with a draught of water, I looked on, as the reader will have no trouble in believing, with hungry expectancy; but not until every man, woman, and child had been served did any one seem to give me a thought. Then, however, I was rejoiced to find that starvation, for the present at least, was not to be my fate; for one of those whose office it seemed to be to dispense the provisions approached, and handed me a date-cake about the size of an ordinary sea-biscuit, and a wooden cup filled with water. Eagerly did I grasp the cup and place it to my parched lips; and, although the water was lukewarm and under any other circumstances might have been considered unpalatable, it now seemed like ambrosia. I sipped and sipped, enjoy-

ing to the full the heavenly sensation, and would have continued sipping for an hour, to prolong the delight to its utmost, had not the official, becoming impatient at my apparent tardiness, ordered me to drink the water at once,—an order which, sorely against my will, I obeyed. With the *bazeen*, however, I was allowed to do as I chose. Carefully did I husband the precious morsel, taking but a crumb at a time and chewing it as long as possible; and although in my then famished condition I could with ease have eaten twenty times the quantity, I forced myself to abstain before the cake was entirely gone, and reserved a portion for future contingencies,—since I knew not when a merciful mood might again actuate my savage captors.

For a little while I was somewhat at a loss for a place in which to hide it securely; but at last I tied it in a corner of the shirt which, as I have already said, I had wound around my head. My hands and arms being now free, I began to consider whether I could not devise some further plans for my personal comfort,—or, perhaps I should say, for the alleviation of my discomforts. The shirt had protected my head from the sun's rays, but my back and shoulders had been fearfully scorched, and the pain was almost as intolerable as the headache had been. I now arranged the garment in such a way that, while a portion of it covered my head, the remainder fell loosely

over my shoulders; and soon I had occasion to be thankful for the happy thought, for I found that as it was stirred by the breeze a very pleasant sense of coolness was produced. In the joy of this discovery, I already began to view my situation more hopefully.

Up to this moment I had been sitting on the burning sand, without the slightest shelter from the terrific heat of the meridian sun; but, under the impulse of my renewed hopefulness, I made bold to ask permission to lie down in the shade of a tent. I hardly expected that my request would be granted, and was therefore the more surprised when, after a few minutes, the man whom I had addressed came up to me and told me I was to go forthwith to the tent of the sheik, which stood in a central position and was guarded by the three men who during the march had ridden immediately behind him.

I obeyed the summons with alacrity, and was soon ushered into the presence of the chieftain, whom I found reclining at full length on a heavy carpet in the centre of his tent. Bidding me to be seated, he fastened his eyes on me with an earnest gaze, as though he would have read the innermost secrets of my heart. For several minutes the steadfast, searching look was continued; and, though I was inspired by all the courage of conscious innocence, I could not help feeling somewhat disconcerted by the scrutiny of those keen black eyes,

into whose fiery depths I gazed with a disheartening sense of my inability to determine from them whether evil or good was in store for me.

After he had seemingly satisfied himself, he called to one of the sentinels at the door of the tent, and ordered that no one should be allowed to enter until the conclusion of his interview with the infidel stranger. This done, he beckoned me to his side, and addressed me with the question,—

“Are you in reality what you profess to be, or have you not been sent hither as a spy?”

“A spy!” I replied, in amazement. “I a spy?—and of whom?”

“Of the Taleb of Ghardaia,” answered he; and at the mention of that name I could see a cloud come over his brow and his fist involuntarily clench.

“Of the Taleb of Ghardaia!” I repeated, my astonishment momentarily increasing. “What have I to do with him?” Thereupon I related my whole story,—how I had become acquainted with the Taleb at Tlemcen, how he had promised to Ibrahim to protect and befriend me on my journey through the desert, and how the cool reserve of his subsequent conduct had given the lie to his pledged word.

Towards the close of my narrative, which was given with all the earnestness that springs from truth and the consciousness of having been unjustly treated, I noticed the sheik’s stern features

relax,—particularly when I declared my half-formed purpose of returning by the first northward-bound caravan. I had no sooner concluded than he grasped my hand in evident excitement and forced me to be seated on the carpet by his side.

“Beni cadiqui salem, Insahlalah!” exclaimed he: “I thought you had come hither as his spy; but I see now that I did you injustice. But it is impossible for you to return to your caravan. You will have to remain with us; and if you still wish to visit Ghardaia, you shall go there in my company and under my protection; or if you prefer to return to Algeria, you shall do so whenever opportunity presents.”

I pressed his hand warmly, and would have kissed it,—so great was the joy I felt at this miraculous change from the misery of my position one short hour before; but the sheik, reading my emotion in every feature of my countenance, checked me.

“Be true to your words,” said he, “and no harm shall come to you. But”—and his brow once more clouded, while his dark eyes kindled—“should you prove to be the spy of the Taleb, or try to get away from us without my knowledge, then beware. I would not kill you; but your sufferings would be such as to make death a boon.”

His threat was a needless one. I had not spoken

a word of untruth, nor made a promise which I could not fulfil. I again began to express my gratitude, but as before he checked me, and, once more calling to the sentinel, he ordered him to bring me the clothes of which I had been divested the evening before. In a short time the messenger returned with my entire wardrobe; and it will readily be credited that I was not long in donning once more the garments of civilization. When I had completed my toilet, the sheik added thereto a new white camel's-hair burnouse, and I was as if transformed,—a new man,—the miserable past already fading away like a transient speck on an otherwise unclouded sky.

Great must have been the astonishment of the Tuaricks as they beheld the wretched captive, the infidel dog, who so shortly before had been led into the tent of their chief as a culprit is led into the presence of his judge, now reappear, in becoming dress, joy beaming from every feature, and seemingly the honored guest of the sheik. Several of those who stood nearest made a movement as if to approach us and learn the reason of this wondrous change; but a single glance from their superior caused them to keep their places.

The sheik now conducted me to a neighboring tent, somewhat larger than his own. This was the abode of his women. Entering it, he bade me follow him; and on doing so I was surprised to see several of his wives, lying on a temporary divan

covered with a rich carpet, and, contrary to Arab usage, showing no disposition to fly at the appearance of a strange man,—although an infidel dog, as they are in the habit of terming Christians.

Another carpet was spread on the floor, at some distance from the divan on which the women reclined; and on this the sheik invited me to be seated, he taking a position by my side. Immediately thereupon the youngest of the women went out, reappearing in a short time with a dish of *kuskusu*, in the centre of which was a boiled chicken. I was bidden by my new-made friend to partake; and, without waiting for a repetition of the order, I fell to. I think I can truthfully say that never in my life have I eaten a heartier meal than on that occasion. The young woman who brought in the *kuskusu* also made the *chaouch*,—a sort of equivalent for butter,—handing the dish first to me and then to her lord; for, as I was now the guest of the Arab, he would not taste the food until I had partaken.

For the information of those who may be curious about the matter, I may be permitted to give here a brief description of the mode of preparing the *kuskusu*, as practised among the Arabs,—especially as the style of its preparation differs very materially in the various parts of North Africa.

The foundation of the dish in all cases is the grain of fine wheat, which is first crushed and then rubbed in the hand;—somewhat like the main

ingredient of the *tortillas* of the Mexicans, except that the latter are made from corn soaked in water and then mashed: in both cases the grain is dipped in water and pressed on a flat stone until it assumes the appearance of a small round seed like millet. This is simmered over the fire with oil or mutton-fat, and is seasoned according to the taste or pecuniary ability of the maker. Many of the Arabs put figs and raisins in the mess, and pour cold milk or cream over it; while the Mexicans fill their *tortillas* with raisins, almonds, figs, and red pepper, calling them, thus prepared, *tortillas relLENas*, and accompany them with a red-pepper sauce

Very often the *kuskusu* is stuffed with pieces of mutton, goat's flesh, or, as was the case in the one served up to the sheik and myself, with chicken; and although the epicures of civilization might be inclined to look upon this Arab delicacy with contempt, I can assure the reader that no such feeling was in my mind on this occasion.

A wooden cup was handed to me during the course of the meal, containing a very refreshing liquor, which I afterwards ascertained was made by steeping fresh dates in water and allowing the infusion to ferment,—the result being a sort of mead, with a slightly intoxicating quality. Partly from the effects of this draught, but mainly from my previous fatigue, I soon began to feel quite drowsy, and I ventured to ask the sheik's per-

mission to retire for a nap, which he at once accorded, showing me to his tent and ordering a carpet to be spread for my special accommodation. Upon this I instantly stretched my wearied limbs, and, despite the exciting scenes of the past twenty-four hours, was asleep in less than two minutes.

How long my slumber continued I know not, but I felt as though not an hour had elapsed when I was aroused by one of the guards. I involuntarily put my hand in my pocket to consult my watch, but found that my captors had forgotten to restore it to me with my clothes. Rising, I stepped outside, and saw, to my no slight surprise, that every thing was packed up, the only tent left standing being the one in which I had been sleeping, and that the caravan was once more in motion.

A short distance off was the sheik, mounted on my horse; while beside him stood a camel, which I found was intended for me. Beckoning me to his side, the chief remarked that we must resume our journey, for the sun was setting and we had a long march before us. He apologized for still using my horse, giving as his reason for not offering it back to me that camel-riding would be much more agreeable, since I was not accustomed to the fatigue of a long horseback journey in the desert.

The animal he had provided for me—his own favorite camel—was furnished with a canopy, to

protect its rider from the sun's rays; but, as the day was rapidly declining, I begged him to have it taken down for the present, since I wished to enjoy to the full the delicious breeze that was now setting in from the direction of the mountains. Moreover, being entirely free from bodily suffering and from mental anxiety, I desired an opportunity to study the faces of my companions, that I might the better judge of the character of the tribe in whose power I was,—since it would have been rather an awkward question to put directly to my now attentive host.

As we quietly marched onward, disturbed by no noises but the ordinary sounds of a caravan in motion, my mind reverted to the events that had crowded on each other in such rapid succession during the past twenty-four hours. The departure from the camp, the discovery that I was lost in the desert, the sight of the distant camp-fire, my advent among these strangers, the inhuman treatment I had experienced at their hands, the excruciating torments of hunger and thirst, my exposure to the pitiless rays of the sun, followed by the almost miraculous change from the most abject misery to comparative comfort,—all this, in the retrospect, had a bewildering effect: I felt as though in a maze, and almost dreaded to allow my thoughts to dwell upon the past, lest some rude shock should suddenly arouse me from what might after all be but a delightful dream.

I am naturally of an inquisitive turn; but on this occasion I took special pains to repress my curiosity, fearing lest by some innocent but blundering query I might once more arouse the sheik's suspicions. I therefore quietly thanked Heaven for having thus far protected me, gave myself up to pleasant revery, and was silent.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GUARD OF HONOR.

I MAINTAINED the prudent silence on which, as I stated in the preceding chapter, I had resolved, until the sheik began to converse with me on various indifferent matters. I soon observed, however, that he sedulously refrained from any mention of the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia, or of the circumstances of my arrival among his own people.

I began to notice here and there on the surrounding plain a few stunted jujube-bushes (*Zizyphus spina Christi*),—an indication of the presence of water at no great distance. After mounting a low sand-hill, we crossed a dried wady, whose scanty shrubbery gave refuge to a number of birds; and my heart was gladdened at the thought that I was once more to enter the happy world of life.

Suddenly I observed a dark cloud in the distance, which seemed to be approaching us with great rapidity. A closer inspection revealed the fact that what had at first sight looked like a cloud consisted of several dark columns, like waterspouts, following each other in rapid succession, with a

gliding, rolling motion. One of the columns crossed our path not more than two hundred yards in front of us; and then we saw that it was not, as we had at first imagined, a waterspout, but a whirlwind, moving rapidly along in a circular path, and drawing into its vortex vast quantities of the finest desert sand. Its course could be distinctly traced by the clean-swept appearance of the surface over which it passed. I noticed particularly its peculiar shape,—narrowing from the centre upward, then expanding until it was lost to the view in a mist-like cloud of sand.

Although it came so close to us, we could feel no current of air; but the oppressive weight of the atmosphere was very noticeable.

Our road still presented the same monotonous aspect, varied here and there by small clumps of terebinth, acacia, and jujube. For the first time I saw a herd of gazelles browsing; and at the distance of about a mile was what appeared to be the rendezvous of a vast number of birds, leading us to hope that we would soon come to a spot where we might find tolerably comfortable quarters for the night.

As it grew dark, the sheik ordered the caravan to halt; and in a few minutes we were in bivouac. The tents were pitched, and the camels placed in charge of a keeper, to be led out to graze; the women set about preparing the evening meal; all seemed to have something to do before giving

themselves up to repose from the fatigues of the day.

My position among this people was a very anomalous one. I could not consider myself their guest; for the treatment I had received at their hands was not such as is ordinarily experienced by one holding that honorable position. I was much more like a prisoner, treated just now, it is true, with kindness and respect, but none the less under surveillance, and compelled to be on my guard lest by some untoward accident I might forfeit the good opinion of the sheik as suddenly as I had gained it. There was nothing that I could call my own, and all I could do was to submit with the best possible grace to circumstances. So now, as I saw the members of the caravan arranging their tents, I wondered how I was to spend the night; but, making a virtue of necessity, I waited in patience for the development of my captor's intentions.

After all the tents had been pitched, the sheik invited me to occupy his; and although I expressed myself highly flattered by his condescension, I rather suspected that his object was to have a better opportunity of watching me closely and frustrating any plan of escape, should I be contemplating such a movement.

I was confirmed in my suspicion when, during the course of our conversation after we had entered the tent, he told me that, while I was perfectly free to ramble about the neighborhood of the camp, he

would advise me not to go very far from it, and on no account to move a step without being accompanied by one of his armed adjutants, stating as his reason for this precaution that the vicinity of our encampment was exceedingly dangerous, on account of the ferocious beasts that were constantly prowling around, and which, should I accidentally fall into their company, would show even less respect for my feelings than his people had manifested when I first came among them.

I of course was careful not to betray my knowledge of his motive in giving me this advice, and assured him that, while I looked upon the accident that had made me acquainted with him as on the whole a happy one, I had not the slightest desire to tempt fortune again in that way; so that, even though his most experienced warriors were to volunteer to accompany me, I should decline to trust myself away from the camp. This seemed to give him great pleasure, and he shortly afterwards bade me good-night, with the following parting words:—

“Our people have the reputation of being the most hospitable of their tribe; and I do not intend that there shall be any blot on our character from our treatment of you. You are to occupy my tent, and make yourself thoroughly at home in it. You shall ride on my camel, sleep on my carpet, eat of my dates and my kuskusu, and drink from my guar. Nor do I speak for myself alone in this

regard: you will find the same disposition actuating every member of the caravan. One other matter I must speak about, and then I will leave you to the refreshment and repose you so much need. It is this: Be careful to repress any desire—should such exist—to make the acquaintance of our women.”

I could not but marvel at this remark of the sheik. What had prompted it I was at a loss to understand, since I had spoken to none of the women of the camp as yet, and since, in my disturbed state of mind, it was not at all probable that I would trouble myself about them. Nay, had I been ever so much disposed to seek the company of the tender sex, the specimens I had thus far seen with the caravan were not calculated to make one run any risks for their sake.

Dismissing this as the prompting of the innate jealousy of the Oriental, my mind reverted to more serious questions, the principal of which was, “What disposition is to be made of me? Who are these fierce barbarians, into whose power I have fallen through my own idiotic carelessness?” Weighing carefully every utterance of my captor during my interview with him, I at last came to the conclusion that, while I was to all intents and purposes a prisoner, I was in the hands of a man who would take good care of me, feeling assured that he had some end to serve in thus holding me, —though what that end was I could not conceive.

Thankful, however, for my present happy state as compared with my condition the night before, I soon ceased to trouble myself about the future, and concluded that the wisest plan would be to let the morrow take care of itself.

Supper was served to me in my tent; and, so far from being offended at being left to eat it in solitude, I was glad to have an opportunity to satisfy my appetite without the restraint that might have arisen from the presence of the chief. As soon as the meal was despatched, coffee and the never-failing pipe were brought in. I had not enjoyed the charms of the fragrant weed for several days; so, making myself as comfortable as possible, I puffed away to my heart's content.

The hearty meal, the profound silence, and the soothing properties of the tobacco, soon told upon my wearied frame, and almost immediately after emptying my pipe I arranged my couch for the night and in a twinkling was sound asleep.

Thanks to my vigorous physical constitution, I have never been troubled, during the hours of sleep, by dreams. I think I may safely say that I have not dreamed a dozen times in the course of my life. Had it been otherwise with me, my sleep that night would in all probability have been broken by the remembrance of the horrors of the preceding twenty-four hours; but, as it was, my slumber was deep and unbroken until I was aroused by the touch of the guard.

As nearly as I could guess, it was not an hour past midnight. There seemed to be an unusual stir outside; and, on stepping to the door, I saw, by the light of the moon, that the caravan was in marching order, my tent being the only one that remained unpacked. Something unusual and unexpected must have occurred, I felt certain; for the sheik had told me, before leaving me for the evening, that I would not be disturbed until sunrise. However, I thought it best to express no surprise; and, seeing my camel close by, I mounted, expecting that the sheik would take his position alongside of me, as had been the case in the afternoon; but, upon inquiry, I was informed that he would not join me for some time yet, being engaged in giving directions in another part of the camp.

This explanation hardly satisfied me; for I noticed that I had no sooner mounted my camel than a dozen or more men, each with the long Arab carbine on his shoulder, took position around me, forming an armed escort, not exactly of the kind that is ordinarily considered a *garde d'honneur*, but rather like that which keeps close watch over a prisoner.

Throughout my life I had been accustomed to view misfortune in a philosophic light, and here was another opportunity to call my philosophy into play. I could now plainly perceive that I was to all intents a prisoner; but as during the

afternoon I had not suffered the change for the better in my treatment to exalt my spirits unduly, so now I gave myself no concern, and accepted with the best grace in the world what I could neither alter nor avoid.

Still, though I felt no anxiety, I could not help feeling curious to know the reason for this early start. There was every indication of something extraordinary having taken place: the camels were urged to their swiftest pace, the muskets of the armed men were no longer swung carelessly over their shoulders, but were held ready for instant use, and the order of march was entirely different from what it had been during the day. A large body of warriors constituted the vanguard; then followed the camels bearing the women and children, together with the herds and their drivers; and another body of warriors brought up the rear. I could see the sheik, mounted on Deborah's horse, riding hither and thither, apparently giving orders, and seemingly laboring under considerable excitement; while the anxious faces of my guard, as they glanced to the right and left, proved conclusively that we had either been disturbed by the discovery of some formidable enemy in the neighborhood and were endeavoring to get away unmolested, or were marching to fall suddenly and overwhelmingly upon the foe in the dead of night.

Far to the left I could see what was undoubtedly the watchfire of a caravan; and it soon became

plain to me that our course was leading us away from it. I could not understand the movement at all; and at last, curiosity getting the better of discretion, I resolved on trying to ascertain the cause. It would have been the height of imprudence to risk incurring suspicion by a too blunt question: so, after some cogitation, I hit upon a strategic method of finding out. Addressing myself to the man who seemed to occupy the position of leader in my escort, I remarked that, being a tolerably good marksman, I might be of service to them should we fall in with an enemy, if the sheik would but intrust me with a weapon. Nor was the proposition prompted entirely by strategy; for in case of a fight it would be much better to have something wherewith to defend one's self than to be compelled to remain a passive on-looker, especially since the chances for life were the same in either case.

No answer was vouchsafed by my companions; but I observed that immediately afterwards one of the men rode off,—in search, as I supposed, of the sheik. In a short time he returned, saying that the sheik himself would reply to my request; and in a few minutes that personage rode up, reining in his steed at my side. As he did so, the men composing the guard fell back to a respectful distance, leaving us considerably apart from them.

After a hurried greeting, he thus introduced the subject:—

"I am about to ask you a question, which I desire you to answer without any attempt at evasion or equivocation."

"As I can have no reason for deceiving you," replied I, "you may depend implicitly on whatever I say."

"That is what I desire," said he. "And, remember, whatever the character of your thoughts, whether favorable or hostile to me or mine, do not conceal them. Truth I will respect; and your treatment shall be the same whether your intentions are pleasing or the reverse to me; but let me discover an attempt to deceive me, and you pay the forfeit with your life."

Once more I declared my purpose of stating nothing but the truth.

"'Tis well," said he. Then, after a short pause, he continued:—"You made known to one of my men, not long since, your desire to be intrusted with a weapon of some sort, so that in case of an attack you might have an opportunity to defend yourself. Your request is a very reasonable one; and I had looked for it. One point, however, remains to be decided: How, in case I accede to your wish, would you use the weapon placed in your hands? Would it be against friend, or against foe?"

This question took me by surprise. To defend one's self against a foe seemed quite natural; but against a friend—that was an unheard-of idea;

and I of course told him that my blows should be directed against none but my enemies.

"Then," said he, "I cannot put arms into your hands; for the men whom we are about to encounter are your friends."

These words mystified me still more. Who in all this bleak desert could be styled my friends? Could it be that the sheik expected to attack a body of some French troops? If so, fortune was indeed favoring me; for then I would have an opportunity of mixing once more with civilized men, and to them I would cling until I had extricated myself from the dreadful labyrinth of adventure into which my restless spirit had plunged me.

True to my purpose of concealing nothing, I at once put my thought into words.

"No," replied the sheik, with a shake of the head: "those whom we are to meet, either on the morrow or on some day not far distant, are not the people of your creed, nor do they come from your country; but they are nevertheless known to you; you have eaten of their bread, have slept under the shelter of their tents. I therefore ask you once more, would you fight against them, or for them?"

Vainly did I strive to solve the mystery of these words. I remained silent, until suddenly it occurred to me that perhaps the sheik alluded to the B'ni Mozab; and I immediately asked if they were the friends of whom he spoke.

I had hardly mentioned the name, when a frown

overspread his countenance, and, in a voice from which every trace of blandness had vanished, he replied,—

“Yes, it is the B’ni Mozab whom we are to fight, sooner or later. It may not be to-night, nor to-morrow night; but the battle will take place ere a week has passed. Now, as I cannot be sure that you would remain neutral in the event of a contest, I am compelled to refuse you the use of a weapon. You will also have to submit to be closely guarded until this matter is decided. Then you will be restored to liberty; for if Allah decides in our favor you shall be treated as one of ourselves, free to come and go as you choose; while if we are defeated you can, of course, rejoin the Taleb.”

So saying, and without giving me time to answer, he signed farewell and rode off, the guard at the same instant closing in around me, in obedience, as was now apparent, to the orders of their chief.

My curiosity was fully satisfied. I had made two discoveries, each of considerable importance to me. The first was, that I was a prisoner, with the prospect of remaining in captivity until these barbarous tribes should meet in deadly conflict. Secondly, I was looked upon by the men in whose power I now was as one of the B’ni Mozab, or, at least, one whose feelings towards them could not be other than friendly; and, knowing this, I could not resist a feeling of uneasiness, while at the same

time I marvelled at the kind treatment which I was experiencing.

One other problem remained. Which of the two was the aggrieved party? I pondered this question, looking at it in every possible light, until I decided that it must be the tribe with whom I was now a captive; for during all the time I had been with the B'ni Mozab I had never once heard them speak of expecting attack from any one except the bands of robbers who infest the Sahara, for whom all caravans are constantly on the lookout. I felt inclined to the belief, therefore, that the B'ni Mozab, on their present homeward march, were totally unaware of the present designs of their enemies; and when I brought to mind the watch-fire, and how the great anxiety on the part of all had been to get away from it, at the same time keeping a constant watch over myself, I became convinced that the object was to prevent me, as a supposed friend of the B'ni Mozab, from escaping to them and giving them warning of their impending surprise, and that the light I had seen far off to the left, during the early part of our night-march, came from the camp of my former companions.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARAB FREE-MASONRY.

NOT until eight o'clock the next morning did we come to a halt. Whether we were then supposed to be at a safe distance from the foe, or the animals were too much fatigued to proceed, I cannot say; but the order was given to stop and prepare for breakfast. I was exceedingly glad to hear it; for we had been on the march since a little after midnight, and, whatever the feelings of the Arabs, I was completely exhausted.

The sheik, who seemed to have regained all his former affability, invited me to share the morning meal with him in his tent; and I, only too happy to find him still well disposed towards me, joyfully accepted his invitation. One of the smaller tents was pitched, the carpet was spread, and in a very short time the sheik, two of his wives, and myself, sat down to breakfast, which consisted of camels' and goats' milk, bazeen, and stewed chicken,—a feast which the most fastidious gourmand of Europe would have relished.

As the ladies remained veiled during the meal, I was in no danger of being smitten by their

charms,—though I could not help thinking of the chief's warning concerning the desire of making their acquaintance. The repast concluded, the two women retired, leaving me utterly in the dark as to their beauty, their amiability, or their conversational powers; for not only had their faces been scrupulously concealed, but they had not spoken a single word. I was unable even to determine their age,—which I might have been able to guess at from their walk, but that I dared not look after them, lest I should arouse the jealousy of my host.

As wine loosens the tongue of the European, so does coffee appear to loosen that of the Arab; and under the influence of the latter beverage the sheik soon became quite communicative. He seemed to have entirely lost sight of his suspicions of my character, and, the conversation turning on the inhabitants of the desert, he spoke with all the freedom of a lifelong acquaintance, giving me in one short hour what would fill many pages of this book. As what he told me is in a measure historical, I shall endeavor to give the reader the substance of his remarks.

In the early part of my narrative I spoke of the B'ni Mozab, sketching briefly their character, and stating that they claim to belong to the aboriginal race of North Africa. Their chief town is Ghardaia, on one of the large oases in the northern part of the Desert of Sahara, situated near the twenty-

sixth parallel of north latitude, and lying due south of the city of Algiers. These oases constitute a sort of federal republic, of which Ghardaia is by far the most important member.

The people of these oases are principally engaged in commerce, trading directly with Timbuctoo, Sudan, Morocco, Tunis, and Algiers. In manners, customs, and even in religion, they differ widely from the generality of Arabs, Berbers, and Kabyls. M. Cherbonneau calls them, very aptly, "Mohammedan Protestants;" though perhaps a more exact term would be "Mohammedan Quakers." While they derive all their notions of religion from the Koran, they reject *in toto* the traditional law and complicated ritualism which have been added to Islamism by the tribes whose ancestors came from the Arabian peninsula. Their distinguishing characteristic is their hatred of all religious forms. Like the Quakers, they have a decided faculty for money-making, and are at the same time scrupulously just in their commercial transactions. The word of a B'ni Mozab once given may be implicitly relied upon. They travel through the neighboring countries chiefly with the wool of their own production, and as factors for merchants, by whom they are often intrusted with goods to a very large amount, and yet any thing like fraud is unknown. Their honesty disposes them to place confidence readily in others, except they have seen good reason for withholding it. They are rigid economists,

and never miss an opportunity of making as well as saving a penny.

In the year 971 A.D., when they were driven from the country where they had originally settled, they came to Waregla and the desert country south of it. There they founded several k'sours, or artificial oases, which, however, are now lost, and among which were Kerima, Sedrata, and Djebel-Enbad.

The aboriginal Wareglans, with whom they were at first on good terms, actuated by sectarian jealousy, harassed them until they were again obliged to emigrate; and in the year 1012 Hegira (402) they returned and built the city of Ghardaia, where they have dwelt unmolested for eight hundred and fifty years. Even now the bitterest feelings of hatred are entertained on the part of the Ghardaiaans towards the inhabitants of Waregla, the lapse of more than eight centuries having failed to make them forget their wrongs.

They founded five cities in the Wed Mozab, besides extending their dominion at an early period to Berryan and Laghouat, in the north, and establishing a third colony at Metlili, in the southwest, which, however, was conquered and held for a long time by the nomad Chaamba.

Guerrara was built in A.D. 1666 by the descendants of the expelled colonists of Laghouat, consisting of Arabs, the Mozab of Berryan, and the original inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The various sects, although of a common creed and origin, soon became bitter antagonists; and from that time down to the present day they have been constantly at variance, prompted by jealousy, eagerly availing themselves of every opportunity to harm one another.

Their civil government, until of late, has been under an Imaum, who not only wielded spiritual and temporal authority over the inhabitants of the place where he resided, but also held in subjection all the petty republics or oases that lay to the north and south.

Each city formed a separate republic, governed by an elective council, or *djemmâa*; and this is the case to the present day. The number of each *djemmâa* varied from four to twelve, according to the population of the district.

The president was and is in all cases the sheik of the Talbas, representing the ecclesiastical element,—now-a-days also the political,—and is called the “Sheik Baba.”

The oasis of Waregla, which ranks next in importance and size after that of Ghardaia, has its own “Sheik Baba,” who, although not invested with powers like those of the Taleb of Ghardaia, is a very important personage in his own estimation, and hence naturally inclined to regard with jealousy the Taleb, to whom he is a sort of subordinate, the traditionary laws giving the position of leader to the ruler of Ghardaia.

The B'ni Mozab of Ghardaia, like all other Mussulmans, may, if they choose, each have four wives; but, although granted this privilege by the terms of their religion, they never avail themselves of it, monogamy being their invariable practice. The Wareglans, on the contrary, often transcend the limits fixed by their creed, and in some instances a man will be found rejoicing in the possession of six wives. Hence the proportion of women to men is much greater in Waregla than in Ghardaia, since, in addition to the natural increase of population, the Wareglans bring young girls from the neighboring oases, and even from greater distances, sometimes making purchases in Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco.

In addition to the B'ni Mozab, the principal inhabitants and original proprietors of Ghardaia, Waregla, and the smaller oases, there is a sort of floating population, found especially in the neighborhood of Waregla, and styled the Touareg, or Tuaricks. As a rule, the tribe is composed of freebooters: a few occupy themselves as traders, or hire themselves out as guards for caravans. Humble and submissive in their demeanor while within the limits of the city, they are fierce and domineering when encountered in the desert; and very few Arabs or Mozabites have ever ventured to visit their far-off home.

To hear these Tuaricks talk, one might imagine them to be the masters of the world; and, indeed,

they own a considerable portion of it, though not the most valuable,—namely, the whole of the desert from the oasis of Wadan, ten days' journey northeast of the Senegal River, to Timbuctoo, thence north of Soudan to the Tibboo country. The rendezvous of their chief clan seems to be an isolated group of mountains southeast of Tuat, and is said to be fifteen days' journey from Waregla. Such of them as haunt the vicinity of Waregla are tolerated by the authorities of that place, just as the gipsies are tolerated in Hungary; but none are permitted to stay for any length of time around Ghardaia,—whence has originated a bitter hatred towards the B'ni Mozab of this place on the part of the Tuaricks.

In the neighborhood of Waregla they are generally encamped in small leather tents made of the untanned hides of goats or antelopes. These, though much heavier than the customary camels'-hair abode of the Arabs, are said to be greatly superior in comfort, the thickness of the leather serving to ward off the intense heat of the sun.

At the time when Mussa-el-Darkui, the father of the present Taleb of Ghardaia and of the lovely Deborah, was waging war against Abd-el-Kader, he called on all the faithful throughout the various oases to assist him in his undertaking; and everywhere his summons was obeyed, except at Waregla and among the Tuaricks encamped at that time around that place. These marauders would in all

likelihood have joined him, since the prospect of plunder was an almost irresistible temptation, had not the chief of Waregla, a secret enemy of the Taleb, instigated them to keep aloof from the enterprise by a promise of a still better opportunity for plunder, and a threat that, in case they joined the Taleb, they should be banished forever from the neighborhood of Waregla.

Their hearts not being in the cause, no great amount of dissuasion was required; and the Ghar-daian messenger was sent back with a decided refusal to take part in his enterprise against the Emir.

Mussa-el-Darkui resolved to punish the Tuaricks at the first opportunity, especially as he well knew that their refusal had been prompted by the jealousy of the Sheik of Waregla; but, as he was fully occupied with his preparations for the campaign against Abd-el-Kader, he intrusted the punishment of the recalcitrant tribe to his son, Enoch-ben-Mussa.

This man, intelligent and energetic, at once devised a plan of operations, which he communicated to two or three of his intimate friends, exacting from them a pledge of inviolable secrecy, for on that depended the success of the measure. The men whom he had intrusted with his plan belonged to the Tamissa party, and were therefore men in whom he could confide.

Just here I must say something about the Tamissa and the Takhessaïs, which divide the B'ni Mozab into two parties; and although the schism

took place hundreds of years ago, and sprung from the merest trifle, the spirit is rife to this day.

As the tradition goes, an inhabitant of El-At'f had brought several kinds of garden-seeds from the Tell, and among them those of a species of pumpkin. These were planted in the oasis of Ghardaia, and also in the gardens of Waregla, and in both places yielded a fine crop, specimens of which were laid before the djemmâa, who determined to give a special name to the new plant.

After several stormy meetings, the matter was put to vote, whereupon the delegates of Ghardaia voted for the name of Tamissa, while those of Waregla declared for Takhessaïs. Neither party being willing to give way, the discussion soon waxed hot, and from words they came to blows.

Although centuries have elapsed since this occurred, it is impossible even now to utter the word "Tamissa" to a Wareglan, or a descendant of those who voted for Takhessaïs, without giving dire offence; and *vice versâ*.

The members of the Tamissa party are banded together in a secret society. They are a species of free-masons; and, indeed, it is almost certain that free-masonry of a very high degree is to be met with not only among the B'ni Mozab, but also among the Arabs of Tunis and Algeria: at least several of the signs in use among them correspond to those of the European fraternity, although the attached traditions are quite different.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEAUTIFUL CAPTIVE.

AT the distance of about a mile from Waregla could be seen the camp of the Tuaricks, their small leathern tents rising here and there between the numerous date-trees, and interspersed with the enclosures where the cattle of the tribe grazed in common.

Especially noticeable among the animals of the Tuaricks is the *mahari*, or white dromedary, which is the inseparable companion of these fierce robbers of the desert. Seen quietly feeding in a pasture with other camels, the graceful beast at once attracts the eye, its towering stature, small, fawn-colored head, fine coat, great length of limb and breadth of chest all betokening the highest breeding.

This animal, which is probably never seen in Europe, and rarely even in Africa except among the Tuaricks, is from sixteen to eighteen inches higher than the ordinary camel (*djamel*), with a much smaller hump, and, although by no means so hardy in appearance, will perform quite as much labor as its more rugged-looking brother.

At the doors of the tents were stretched in

various easy attitudes several of the men of the tribe; and in front of the encampment a merry party of children were disporting, some amusing themselves by pelting each other with date-stones, others engaged in the practice of archery, the arrow being one of the favorite weapons of this people.

The dress of the Tuaricks differs materially from that of the B'ni Mozab or of the Arab; so that, even were there no other distinctive marks, there would be no difficulty in recognizing them at once as of another tribe. They invariably wear trousers of cotton stuff, not loose like those of the majority of the Orientals, and never fastened at the ankles. Over this is worn a flowing black robe, usually of cotton, but occasionally of wool, fastened around the waist by a broad leather girdle. Above this, again, comes a sleeveless cloak, usually of blue or striped cotton; while the head-dress consists of a high red fez cap, with a black turban wound around it, a fold of which is brought down over the face and fastened with an ivory pin in such a manner as to leave only the eyes exposed. This black veil is never removed, even at meal-times, but is then merely drawn aside with the left hand sufficiently to allow the food to be conveyed to the mouth. The exposure of the face is considered a mark of degradation by them; and it is probably to denote their inferior station that the Tuarick women always go unveiled, contrary to the almost universal custom of Eastern nations

The Tuaricks very rarely wear shoes, insisting that it is only those who are too poor to ride who find protection for the feet necessary.

Except in the case of the chiefs, their arms consist of a lance, about seven feet long, and a straight two-edged sword slung over the left shoulder, to which some add a short dagger stuck into the girdle. On the left arm is carried a round shield, made of elephant hide stretched on a wooden hoop and thickly studded with large-headed nails. This shield is strong enough to ward off any ordinary blow with a sabre, and at the same time leaves the hand quite free to guide the dromedary.

Thus armed and accoutred, the Tuarick is a foe not to be despised even by a well-mounted horseman; for the height of his dromedary makes it difficult either to parry his thrusts or to return his blows, and in pursuit of a retreating enemy the endurance of his animal renders capture a mere question of time.

So far from the Tuaricks being white, as many European travellers have asserted, their complexion is a dark brown,—darker than that of the Arabs. Their features are finely cut, their stature tall, their limbs slender, and their hands and feet remarkably small.

The women are unusually free from restraint, and when young are by no means ill-looking. Old age, however, early sets its mark on them. They begin to show signs of decadence soon after pass-

passing the age of twenty-five ; between thirty and thirty-five they are simply hideous ; while above the latter age they realize the popular conception of the aspect of witches.

Polygamy is not general among the pure nomads ; but many of the wandering Tuaricks have each from four to six wives. These women, however, are very seldom of the Tuarick tribe, but come from all climes and represent many distant nations. These robber bands, in attacking a caravan which has not bought immunity by a heavy tribute, carry off with them any of the women who may strike their fancy ; whence it happens that the small leather tents around Waregla often conceal many a lovely creature, whose possession is envied not only by the B'ni Mozab of Waregla, but also by those of the more powerful republic of Ghardaia.

About ten years before the occurrence noted at the close of the last chapter, the Tuaricks of Waregla learned that a caravan of about a hundred men, having in charge upwards of fifty female slaves who had been picked up on the coast of the Mediterranean, was on its way from Morocco to Tunis, the living merchandise having been consigned to a dealer in the latter place. It would be necessary for them to come into the Sahara a considerable distance ; and the opportunity to secure a valuable booty, or, failing in that, a liberal ransom, was not one to be thrown aside by the freebooters of the desert.

Very little preparation being needed, they were soon off on the expedition, leaving their wives and children under the protection of the authorities of Waregla. In two weeks they returned, bringing with them a number of beautiful women,—the daughters or wives, in all probability, of fishermen on the coast of the Mediterranean, snatched from their homes, during the absence of their protectors, by pirates, and sold into slavery. Destined by their captors to fill the harems of a few rich Mussulmans, these unfortunate creatures had now fallen into the hands of a band of barbarians, who carried them off into the midst of the desert, to add to their already abundant stock of wives.

The Tuaricks have always been in the habit of making their captives a source of revenue by hiring them out to rich Mozabites of Waregla or the neighboring oases, receiving in return for a year's possession of each one a sum equivalent to about fifteen dollars of our money.

It happened that, just at the time of the return of the Tuaricks from the above expedition, the present Taleb of Ghardaia was at Waregla on government business; and, being the guest of the ruler of the city, he was invited to accompany him on a visit to the encampment of the robber tribe, who it was understood had brought with them quite a number of handsome women, the result of their last foray.

On arriving at the camp, the two young men

were cordially received, and, upon expressing a desire to be shown the newly-acquired treasures, were conducted by an elderly Tuarick to a tent which he told them contained a woman of wondrous loveliness. Eagerly they followed him, and, entering the tent, found that their guide had not exaggerated the charms of the captive. On a piece of old matting reclined a figure of surpassing grace, the upper part of her body, which was almost devoid of clothing, being veiled by her long blonde hair. Her owner, rudely pushing aside this natural covering, displayed her face to the two chieftains, and as the frightened stranger raised her beauteous blue eyes appealingly to the intruders on her privacy, it seemed to them almost incredible that mere flesh and blood could take on so angelic a shape.

Not long did they gaze in rapt astonishment, however. The desire to possess this paragon at once sprang up in the breast of each.

"What price do you demand for this slave?" asked the Sheik of Waregla of the man who had led them to the tent.

The price was instantly named; but no sooner had the words left his lips than the Taleb of Ghar-daia offered treble the amount,—which was accepted by the Tuarick at once.

The Wareglan chieftain, thus deprived of the treasure which a moment before he had believed to be in his possession, could not conceal his anger.

The blood mounted to his cheek, his eyes kindled, and in tones of chilling reproach he addressed the Tuarick.

“This man is a Tamissa; and wilt thou sell him thy woman?”

No sooner had the Tuarick heard these words than he declared the bargain null and void, saying that he would rather let her be devoured by wild beasts than dispose of her to a Tamissa; and, taking the captive by the hand, he led her towards the Sheik of Waregla, in token that he transferred her to him.

The son of Mussa-el-Darkui, unable to brook such an affront, instantly left the tent and hurried towards the city; and soon he and his retinue were scouring across the desert in the direction of Ghardaia, his men keenly resenting the insult to their leader and burning with impatience for an opportunity to avenge him.

This occurrence took place just two months before Mussa-el-Darkui had sent his commissioner to the Tuaricks of Waregla, asking their co-operation in his enterprise against Abd-el-Kader. As the reader is aware, his proposal was met with contempt; and, prompted thereto by the Sheik of Waregla, they had sent back an insulting message, calling the Taleb the friend of the French, and threatening even to stop his progress should he decline to pay the customary black mail exacted from caravans.

The reader has also been made aware how the Taleb received this message,—how he intrusted to his son the task of punishing the insolent Tuaricks as they merited, as well as the Wareglans, and how Enoch-ben-Mussa—prompted by a motive very different from that for which his father gave him credit—at once set about carrying his father's injunction into effect, rejoiced at the opportunity of striking a mortal blow at the man who had snatched from his grasp the loveliest creature he had ever beheld, as well as the insolent freebooter whose contemptuous glance and scornful words had on that day set his blood on fire.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DESERT FOE OF ABD-EL-KADER.

IT was the first day of the Ramadan. In the city and republic of Ghardaia, however, there was no indication of the usual observance of the feast. On such occasions, ordinarily, the streets are deserted by the men, and are in possession of the women and little children, who give themselves up to enjoyment, dancing and singing; while the men and boys are congregated round the mosques, to witness the first ceremony of the great feast.

On this day, in Ghardaia, the women were occupied in their houses, preparing the outfit for their husbands; and to all appearance it was a long journey for which they were making ready. Towards evening, all the young and able-bodied men of Ghardaia were drawn up in line, outside of the city, while the old men, women, and children had assembled to witness the review that was to be held by the Taleb.

And a splendid sight it was. Over eight thousand men had come at the call of their chief, ready to shed their blood in the war against the son of

the marabout Sidi Mahiddin, the present Emir of Tlemcen, Abd-el-Kader. Every oasis in the neighborhood had sent its quota of able-bodied men, with but one exception,—the city of Waregla and the marauding Tuaricks of its neighborhood.

After the review, the Taleb addressed his army, swearing by the grave of Mohammed not to sheathe his sword until he had caused the proud Emir, Abd-el-Kader, to bite the dust, and had driven the French marauder from African soil.

The next morning, at break of day, the Taleb, accompanied by his wives and children, placed himself at the head of the army; and the impatient warriors bade farewell to their oasis-home, and set out for Tlemcen, which was to be their first point of attack.

While they are pursuing their toilsome way through the sandy waste, let us take a glance at what was passing in Algeria, and transfer the reader for a while to the scenes where Abd-el-Kader waged war against the French, now his declared enemies.

In the course of the wars which devastated Algeria after 1830, the town of Tlemcen—the last stronghold of the natives—was almost entirely destroyed. There Abd-el-Kader had concentrated all his forces, and from that point he struck his deadliest blows at the enemy.

Upon his election as Emir of Mascara by the unanimous choice of his countrymen, he at once

began hostilities against the French, commencing by an attack on Oran, then occupied by the invaders; and, although he failed, he succeeded in habituating the Arab warriors under his command to the fire of artillery, of which till then they entertained an unconquerable fear.

Adopting a new style of warfare, he began to cut off the supplies which the town had been accustomed to receive from the country, and soon made it entirely dependent on those brought by sea. The following year he succeeded in obtaining possession of the city of Tlemcen, but was unable either to cajole the Turkish garrison of the Mechouar or to expel them by force, having at that time no artillery.

But his policy of starving the littoral was so successful that in the next year he obtained a peace from General des Michels, the French commander at Oran, which gave him the port of Arzew, and confined the commerce of Oran and Mostaganem to the supply of their own wants.

He succeeded in getting the confidence of the French, promising to aid them in the conquest of Algeria, and, in case they would supply him with ammunition, to secure them the supremacy over all the native tribes between the confines of Morocco and the river Cheliff.

In the year 1835 he pushed on yet farther, crossed the Cheliff and obtained the submission of both Cherchel and Tenez, advanced thence to

Milianah, where he was received with the greatest enthusiasm by all the inhabitants, and proceeded to Medeah, where he appointed one of his own adherents bey of the province of Titterie.

The French Government now took the alarm, and endeavored to check the growing greatness of their *protégé*; but the first attempt in that direction resulted disastrously.

General Trézel, who had succeeded to the command at Oran, advanced, with twenty-five hundred men and six guns, on the road towards Mascara, as far as the banks of the Sig. He had been attacked by skirmishers during his march, and suffered so much—although the enemy had on every occasion been repulsed—that he felt unable to advance farther.

In order to save appearances, he resolved to retreat, not by the way of Oran, but by that of Arzew; and, fearing lest arrangements had been made by Abd-el-Kader to attack him on the direct route thither, he determined to skirt the hills which form the boundary of the valley of the Sig on the west, and to come out into the open country which surrounds the Gulf of Arzew, by a defile below the junction of the Sig and the Habra, where the united streams take the name of *makta* ("ford.") The Emir soon divined the intention of his enemy, and at once despatched a number of cavalry, each man carrying a foot-soldier behind him, to occupy the pass.

When the head of the French column arrived there, it was the middle of the day, and the soldiers were terribly exhausted with the heat. On their left were hills, and on their right a marsh formed by the *makta*, and the passage between was so narrow that the carriages which contained the ammunition and the wounded could only pass singly. In this conjuncture the Emir launched his troops upon the column, and struck a panic into the whole force.

Only one carriage, containing wounded, was saved; the ammunition-wagons were all lost; and it was with the greatest difficulty that General Trézel succeeded in bringing the survivors of the contest into Arzew, where they did not arrive till late at night, after a retreat of fifteen hours, during which they had constantly been harassed by the enemy. At least five hundred were left on the battle-field.

Abd-el-Kader carried off a large quantity of ammunition, of which he was much in need, and, among other trophies, a howitzer, the first he ever possessed.

The French troops were so discouraged by the events of that day that the commander was obliged to send them to Oran by sea.

This terrible defeat took place on the 29th of June, the darkest day in the annals of the conquest of Algeria.

In the following November an attempt was made

by the French to avenge this insult to their national honor. Marshal Clausel, then governor-general, accompanied by the Duc d'Orléans, conducted an expedition, with eleven thousand men, against the Emir, at Mascara; but Abd-el-Kader, with the whole of the Mussulman population, abandoned the town the moment they became aware of the approach of the French.

The latter remained only a short time, and, after burning every thing which could be destroyed, returned to Mostaganem. The retreat they made was equivalent to a defeat; for the army suffered terribly during the last days ere they reached Mostaganem. The baggage-animals—especially the camels—slipped into the gullies, which every watercourse forms in an incredibly short space of time in this soft soil after rain; and the slip of a loaded camel is nearly sure to disable the animal, by spraining the hip-joint.

From that time until 1837 Abd-el-Kader constantly harassed the French forces in Algeria. In that year he entered into a treaty with the invaders, by which, in addition to the city of Tlemcen, he was given full sway over the province of Titterie, the greater part of the province of Algeria, and the whole of Oran, with the exception of the towns of Mostaganem, Arzew, and Oran. This arrangement, however, did not satisfy the warlike Emir. His enemies among his own people—and they were by no means few—boldly charged him

with treason; and, influenced in some measure by a wish to disprove this slander, but much more by his ambition, he determined on a renewal of his contest with the French.

He immediately called for men and the necessary appliances to carry on war, levying on the more remote tribes as well as on his own. Among other things done by Abd-el-Kader's command, a caravan belonging to the B'ni Mozab of Ghardaia was stopped on its way from Tunis to Morocco, and all the able-bodied men were taken from it and forced to enter the military service of the Emir.

As soon as the news of this outrage reached the ears of Mussa-el-Darkui, he swore vengeance, and, at once mustering a force of eight thousand men, was soon on his way to Tlemcen, to punish the Emir and afterwards drive out the Christian invader. His men followed the old warrior with cheerful hearts; for he had assured them that they were sure of the favor of Allah, and that by the help of Heaven they would humble the insolent Emir and sweep the Christian dogs from the land that was the birthright of the Arab.

So certain was he of success that he did not hesitate to take his wife, children, and favorite slaves with him,—placing his whole household under the charge of his eldest son, then a young man of twenty.

The expedition had started, as already related,

provided with all the articles necessary for their long journey, and all kept together until they had reached a small oasis, where they halted to supply themselves with fresh water. At this halting-place, the son of Mussa divided the army into ghafalahs of a hundred men, placing over each a chief or lieutenant, and, assigning a guide to every five ghafalahs, he indicated the routes and appointed a place of general rendezvous.

From the eight thousand, however, he selected six hundred men, to form a separate ghafalah; and not until the rest had started and were at a considerable distance did he make known to them his purpose. This was to punish the Taleb of Waregla and the insolent Tuarick; and all the young men being of the "Tamissa" band, he had no difficulty in enlisting them in his enterprise.

They travelled all night and the whole of the following day, until they reached a forest of date-trees situated at no great distance from the Tuarick camp near Waregla.

They met but one man who could have betrayed their approach to the people in the city, and him they took prisoner, promising to release him as soon as the enterprise they had in view was successfully carried out. From him they got some valuable information; and, in order not to fail through delay, they lost no time, but went to work that very evening.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESCUE.

TO the left of Waregla is a large tract of land covered with date-palms, while immediately behind it are large sand-hills, between two of which is a ravine leading directly to the grove of palms. This ravine is very broad in the centre, while the pass that leads to the forest is so narrow that two camels could not pass each other in it without difficulty.

Here the son of the Taleb of Ghardaia ordered his men to halt and dismount. This done, twelve of the most daring were sent to the outlet of the pass, with the order to let every one enter, but to allow none to leave it.

The evening was beautiful; the sun was just setting, coloring the western horizon with the purple fiery tint which among us is considered a prognostic of rain, but which in the desert is an every-day sight.

The city of Waregla and its inhabitants were wrapped in solemn silence. It was the period of the Ramadan, when all believers in Mohammed fast and abstain from every kind of pleasure. The

mufti had ascended the minaret, calling the faithful to prayer, and men, women, and children were congregated in or around the mosques, some—especially the elder ones—sitting motionless around the fountain, while others were stretched on the ground, but all plunged in meditation.

The Tuaricks do not pretend to observe the feast of the Koran with the scrupulousness of their Mussulman neighbors. Nevertheless, they are not pagans; but their Mohammedanism is of the laxest kind. They do not perform the prescribed ablutions, nor do they observe the hour of prayer, and they so far even neglect the Ramadan that in the height of this great feast the Tuarick takes his coffee and afterwards lights his pipe with the utmost unconcern.

Near their tents, on this night, they were stretched, smoking quietly, while their neighbors, the natives of Waregla, were assembled to repeat the prescribed prayers of the Ramadan. Their arms were stored away in their huts; for the Tuarick never apprehends danger while at home; his sword, lance, dagger, and shield are reserved exclusively for his marauding tours.

Different was the occupation of the party in the pass between the sand-hills. The camels were put in charge of a few men; and, while the animals were allowed to graze, they were kept near at hand, so as to be ready at a moment's notice.

The men who were placed to guard the outlet

of the pass received from the chief a certain password, which was "Tamissa," with the order to give admittance during the night to none but those who gave that password, while all other intruders were to be punished with death. This arrangement made, all except a few emerged from the pass, the darkness, which was now setting in, securing them from the risk of detection. They traversed the long groups of date-trees, and, ten by ten, went along like peaceful citizens quietly going home to rest from their daily labor. They even carried no arms, to all appearance, although, if closely examined, a fine dagger would have been found hidden on each of them, to be used only should the contest require it. When it had become entirely dark, they emerged from the woods; ten only, among whom was the leader, the son of the Taleb of Ghardaia, went to the quiet city of Waregla, while all the others—some four hundred in number—had been directed to remain hidden behind the date-trees that bordered the outskirts of the woods, and wait there quietly until the ten were successful and had returned unharmed from their errand. These ten did not march in company, but each took a separate course towards the city. Many a Tuarick tent they passed without exciting the least suspicion, now and then remarking, to throw the Tuaricks off their guard, that they were hurrying on to join in the prayer of the Ramadan. As soon as they had entered the city,

their chief took the lead, while the others followed at a distance.

They soon came to the place where stood the house of the Taleb of Ghardaia. At the entrance, the chief halted until his followers drew near. He gave them his final instructions, consisting of a few words, and, without any more preparation, pushed open the door, which yielded easily, two of his followers accompanying him, while the others kept watch around the house, placing themselves so as to be able to render aid to each other in case of need.

All was silent within and without; not a soul was observed in the streets, not a light was to be seen from the inner apartments of the neighboring houses. The stillness of death reigned throughout Waregla, except in the edifice where the faithful had assembled to pray.

The inmates of the house of the Taleb of Waregla were all at the mosque, except the children, who were asleep, and two females, one an old negress from Soudan,—a slave who had grown old in the service of the Taleb, and who was entirely devoted to the interest of her master. On this night she was lying on a mat, in a dark corridor which led to the inner yard. As the intruder was groping along the passage, he stumbled over her, and, fearing that it was an enemy whom he had encountered, he immediately grasped her by the throat; but the next instant, perceiving that it was a

woman, he released his hold, and, rather glad to have found somebody, he inquired after—her.

But her?—who was she? by what name should he call her? The slave stood stupefied: she could not imagine what he wanted, until he inquired after the Rumeë,—the Christian with the light hair. Now the negress commenced to understand: it was after the beautiful Christian that the robber was asking: yet, this being her master's property, she was unwilling to answer; and the supposed robber had to draw his dagger to make her tell.

She led the way to the inner court, and from there they entered a compartment lighted by a small oil-lamp which scarcely gave light enough to make the objects in it visible. The one who accompanied the intruder now took charge of the slave, while the other entered alone.

The floor was covered with a fine matting, the manufacture of the poorer class of the B'ni Mozab; on one side of the room stood a divan covered with rich cushions; on the opposite side, something similar to a European bed; in the centre, and towards the wall that faced the entrance, was a table on which stood an ivory vessel filled with oil, serving as the lamp for the abode; on the table, inclining towards the wall, were also two pieces of ivory, placed so that the shadow they formed on the wall were similar to that of a cross. In the front of it, and with her back to the unexpected guest, kneeled a figure absorbed seemingly in prayer.

She was dressed in a white loose gown, although her long and light hair, which hung loose, enshrouded her, as if forming a mantle around her. She did not seem disturbed by the intruder, either because she was accustomed to these nightly visits, or because she was so much absorbed in her prayers that she did not hear.

"Rumee," said the young man, after a while, "I do not come to disturb you, but to free you from the vile man into whose hands you have fallen."

At the first sound of his voice the kneeling figure turned her head, and, frightened at perceiving the stranger, she grasped the cross; then, retiring towards the corner where stood the bed, she asked, in a faltering voice, what he wanted of her, and who he was.

The young man could scarcely speak, so bewildered was he by perceiving once more that beautiful creature whose picture had haunted him since first he saw her, and whom he had sworn to possess, cost what it might.

"I have come to free you. Trust me, and follow me. But be quick; for the next instant it may be too late."

The girl knew not what to answer: she feared it was some snare, and at last asked, "But who are you that show pity on me? I know you not; I have never seen you before."

"You have," answered the young man. "Re-

member the evening I bought you of the Tuarick ; and you would have been mine if the one who now holds you had not taken you away from me, by calling me a Tamissa."

Still she hesitated.

"Hurry! hurry!" enjoined the young man. "There is no time now to explain. They will soon return, and then all will be lost. Trust me. I am going to Algiers. I am now on my way thither; and, if you are not willing to remain with me, I will restore you to your own people."

The idea of being free, of returning to her kindred, made the girl listen to the stranger; yet she would have hesitated in following him had it not been that one of his companions just then entered the room and called on his friend to hurry, for the lamps in the minaret were beginning to be extinguished,—a sign of the dispersion of the assembly, and that they could not stay much longer without being surprised by their foes.

The fair Christian was at once seized by her deliverer, and led out by the corridor through which they had entered. Once in the open air, the ten followers who had stood guard around the house closed around her to shield her from any danger, and the successful party hurriedly made their way out of the city.

They arrived at the grove of date-trees without encountering an obstacle; and, there being no desire on their part to shed blood needlessly, they

were ordered by the chief to hasten back to the pass and continue on their journey.

When the Taleb of Waregla had returned from the place of worship, and listened to the story of the negress, he could not at first believe what he heard. As soon as he became convinced that it was nothing but the truth, his rage knew no bounds. In wild excitement, he demanded the number of the despoilers, and the course they had taken when they left the house; and the poor slave, frightened out of her senses, declared that she had seen a band of several hundred surround the house, and, after securing their booty, fly on camels towards the Tuarick camp.

In an instant the whole town was alive. The Taleb called all his friends together, and, armed as if marching against a formidable foe, they went in the direction of the tents of the Tuaricks; for it was now his impression that those robbers, taking advantage of the Ramadan feast, had entered the city and taken his Christian slave, to sell her to some one who would offer a better price; for, during the two months that she was in his possession, the reputation of her beauty had spread far and wide.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GRAVE OF THE RUMEE.

THE quiet city of Waregla was astir the whole night; for there were many in the town who disliked the Tuarick people, and were glad of an opportunity to revenge themselves on them.

By four in the morning, two hundred young men, under the leadership of the Taleb, marched towards the tents of the Tuarick people. They had not far to go, for the tents were pitched close to the town; and, directing their steps towards that of the man from whom the Taleb had bought the Christian slave, they halted.

The Taleb was the first to enter, and, looking for his foe, he found him tranquilly stretched on his mat, enjoying the slumber of the just. He was at once seized by the arm and rudely aroused from his sleep; and with a bewildered look he gazed at the unexpected guest, who in no very reassuring language commanded him to give up at once the Christian slave whom he had spirited away.

If the Tuarick had been bewildered and astonished by this unexpected visit, much more so was he when he was made acquainted with its cause.

He loudly protested that he knew nothing of the whereabouts of the Christian slave; that he had not left his tent for two days, and that no earthly consideration would make him risk incurring the displeasure of his protector the Taleb.

His protestations of ignorance and innocence, however, were of no avail. The Taleb, infuriated by the loss of his treasure, would not believe a word the Tuarick said. Grasping his victim by the arm, he dragged him to the front of his tent, notwithstanding his struggles and protestations, and summoned his followers to hold a council of war, to decide at once the fate of the supposed robber.

In a moment a portion of the Taleb's followers formed a group around the unfortunate victim, while the others held themselves in readiness to resist any attempt at rescue on the part of the culprit's tribe.

In the mean time the tribe had been aroused from their slumber by the shouts and protestations of the man whom the Taleb accused of the robbery; the women ran from tent to tent to apprise their lords of the unexpected appearance of the town-people; the children screamed; the young girls ran to hide themselves in the neighboring woods; the men started up from their sleep, half bewildered, and, grasping their arms, rushed towards the scene of confusion, to find out the cause of the unwonted disturbance.

The group that had formed around the accused Tuarick was soon increased by nearly the whole tribe. Men, women, and children,—Tuaricks and B'ni Mozab,—all were huddled together; while the Taleb, standing close by his victim, announced, in a loud voice, the cause of his coming thither with his seemingly hostile intent.

As soon as the Tuaricks heard the Taleb's statement, they all turned against the now trembling culprit, exhorting him to give up at once the "golden-haired Rumeë," as they called her; but he as stoutly as ever protested innocence, as well he might, since, as the reader already knows, he had had nothing whatever to do with the abduction.

The Taleb, now seeing that his victim persisted in declaring his ignorance of the whereabouts of the Rumeë, directed his men to tie the Tuarick by the feet to a branch of a tree close at hand, and let him hang in that position until he had confessed.

His orders were at once carried into effect. The poor fellow was suspended by his feet, with his head downwards, suffering fearfully from the rush of blood to the head. After remaining in that position for some time, and still protesting his innocence, he was taken down, and one hundred lashes of the bastinado were applied, the victim calling loudly on Allah and the Prophet, but to no purpose.

Neither of these punishments having the desired effect, he was tied to a tree, and twenty men of the Waregla people were ordered to pierce him with their arrows. Twice twenty instantly prepared to obey the command; and in another minute nothing but the lacerated corpse would have remained, had it not been for the timely appearance on the scene of a member of the tribe who had just arrived at the camp. This was the man who during the night had been taken prisoner by the men who accompanied the son of the Taleb of Ghardaia on his daring expedition, and who had been kept closely guarded by them until the others with their precious booty had got far away on their route to the north, so as to render it certain that if the Taleb of Waregla should be inclined to follow, they would have the advantage of a long start.

His story told, the tide of indignation turned upon the real robbers,—the people of Ghardaia. The unlucky victim was at once released, without so much as a word of apology for the rough treatment to which he had been subjected.

If the fury of the Taleb had been great when he thought that the Tuaricks had deprived him of his treasure, he was beyond himself with rage when he learned who was the real robber. Long before this there had existed a rival feeling between the two towns, especially among the chiefs; and when the Taleb's followers heard of this outrage, the thirst

for revenge knew no bounds. The anger of the Wareglans was fully shared by the Tuaricks, the ancient foes of the Ghardaia, particularly as they had been accused of a crime of whose perpetration they had not even dreamed.

They at once offered their services to the Taleb, some begging him to lead them immediately to Ghardaia, and promising to make prisoners of the females, to slay all the men, and to cause the place to disappear from the face of the earth, others soliciting him to follow the abductor and his tribe on their expedition, and deal them a decisive blow on the road.

After listening for some time in silence to their clamor, the Taleb seemed to grow composed. He ordered the excited crowd to retire, and to conduct themselves for the present as though nothing extraordinary had happened; at the same time, however, he asked them to promise that whenever he should summon them—no matter how distant the day—they would aid him to wreak vengeance on his antagonist. This promise was given at once with loud acclamations, after which the excited group dispersed, and in a few minutes the scene of the recent disturbance resumed its usual calm aspect, the Tuaricks returning to their tents, while the men of Waregla went back to the town, to celebrate in peace the interrupted feast of the Ramadan.

To no human being did the Taleb communicate

his thoughts. In silence he bent his steps to his abode, whence his most precious treasure had been stolen, there to shut himself up with his own grief, and evolve some plan of revenge that would give him an opportunity of venting all his hatred on the head of his insidious enemy.

We have seen Mussa-el-Darkui set out on his expedition from the city of Ghardaia, in company with his son and the rest of his family, consisting of four of his wives, three children, the eldest of whom, except his son, was Deborah, then between eleven and twelve years of age, and her playmate, of the same age, whom he had bought from a slave-trading caravan on its way from Morocco to Tripoli.

Three days after their start, the caravan was augmented by another female, the Rumeë with the golden hair, with the circumstances of whose capture we have already been made acquainted.

The situation of this poor creature was in no way enviable. A Christian among so many infidels, a white woman, a European, held as a captive among the Arabs of the Sahara,—her position was one which could not but cause her the most poignant suffering; and, despite all the care of her new possessor, it soon became evident that she was pining away. After the caravan had been eleven days on its journey, and while halting at the Wady-ben-Ain, she was relieved from her earthly sufferings. Death, who confers freedom

on all, broke her bonds; and the traveller who now, passing that route, halts at the wady, is shown a little heap of stones, under which rest the bones of the "Rumee with the golden hair.

The grief of Enoch-ben-Mussa was such that he swore to die in the war they were about to undertake against Abd-el-Kader; for he would never return to the place where he had promised himself so much pleasure in the possession of his now hopelessly lost treasure.

The lapse of time, however, tempers the violence of grief alike in the untutored barbarian and in the refined European; and we need not be astonished to find that change of scene and the turmoil of war exerted a healing influence on the distressed heart of the lover of the fair Christian slave who had breathed her last in the desert.

The reader has already been made acquainted with the disastrous turn which affairs afterwards took with Mussa-el-Darkui, the desert chief,—how he was routed by the Emir, and how his cavalry had to fly before the infantry of Abd-el-Kader,—how he lost all his baggage, and how his wives and family were taken prisoners, while he and his son barely escaped with life, and returned to their desert-home, covered with confusion and mortification.

Yet Abd-el-Kader was more generous than his foe. He returned to the vanquished chief his baggage and his wives, keeping only as hostages

his youngest daughter Deborah, and her playmate Zelma.

Mussa-el-Darkui, upon returning to Ghardaia, handed over the government of the oasis to his son, who was duly recognized as Taleb, while he himself, living the life of a marabout, soon found a release in that slumber from which there is no awakening.

As soon as the young Taleb was in command of the city, the feud between him and his former foe, the Taleb of Waregla, broke out anew. Wherever a Tamissa met a citizen of Waregla, a fight ensued; and seldom did a caravan of Ghardaia set out without being attacked by the hostile tribe of the Tuaricks.

Thus things went on for a long time, the Taleb of Waregla ever watching for an opportunity to deal a deadly blow to his mortal enemy, the Taleb of Ghardaia. After the lapse of eight years, the first and thoroughly favorable opportunity presented itself.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that negotiations had gone on for some time between the Taleb of Ghardaia and the French conqueror of Algiers for the release of his sister Deborah, that upon the intervention of the renegade Ibrahim, Deborah and her companion Zelma were released by the French, who had continued to keep them as hostages after Abd-el-Kader's downfall, and that her brother, the present Taleb of Ghar-

daia, had come with his retinue to take his sister back to her desert-home.

The reader who has attentively perused the opening chapters will also remember how chance brought me into the company of the B'ni Mozab, how I had undertaken my journey with them to the desert, and how by my own stupidity I had been lost in the desert and had fallen into the hands of a strange caravan, who at first, taking me for a spy of the Taleb of Ghardaia, had treated me with frightful severity, and afterwards, becoming convinced of their mistake, had made of me a sort of honored prisoner. These people, then, whose captive I was, were no other than the men of Waregla, who had an old account to settle with the Taleb, the brother of Deborah.

The Taleb of Waregla, having received information that his mortal foe was on the road to bring back his beautiful sister and her companion Zelma from their captivity among the French in Algeria, thought that the time had come to pay his debt in the same coin ; and, calling around him his faithful friends, each of whom had some private account to settle with the people of Ghardaia, he invited them to join him in the proposed expedition.

It was his plan to waylay the Taleb of Ghardaia near one of the mountain-passes of the Atlas, and there to take from him his sister Deborah and Zelma her companion. They were now following them at the distance of not more than one day's

journey, watching for a favorable opportunity to attack.

Knowing as I did that Deborah was likely to be the victim of these prowling robbers, I could not but feel solicitous,—nay, I was tortured by inexpressible anguish at the thought that I was utterly destitute of the means of apprising her of the danger that threatened her.

Nevertheless, I did not despair. From the instant that the sheik—whom henceforth I shall designate by his proper title, namely, the Taleb of Waregla—had made me partly acquainted with the object of his journey,—from that moment, knowing it was Deborah who was in danger, I commenced to devise a plan by which to save her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ATLAS.

WE were now on the road again ; and although I tried to appear cheerful, it was very hard work, for, while I have undoubtedly many faults, the art of dissembling is not one of them. The knowledge that at any moment I might be brought face to face with those in whose company I had started on my journey in the desert, and particularly in the presence of her who was not altogether indifferent to me, with the harrowing consciousness that it was next to impossible to warn her of the impending danger, could not but show itself in some degree in my face.

I was in the Taleb's company nearly the whole of that day ; and when we bivouacked in the evening he invited me to share his tent with him.

As already stated, I was a well-treated prisoner ; and it was an object with me to gain the good will of my captors, that I might be accorded more liberty.

Stretched on my carpet after retiring, I pondered the feasibility of my project of escape. Should I succeed in eluding the watchful eyes not only of

the Taleb, but of the hundreds of men that composed the caravan, how could I get out of that mighty prison, the desert, or how make my way to those whom I wished to befriend? The more I reflected, the more hopeless seemed the enterprise, until at last, fatigued and dispirited, I fell asleep.

The next day's journey was far from having the usual monotony of desert travel. Several times our path led across dried-up water-courses; but it was to me a mystery how the water could ever have come there, or whence it could have flowed. Nevertheless, there were the indubitable indications of its former presence; and my companions assured me that if we should run short of water we would merely have to dig to a depth of twelve feet to find it in abundance. At this point, also, vegetation seemed to be struggling into existence, a stunted herb bordering the ravine and offering a welcome feast to the camels.

The ground around was no longer fine sand. The steps of the camels were more audible, for now there was rock beneath the sand; and the hills that were to be seen a short distance off were of a grayish hue, in no respect like the changeable sand-hills of the heart of the desert.

I have often heard it said that people who feel unhappy find the burden of misfortune lightened when they see nature smiling around them,—that grand scenery and pleasant surroundings have a

soothing effect. How this may be with the mass of mankind I know not; but I have never heard this assertion made without thinking of a visit I paid, when about twenty years of age, to the celebrated fortress or Bastille of Munkacz, in Hungary. That Bastille, and the Spielberg in Moravia, are perhaps the only two fortresses of Europe that deserve the name of "living graves."

The above-named Hungarian Bastille is a hill in the shape of a sugar-loaf, that stands in one of the most beautiful regions of the kingdom. The hill itself is covered from top to bottom with luxuriant vineyards; and were it not for the small guard-house that stands on the summit, no one would ever dream that it is the site of one of the most horrid prisons of Europe,—that in the bowels of that hill hundreds upon hundreds of human beings are immured, cursing the day that gave them birth. Yes, that hill, so luxuriantly covered with the delicious vine, hides in its interior the flower of the nobility of crushed, unhappy Poland. It is the place where all the nobility of Poland who attempted to revolt against the oppressor are kept as prisoners. I have seen there men, young nobles of the best families, who had been incarcerated at the age of eighteen, but whose hair, after they had been imprisoned only two years, had turned as white as snow, while their whole appearance was that of decrepit old men.

On one occasion the young Countess of Wynowska,

after earnest supplications and with the influence of powerful friends, had obtained permission to visit her brother, a prisoner in the Bastille of Munkacz; and I was fortunate enough to be her chosen companion. Traversing the beautifully laid-out gardens until we reached the summit, we stopped there to gaze a few minutes on the lovely picture spread out before us. The fields beneath, ripe for the harvest, looked like a rich golden sea whose surface was rippled by the morning breeze; all nature wore a smiling guise, inviting to happiness and gladness, and making the world seem like a paradise.

When my companion's brother was summoned, I beheld before me age personified in youth. He looked as though he might be sixty years old, but in reality he was not more than twenty-four. He had already been for three years a prisoner of state, his offence being what is called "*lesa majestad*;" in other words, he loved his country: he dreamed of seeing it free, invested with its ancient rights; and therefore he was condemned to be buried alive, for how long he did not know, nor indeed did any one else; for often, in that country, in the case of political offences, years are suffered to pass between arrest and trial; and when at last the trial does begin, it is prolonged through many weary months, while in pronouncing sentence the previous incarceration is never taken into the account, and the unhappy prisoner is treated as though he had but just been deprived of his liberty.

When the countess introduced me to her brother, my emotion was so great that I could hardly utter a word. He was dressed in the prison uniform, and the heavy chain that shackled his left hand and right foot looked as bright as though it had been made of burnished silver,—the polishing of their fetters being one of the means resorted to by these unfortunates to beguile the weary hours.

During our conversation, which was constantly broken by the bitter sobs of the countess, I thoughtlessly called his attention to the beauty of the surrounding scenery, thinking thus to divert his mind for a few moments from his melancholy lot. A sad smile played on his lips, and, after gazing for a few moments on the lovely panorama that stretched before us, he grasped my hand, and answered, in tones whose deep feeling I can never forget,—

“My friend, once a fortnight the wretched beings immured in this living tomb are allowed to emerge from their dungeons for the space of half an hour, to breathe the pure air of heaven and gaze on the beauteous earth. So far from the sight being a pleasure to me, I could wish that the prison stood in some dreary mountain-pass or on some bleak desert, where the surroundings would harmonize with my feelings, and where I might have at least the poor consolation of knowing that I was not alone in my misery, but that nature, no less than myself, was under a ban. After being kept for fourteen wretched days and nights in the gloomy cell, I am

brought out to view the outside world, where I see on all sides the work of the generous hand of nature, which has lavished on the scene all that can be imagined of grand and beautiful, while I——” His voice failed him, and for a few minutes he seemed to give way to uncontrollable grief.

“No!” exclaimed he, after a pause, during which he had striven to regain his composure, “the beauty of nature is to one in my position a mockery. The trees, the birds, the sportive insects, are each and all the objects of my envy, and every moment that I behold them but adds to the bitterness of my lot. Ah, no! give to the unfortunate captive the frowning rock, the dreary waste: they are far more in consonance with his feelings than the lovely valley, which can but remind him of what he has forever lost.”

These despairing words of the Polish noble forcibly recurred to me on beholding once more the signs of returning vegetation after wandering so long over the sandy wilderness. I could not but bewail my unhappy condition,—a prisoner among the most lawless of the bandit tribes of the Sahara, expecting momentarily to be compelled to witness the slaughter of a number of my fellow-creatures, among whom was one whose welfare had become to me a matter of intense solicitude, and yet tortured by the consciousness that I was helpless to assist them, or even to give them warning of their impending fate.

On this day the Taleb had very little conversation with me; but I could not get rid of the impression that he was narrowly observing me, to see what effect his communication had upon me. I tried hard to seem unconcerned, entering into conversation with the men, and listening with apparent interest to their wild stories of desert adventure,—for among them were many who had traversed the Sahara in its length and breadth; but all the time my thoughts were turned to the one absorbing object of effecting my escape,—the idea that had occupied my mind to the almost entire exclusion of all others since the moment I heard that Deborah was in peril.

The prospect, however, was still far from cheering. It would have been utter folly to attempt escape in the desert, for, even if I could manage to elude the vigilance of my custodians, I would have been but rushing into the gaping jaws of death. The only way that seemed open to me was to wait until the caravan arrived at the mountains, where the opportunities for concealment would be much more numerous, and where also I would be less likely to perish from starvation or thirst should I fail to find the caravan of Enoch-ben-Mussa.

That evening we halted early; and during the night our camp-fire burned with more than ordinary brilliancy and strength,—another sign of our proximity to the world of vegetation; for now we were not compelled to rely for fuel on the dried

manure of the camels, since with a little trouble enough firewood could be collected to keep up a brisk fire all through the hours of darkness.

The heat no longer oppressed us at night: indeed, towards morning the air was refreshingly cool; for we were but two days' march from the great Atlas chain, whose heaven-kissing peaks and grand curves stood before us in all their solemn beauty, no longer a shadow on the distant horizon. Still, although the air was so cool in the early morning as to be almost chilly, we were not without a reminder that we were as yet in the region where the sun is supreme, for at noonday the thermometer stood at 130° Fahrenheit.

For the first time, we came this day upon the prickly-pear, growing in the open desert. They were so thick and high that a man would have found no difficulty in concealing himself among them. We did not make a circuit around the grove, but passed directly through it,—not without considerable difficulty, however. But, while it was a troublesome journey for the men, it seemed a very agreeable one to the camels; for the poor beasts eagerly ate of the leaves of the cactus as we pressed our way through.

Upon emerging from the prickly-pear grove, we came upon an Arab encampment, their handsome black camel's-hair tents reminding me forcibly of the abode of the gipsies as I had seen them, in happy days gone by, on the puszta of Hungary.

The sight was a cheering one to me, for the whole encampment was in a stir, every one busily engaged in the ordinary duties of Arab domestic life.

The Taleb inquired for the chief, and, upon that dignitary making his appearance, entered into conversation with him; while a few of our people mingled with the men of the encampment, and, after some bargaining, purchased a quantity of the intoxicating plant used by these nomads for smoking in lieu of tobacco.

This keef, as it is called by the Arabs,—though of a very different family from the hasheesh or *Cannabis Indica*,—is an indigenous desert herb, and produces on the bodily system much the same effects as the well-known drug of the Hindoos. All parts of the plant are used; but the seed is the most intoxicating. The laws of the Mozabites strictly forbid its use, in common with that of all narcotics; but the Tuaricks and other similar tribes indulge in it until they lose their senses in stupefaction.

One of the men handed me his pipe, and I, nothing loath, accepted it, and, putting it in my mouth, proceeded to enjoy the treat. I found the taste, however, extremely bitter and astringent, and one whiff was quite enough for me: so I soon handed the pipe back to its owner, who seemed to wonder at my abstemiousness. Afterwards, I obtained a specimen of the stem, leaf, and blossoms for my herbarium, which I sent to the botanical collec-

tion of the University of Hungary, but am not aware whether the plant has ever been classified.

As we proceeded, I found the aspect of the desert considerably changed from its usual monotony: heaps of loose stones were to be seen at short intervals, dwarf shrubs grew here and there, together with long patches of coarse grass, and sometimes the surface had a gentle undulation.

We encamped that night at Beer-el-Hamna, where we found a well-spring of excellent water,—the best I had tasted since I had left Tlemcen. The well is twelve feet deep, the water oozing through the rocky sides. Troughs are dug in the vicinity of the well for the sheep and cattle to drink from; while for the camels the water is poured into hollowed-out trunks of the date-palm. When a caravan arrives at a well, there is always a scene of confusion in getting all the camels watered,—the drivers wrangling and scuffling for priority in turn, as well as in filling their water-skins.

The night was pretty well advanced when we observed a camp-fire at the distance of perhaps half a mile to our right. The Taleb immediately sent out scouts to ascertain to whom it belonged; and, while all seemed impatiently to await their return, there was certainly no man in the caravan so anxious as I, since, for aught I knew, it might be the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia; and the surmise seemed all the more probable since the

route which my friends had intended to take towards their home led directly across the mountains.

After two hours' absence the scouts came back, with the news that the fire we had seen was that of a nomad tribe who were pasturing there a large flock of sheep. The tidings gave me inexpressible relief.

The next morning the Taleb sent some men to the tribe to buy a few sheep; but they were not to be had for love or money.

The Arabs, whose only means of support is in the cattle they raise, never eat meat, but live entirely on the milk of their flocks and on farinaceous food. Olive-oil, fat, and fruit they are exceedingly partial to; but they care very little for vegetables. Their flocks they generally keep as a sort of reserve with which to pay the contributions levied upon them by their more powerful neighbors.

We rose at daybreak, and pursued our way towards the mountains. The desert here is one broad stretch of coarse grass,—a welcome sight in contrast with the weary sand-plains of the earlier days of our journey.

Nothing worth mentioning occurred, except that the Taleb—who since he had made me acquainted with his purpose had become quite reserved again—said to me, “Rumee, how do you like the journey now?” Naturally enough, I said I was very well

pleased. "Well, you will soon be at liberty," he replied, and left me alone again, to ponder the drift of his mysterious words. "At liberty!"—what could he mean by that? Did he expect the encounter soon, or had he abandoned his project? The latter supposition was not a likely one; for he had undertaken this long journey with the sole object of avenging himself and getting Deborah into his possession. "Surely, then," thought I, "he must expect to fall ere long upon his foe." And, becoming convinced that this was the case, I set about planning my escape.

The country now began to show signs of cultivation; and indeed a great portion of this so-called desert is merely wild land, which in my opinion might be rendered in the highest degree productive, all that is needed being a supply of water, which, in case of scarcity of rain, could be obtained by artificial means.

We had passed the *kailah*, or the heat of the day, and were rapidly drawing near to the mountains. About four in the afternoon we were on the ascent; and I experienced a feeling of strange exhilaration at leaving behind me, for however short a time, the intolerable monotony of the Sahara.

The chain of the Atlas, which is here a series of mountain-peaks and elevated plateaus rather than a continuous chain, has various names, according to the locality: the portion on which we were now travelling is called Yefran.

The following are the names of a few of the principal peaks of this part of the Atlas:—Gharian, Kiklah, Yefran, Jibel (mountain *par excellence*), Nouwahecha, Khalaefah, Reeaneen, Zantan, Rujban, Douweerat.

All the larger districts are divided into smaller ones; and every dell and copse and glade is claimed and the land tilled where it is susceptible of cultivation; so that it is an erroneous view to consider the Atlas chain as a vast uninhabited waste.

The French, after the conquest, rushed into the plateaus and groups of the Atlas as into a virgin territory, and were quite astonished to meet with claimants for their newly-acquired possessions, which they had imagined had lain fallow since the creation.

The part of the chain on which we were was exceedingly difficult of ascent. The camels were evidently very much fatigued, and picked their way with great circumspection. As the entire ghafalah arrived on the acclivity, the scene was a novel one: some of the camels were laboring up the mountain-side; others had thrown off their burdens and were standing still; while the herds and their drivers seemed to be straggling in all directions. Being in the company of the party that rode at the side of the Taleb, I was among the first to reach the summit. Once there, we halted, and beneath a huge old black olive-tree, which seemed coeval with creation, but which was still

in vigorous bloom, I sat down, enjoying its shade and gazing on the bleak waste before me.

How different the scenery from what I have so often beheld in other parts of the world! When a mere youth, scarcely yet fifteen, I visited, during the college-vacation, in company with a few fellow-students, the three highest peaks of the Carpathian Mountains,—the Tatna, Fatra, and Matra,—and in after-years I climbed, in succession, the Sömmering, the St. Bernard, and other mountains of Switzerland, and, later still, Mount Orizaba, the Cofre of Perote, and Popocatepetl; but the sight I beheld from the Atlas exceeded, in terrific grandeur, any that I ever witnessed, before or since. From its summit one takes in at a glance the vast expanse of the desert,—rolling its sandy billows far as the eye can reach, its awful silence seeming like the dread quiet of the tomb.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

TOWARDS morning of the next day, the entire caravan had reached the rendezvous, and scouts had been sent out for information as to the exact route of the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia; for the road from Tlemcen to the latter place crossed the mountains here by two passes, and the party with whom I was a prisoner did not positively know the one their foe would select, but had so arranged the route as never to be more than half a day's journey distant. The scouts were out the whole day and part of the night. I could see anxiety depicted in the Taleb's face, and doubtless my own face betrayed an equal amount of solicitude; but the causes were very different.

Towards morning the scouts arrived; and, although I was not made acquainted with the result of their exploration, I could easily surmise, by the command that was given to the men to prepare for immediate departure, that something extraordinary was going on.

The greater number of the able-bodied men made ready for the battle, those who were left behind

being detailed to tend the camels and the flocks, as well as to guard the tents and take charge of the women.

Just before the expedition set out, the Taleb called me to one side.

"I know," said he, "that the oath of a Rumees is sacred in his eyes; I have heard it said that he would lose his life rather than break his pledged word. I know not, however, whether that is the case when the pledge is given to one who is not of the Christian faith; and I wish you to satisfy me on this point."

To this, of course, my reply was that a pledge is sacred whether given to Christian or infidel.

"Then," said he, "give me your word that you will not attempt an escape during my absence, which may last one, two, or even a greater number of days."

At once, without uttering a syllable, I placed my hands in his.

"That is enough," said he. "Remember, however, that those whom I leave in charge of the camp have been instructed to keep a vigilant eye on you. You are at liberty to stroll around, but you must not go out of sight of those who will have to answer for your person with their own lives."

He thereupon left me, but in a moment returned, to warn me that, should I attempt to escape, he would leave no means untried to recapture me,

and that should I once more fall into his hands I need expect no mercy, reminding me at the same time that I had already had a taste of their style of punishment. "I would not kill you," said he, "but your torments would be such that you would long for death as a release."

So saying, he bade me farewell, and went to rejoin his men, who were already going down the declivity, and were rapidly being lost to view in the numerous pathways that led from the summit.

Well might the robber-chieftain say that I had already had some experience of the quality of their punishments; but, vivid as was my remembrance of the sufferings I had endured, I determined that I would not remain, despite my promise to make no attempt to escape.

And yet how was I to overcome this difficulty? A pledge of one's word, even though given to an infidel, is sacred; and I could not see how I was to disregard it without becoming liable to the charge of breaking faith. The dictates of honor seemed to bid me abandon all thought of escape at this moment; but, on the other hand, the probable fate of Deborah and the almost certain massacre of so many innocent people, should I not in some way warn them, urged me to seize whatever favorable opportunity presented itself.

Suppose the Ghardaian caravan surprised and all its male members slain, and Deborah, with her companion Zelma, in the hands of the Tuaricks:

would not conscience reproach me with having had it in my power to endeavor to save them from their terrible fate? And would I be able to silence it by the reflection that I had been kept from so doing solely by my regard for a promise made to a barbarian whose prisoner I was, who had deprived me of my liberty, and had caused me to undergo an incredible amount of suffering?

After carefully weighing the arguments on each side of the question, I resolved to make my escape, if possible, and immediately began to summon up my ingenuity to aid me in the execution of my purpose. I did not for one moment take into the account the imminent risk I ran: could I but be the means of insuring the safety of Deborah and of the caravan, it would matter very little what became of me.

While pondering the feasibility of various plans, a question arose more serious than any that had hitherto presented itself. Suppose I should succeed in effecting my escape: how did I know that I could find the caravan of Enoch-ben-Mussa, utterly unacquainted as I was with the mountain-passes, and how was I to guard against falling at any moment into the hands of my infuriated pursuers?

Serious as this difficulty was, however, I did not allow it long to trouble me, but came to the conclusion that my best plan would be to effect my escape and trust for the rest to the guidance of a kind Providence,—since on a moment's delay might

depend the safety of those for whom I was willing to risk not only life, but the infliction of the most agonizing tortures in case of failure.

The first thing to be done was to reconnoitre the camp and its surroundings. Going to the centre, where the men were assisting the women in the preparation of their meal, I found seven men in all,—five Wareglans and two Tuaricks. Although these did not inspire me with much fear, yet if they should chance to discover my intention of escaping and give the alarm, those who were in charge of the animals would come to their aid, and I should probably be overwhelmed by numbers. I thought it best, therefore, to ascertain how many composed the latter party.

The place where the animals were pastured was on the slope of the hill, about a quarter of a mile off; and when I reached it I found but three men there. After strolling around in an unconcerned manner for a few minutes, I returned to the camp, where I found the meal of kuskusu just served up. I partook quite heartily of this favorite Arab dish, and afterwards entered into conversation with the men, in order to throw them off their guard as much as possible.

I inquired if there were no olives or other wild fruit to be found on the mountains, to which they answered that they did not know, as they had never before been on this side of the Atlas. I was exceedingly happy to hear this, since if they were

unacquainted with the locality they would have no advantage over me in pursuit should they be inclined to follow me.

Still more important and cheering was the information I derived from one of the party, an old and infirm Mozab. He told me that in his younger days he had many a time crossed the Atlas by the other pass,—the one by which all the caravans cross; that in the neighborhood of that pass there was far more cultivation, and a considerable population of nomad Arabs; that there were several villages there, each with its sheik and kadi, and that fruits and vegetables were to be found there in abundance. He gave me the estimated distance of the pass from where we stood, and indicated the direction in which it lay; and I at once saw that the route of the Taleb and his warriors led directly thither.

There was no time to be lost, and I resolved at once to effect my escape and try to reach the caravan of Enoch-ben-Mussa in time to warn them of their peril. I invited one of the Mozabites to accompany me on an expedition in search of olives or other fruit, at the same time requesting one of the women to lend me a bag to carry what we might gather in our excursion. As I had supposed, none of them cared about accompanying me, not even deigning to answer me: the two Tuaricks lay stretched at full length under the shade of a tree, in the stupor superinduced by their hasheesh,

while the Mozabites, their inner man fully satisfied with the abundant repast of which they had just partaken, were indisposed to break in upon their siesta for the sake of a ramble along the mountain-side. But, while they thus declined my invitation, there seemed not the slightest intention on their part to interpose any obstacle to my going alone. Whether the silence which in ordinary cases implies consent was here simply a device to try me and lead me into developing my intentions, or sprang from total indifference as to my movements, I was puzzled to know; but, reflecting that at all events the chance of escape was worth an effort, I determined to go on as I had begun, and at once I moved off.

Still no objection, still the same passiveness on their part. I had not gone far when the thought struck me that a good way to disarm suspicion, if any existed, would be to go some distance and then return, as though I had concluded to try my good fortune in fruit-gathering in another direction. Acting on this idea, I at once retraced my steps. I found the party occupying the spot in which I had left them, and apparently as unconcerned at my return as they had been at my departure. Addressing myself once more to the old Mozab, I asked him to do me the favor of lending me a knife, so that if I happened upon a fruit which I should be unable to detach with my fingers I might not be obliged to relinquish it for want of

a cutting instrument. At once he acceded to my request; and, throwing the bag carelessly over my shoulder, I again set out, this time with my mind entirely at rest so far as immediate detection and pursuit were concerned.

I took good care, as the reader will easily believe, to shape my course in an opposite direction from that in which the men were superintending the grazing animals, and walked on with an unconcerned air, as though simply taking a stroll for pleasure: so that even had the party suspected me, my leisurely pace and nonchalant manner would have convinced them that they did me injustice.

When I had got a considerable distance down the hill, I halted and sat down under a tree to rest, with my face in the direction from which I had come, anxiously endeavoring to ascertain if the alarm had as yet been given. After a few minutes' quiet reconnoissance, I saw that as yet there was no one on my track; and, commending myself to Providence, I resumed my journey.

Avoiding as much as possible the beaten path, lest I should unluckily fall in with some of the Tuaricks or Wareglans, I pushed on rapidly, until, arriving at a spot where the forest was comparatively thin, I once more halted to review the situation and endeavor to decide the direction I should take.

I had now been gone more than two hours. As

I stood there bewildered, uncertain which way to pursue, I suddenly heard a noise at some distance behind me, as of rapid running, and in a few seconds I was satisfied that the sounds were approaching the spot where I stood. My heart sank within me; and, instead of concealing myself, I stood as though transfixed, unable to move one step, backward or forward. Onward came my pursuers,—for it was now clear that there were several upon my track,—and at last I sank down, faint and utterly dispirited, at the foot of a venerable tree, there to await the fate that now seemed inevitable. The only way of escape from a dreadful doom was to invent some sufficient excuse for my disappearance from the camp; and I resolved to declare that, having missed my way, I had lain down and fallen asleep. With my eyes half closed I awaited the arrival of my jailers; and in a very few minutes the noise was close at hand, and I fully expected to see my infuriated pursuers upon me the next instant.

An agonizing interval of a few moments, and a wild animal rushed past me, so closely that I could have touched him, followed by two or three others. The noise now died away as rapidly as it had arisen, and I found that my pursuit had been but a phantom. In my excitement and terror, I did not discern what the animals were; for the fear of recapture and the contemplation of my horrible fate in such an event almost deprived me of reason.

Greatly relieved at the happy turn of affairs, I rose and resumed my journey. I had not gone far until I came to a mountain-stream; and, considering that I could not take a safer path, I followed its course to where it issued from a narrow ravine,—so narrow, indeed, that it was not without difficulty that I entered it.

This pass or ravine was evidently the result of some terrific convulsion of nature, which had rent the range throughout its length of two miles, forming a fissure whose walls at the widest part were not more than thirty inches asunder. The sides were as smooth as though they had been chiselled by a skilful artisan; and on looking up from the bottom, where the light of day could hardly penetrate, the height of the rocky walls seemed appalling.

Here, it seemed to me, I was comparatively safe from discovery, and, should my pursuers come upon me (for that I would be pursued I could not doubt), the narrowness of the defile would give me an opportunity to sell my life dearly, with the aid of the knife which I had borrowed from the old Mozabite. At the same time, however, I could not help reflecting that I seemed as far as ever from achieving the object of my attempt at escape. In the labyrinth in which I now found myself, it was impossible for me to tell where lay the pass of which the old Wareglan had spoken. I must either keep on as far as the rent in the mountain

permitted, in the hope of finding some outlet, or retrace my steps and run the risk of immediate capture, since it was highly probable that by this time all the party left behind were searching for me, as I had been away some hours, and the Taleb had charged them, on penalty of forfeiting their lives, not to lose sight of me.

After a short counsel with myself, I resolved to keep on along the ravine, and pressed onward until, utterly overcome by fatigue and exhaustion, I sank down on the bleak rock, and was soon in a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

A NIGHT OF HORROR IN THE ATLAS.

WHEN I awoke, refreshed by my slumber, I found that darkness had come upon me. How long I had slept I could not say, and therefore it was impossible for me to tell how far the night was advanced. The question now arose as to what I had better do. There could be no advantage in staying where I was; and yet I could not hope to make much progress in the dark. After weighing the matter carefully, I at last determined to proceed, and taking the wall of the ravine as my guide, I pushed onward, and, although I caught many a severe fall over the fragments of rock with which the bottom of the pass was strewn, I made very fair headway. The heavy damp air of the ravine chilled me through and through, despite the protection of the bag which I had borrowed from the woman, and which I had wrapped around my shoulders.

Thus I groped and stumbled forward in the Cimmerian darkness for at least an hour, when suddenly the wall which had served as my guide seemed to disappear from under my hand. Look-

ing up, I found that I must have come to a larger break, or to the end of the ravine; for the starry canopy of heaven was in full view; and, in a few minutes, my eyes becoming accustomed to the faint starlight, I could see that I was in a broad valley, apparently surrounded by steep mountains. Refreshed as I was by my sleep, I walked briskly on, happy in the consciousness that the darkness was my best safeguard against pursuit, and hoping by some good fortune to come upon the camp of the Taleb of Ghardaia.

I must have walked a long distance—for I had crossed the valley and entered a broad pass that wound through the range of hills on the farther side—when, suddenly turning a sharp angle of rock, I saw, not more than a mile in front of me, a fire; and I had not advanced far when I became convinced, from the dark figures that I could see crossing and recrossing it, that some band of nomads had made their camp there for the night.

I refused to entertain for an instant the idea of retracing my steps; but it was necessary to move with extreme caution, since the party might be the very one that I particularly wished to avoid. Nearer and nearer did I draw, until, my eagerness getting the better of prudence, I was close enough to distinguish the voices of the men as they chatted around the cheerful blaze; and then, throwing myself at full length under a spreading olive-tree, I began to listen to the conversation.

I had not lain there five minutes when, to my horror, I discovered, among the men whose midnight encampment I had thus stumbled upon, one whose form and features were but too well known to me. One glance sufficed for me to recognize the Taleb of Waregla, the man to whom I had pledged my word not to try to escape, and who had threatened me with the most fearful tortures should I prove recreant.

Greatly as this discovery alarmed me, I resolved to maintain my ground; for I was so well concealed that I was almost safe from detection, and knowing the character of the encampment, I thought I might perhaps overhear enough to give me a clew to the whereabouts of the caravan they were about to attack. I therefore lay quite still, hardly venturing to breathe, lest my enemies should become aware of my presence.

I could distinctly see the faces of the men grouped around the fire,—all old acquaintances, members of the Wareglan caravan of which I had till lately formed an unwilling part. They must have arrived on the spot where they were bivouacked early in the evening,—so that their day's journey had been exactly the same as that which I had made at night, except that they must have taken a different route, since they would have found it impossible to squeeze through the narrow pass along which I had groped and stumbled during the hours of darkness.

There seemed considerable stir in the camp, late though the hour was ; and, judging from the movements of the Taleb, who was going from one group to another, apparently giving orders, it could not be a great while before they would break camp and start. Some were polishing their sabres or examining their muskets ; while two detachments were standing in readiness to receive the orders of their chief.

“You will ascend the hill that overlooks the pass,” said the Taleb to one of these detachments, “and remain there until we are engaged with the enemy below ; then, if the victory seems at all doubtful, you are to hurl down rocks at our opponents.”

“You,” said he to the other party, “will take the road to the left, and hide yourselves behind the bushes and in the trees that border the entrance to the pass ; and as soon as you perceive that the whole caravan has entered the pass, you will close up behind them and suffer none to escape, while I and the rest will engage them in the front.”

This said, he ordered them to march ; for, as he remarked, they would hardly have time to reach their destination ere daybreak, and it was necessary to take advantage of the darkness, so as not to betray their presence to their intended victims.

As soon as the two detachments had gone, the Taleb, addressing himself to the remainder of the band, ordered them to prepare for the march, re-

marking that, although they were not far from the pass, and therefore were not compelled to hurry, yet it would be well to take advantage of the night and reach their destination before the break of day.

I had now heard enough to convince me that I was at no great distance from my former *compagnons de voyage*,—the Taleb of Ghardaia and his people,—and that they would enter the pass early the next morning, little dreaming of the reception that awaited them.

There was but one way of ascertaining their whereabouts, and that was to follow the main body of the Wareglans to their place of ambuscade, which must be in the immediate neighborhood of the pass, and that once found, I would have very little trouble in discovering any caravan that might approach it.

Dangerous as was the project of following my enemies, it seemed to be the only one that promised success, and I resolved to carry it out; for, should I do otherwise, how could I be certain that I would not miss the route, lose myself in the mountains, and wander in a direction totally opposite to that which I wished to pursue?

But a short time elapsed ere the men and the Taleb had all in readiness, and they were just about to set out, when all at once I saw a messenger running from the direction opposite to that which the two bands had taken, and, approaching the Taleb, communicate something in a low tone.

The chief at once broke into a furious rage, and among other words I could distinguish "the cursed Christian dog." I felt certain that the news the man had brought related to me, and that the messenger must have been one of the men who had been selected to guard me.

After the first ebullition of passion had expended itself, I heard the Taleb give orders to a few of his men to search the neighborhood, and especially the vicinity of the pass, as he was convinced that the cursed Christian, now that he had escaped, would try to find the caravan of his friends and give them notice of their danger. "Quick!" added he, "and intercept him, if such be the case, and, when you find him, bring him to me, and I will make him feel the weight of my revenge."

Hearing this, I at once gave up the idea of following the party to their ambush. The best I could now do was to remain where I was until the men who had been sent in search of me had got out of sight, and until the Taleb with his band had left their present location. I considered myself safe as long as I stayed in my present hiding-place; for it was on an eminence so close by that they would never have dreamed of looking there; but I felt greatly relieved when I saw them going off in an entirely opposite direction.

As far as I could see, five men constituted the searching expedition. I marked well the direction which they took; and soon after the Taleb and

his followers set out for the pass, cursing incessantly the "Christian dog" who had perhaps frustrated all his plans.

I did not venture to stir for some time afterwards, fearing lest some of them might have forgotten something, and, returning, might come upon me before I could have an opportunity to conceal myself again. After the lapse of about half an hour, during which all was quiet, I emerged from my hiding-place, and began to reconnoitre.

The camp was apparently deserted; not a sound was to be heard except the crackling of the burning wood. After listening intently for a few minutes, I advanced cautiously, looking first to one side and then to the other, in anxious watch for any signs of the presence of an enemy.

I had not up to this time considered myself under any special obligations to my captors, but I could not help feeling grateful for the fire they had left burning; and, although it was undoubtedly a very rash act, I was so chilled by my stay under the olive-tree that I went straight to the burning wood-pile to warm myself.

I picked up some fragments of roasted yucca,—a kind of wild sweet potato,—the remnant of their evening repast; and, scanty though the morsel was, I was thankful for any thing in the shape of food, not knowing how or where I was to get my next meal.

After having warmed myself and satisfied my

hunger as well as I could, I once more went on, but slowly and cautiously, my object being to find a road to the pass, in the hope of meeting there my former friends.

As the likeliest method of finding the pass, I determined to ascend an eminence, whence, if fortune smiled on me, I might perhaps discern the night-fire of the people whom I desired to meet. This idea seemed quite plausible, and I at once directed my steps towards the nearest mountain, the hope of success redoubling my energy. Repeatedly did I stumble over the uneven ground; but on I pressed, halting now and then to take breath, until, at the break of day, I stood on the highest peak. To my great disappointment, I could see nothing, so dense were the trees that crowned the mountain-top. My ascent had been exceedingly fatiguing, and my face was moist with perspiration,—as I thought; but on drawing my shirt-sleeve across my brow, I was astonished to find it stained with blood. So preoccupied had I been that not until that moment did I become aware that my face and hands had been lacerated by the thorny bushes through which I had urged my way in clambering up the mountain. Now, however, I could feel the itching, burning pain all over my face and neck; and I doubt not that had I at that moment looked into a mirror I might easily have imagined myself transformed into a tattooed Indian from the wilds of America.

Although the light was every moment becoming stronger, I could still see nothing but trees; all else was hidden from view by the dense foliage. One consoling reflection I had,—that those who had been sent in pursuit of me would never think of looking for me here; but this was more than counterbalanced by the thought that the time lost in this useless ascent would perhaps have enabled me, had I kept on the low ground, to discover the whereabouts of Deborah and her people. I knew, however, that the Taleb of Ghardaia, while I had been with his caravan, had generally broken camp late in the morning, that even in the heart of the desert, where it was an object to avoid the heat of the day, he hardly ever started before six o'clock, and here, at the foot of the mountain, he would not be likely to move at an earlier hour; so that there might still be time to give him warning of his danger.

I at once began to descend, but by no means so rapidly as I had ascended. Frequently I was compelled to hold on by a friendly branch or sapling, to avoid rolling over a precipice. Painfully I made my way down, until, coming to a sort of ravine, I found myself fronting another hill covered with low underbrush, here and there a huge olive-tree towering above the surrounding vegetation. With considerable difficulty I gained the top of this hill, and, making my way to the highest olive-tree, I threw the bag which I still carried with me over

my head and shoulders, the better to disguise my form should any unwelcome spectator be in the neighborhood. In a short time I was seated on one of the topmost branches, and was gazing anxiously around. Nothing was to be seen but the wide expanse of the desert, just as I had beheld it the day before, when for the first time I ascended the Atlas in company with my captors. No living thing was in sight, except when now and then some bird of prey emerged for an instant from the forest, to disappear as rapidly.

To whatever quarter I directed my gaze, the result was the same,—I could discern nothing. Had even a gazelle or an ostrich shown itself within a circuit of two miles, I could have seen it: how much more, then, a large caravan?

Was it possible that they had gone by and had entered the pass? The thought was agonizing; but such might be the case. How was I to ascertain? To the left, and at no great distance from me, lay the beaten path that caravans leave behind when travelling through the desert; and, tracing its course, I could see that it led between two mountains, and felt assured that it was the fatal pass in which a bloody scene was to be enacted, or perhaps had already been enacted; and although it was not more than two miles from where I stood, I dared not take any steps to ascertain what I so much desired to know.

My position now was a truly sad one. After

having succeeded in eluding the vigilance of my captors,—having triumphed over obstacles whose magnitude I did not comprehend until afterwards,—having forced my way, so to speak, through the heart of a mountain, a feat probably never before attempted even by a native, much less by a European,—having been thus far so fortunate, and now to be close to the spot where all my hopes and fears were centred, and still to be unable to ascertain the exact truth, was a torment beyond the power of words to describe.

Not long, however, did I allow the danger to deter me. Driven to desperation by the thought that my hesitation might prove fatal to Deborah, I came down from my lofty observatory and made my way towards the pass, keeping the sharpest possible watch, and stepping as softly as the midnight robber who is startled at the sound of his own footsteps.

After proceeding in this way for two or three hundred yards, I climbed another tree, and once more bent my anxious gaze on the desert; but all was silence and desolation, and, sick at heart, I came down from my second look-out.

I ventured now to advance nearly the same distance as I had made from the first point of observation to the present. Here again I took a view; and the discovery I made was almost sufficient to deprive me of volition. Fortunately, the tree I ascended had an immense crown, thickly studded

with foliage; for, had it been otherwise, not many minutes of life would have been vouchsafed to me wherein to repent of my too daring advance.

Peering through the leaves, I saw, not farther than four or five hundred yards from where I stood, a Tuarick, mounted, like myself, on a lofty branch, and looking towards the desert. He also was taking observations, but with an entirely different motive from mine,—for self.

Quick as lightning I descended, my heart gladdened at the thought that my friends were so far safe,—that the unsuspecting caravan had not yet arrived; and I almost flew back to my first observatory. So overjoyed was I at my discovery that I did not consider in its proper light the danger which I had escaped or in which I was, surrounded perhaps by the very foes whose grasp I was so anxious to elude.

I once more took a general observation of the desert, but with the same result as before,—nothing was to be seen in the vast space; and I felt sure that the caravan had not arrived, that the barbarian I had seen was watching, like myself, for their coming, and that not far from where he stood must be the remainder of the party who had been ordered to remain hidden at the top of the pass, intrusted with the office of hurling stones on the victims below.

I was so fully convinced of the fact that I felt like a child who unexpectedly receives some long

wished-for toy. I could have cried for delight; and, to take advantage of the unlooked-for opportunity, I tried to impress on my mind the position of the pass, for now I was sure it lay beneath that hill on which stood the tree where I had seen the Tuarick.

Satisfied with what I might call my topographical survey, I went hurriedly down the hill, retracing my steps farther and farther, to avoid the disagreeable vicinity of the lawless band of the Taleb of Waregla. I took care, however, not to get too far from the desert, my main object being to be close at hand should the caravan approach, and then save them by rushing towards them and giving warning of what was to be expected.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DOOMED CARAVAN.

AFTER one more survey, I determined to make a circuit so as to have the pass on the left; and to do this it was necessary for me to descend into a deep gorge,—by no means an easy task.

The formation of the great Atlas, especially in that portion of it where I then was, is a wonderful phenomenon. Here the caprices of nature are so remarkable that, although I had neither disposition nor time to make any geological observations, I could not help stopping now and then, impressed by the marvellous structures around me. Pile is heaped upon pile, one rock towering up like a fragment of some gigantic pillar, with smaller hills around, as if intended for steps to nature's own obelisk. Farther on, the mountain-chain is broken by a valley; but that is not the proper name, for it is only an interrupted continuation,—a semicolon in nature's great handwriting.

Some hills, after their original formation, must have undergone other changes; for they seem as if split, one part towering over the debris of the other half, that lie scattered around, forming so

many smaller hills, and which are the most dangerous to explore; for now and then, and perhaps when least expected, a tremendous noise is heard: it is the detaching, falling, and breaking of a rock from its original position, the displacement of a hill, or the division of a mountain into fragments.

This breaking-up of the rocks gives rise to caves of fantastic shapes, which often follow each other in a continuation of various apartments, different in size and form,—some large enough to give shelter to an entire tribe, with their cattle; others so small as hardly to afford space enough to protect the solitary shepherd from the storm.

The circuit made, I stood on the other side. I had the pass to my right; and the hill I had selected as my look-out was so placed that I was secure against being observed by the people whom I was not over-anxious to meet.

In front of this hill was just such a chaos of rocks as I have above described,—a heap of stones, or (if the reader will allow me to use my own expression) the ruins of a mountain, which had rolled down and formed a kind of perpendicular wall, forming, for a long distance, a part of the border of the desert.

Crawling through the underbrush which crowned this natural wall, I had an uninterrupted view of the desert. Not even a dog could have entered the pass without my seeing him, and of course much less the expected caravan; but there was

no sign as yet of their approach, although the sun was already within an hour of the meridian. Perhaps, thought I, something extraordinary has delayed them, or the people who await their coming have been wrongly informed by their scouts; for, from the conversation I had overheard the night before, they expected to meet them early in the morning.

As nearly as I could estimate, the wide and open desert before me must have measured more than six or eight miles in a diagonal line from the place where I stood to the far-reaching horizon that enclosed the view on all sides, except where the mountains formed part of the group; and as I could see nothing throughout the entire space, I concluded that in any event it would take some hours for the caravan to reach the pass.

Partly to beguile the weary hours, but principally with the object of looking for some sort of fruit with which to appease my hunger, I resolved to explore the vicinity. As the spot upon which I now stood was excellently adapted to my purpose of keeping a look-out for the caravan, I resolved to return to it again; and, to make sure of not missing it, I cut with the knife such marks on the trees from time to time as would be certain to enable me to make my way back.

I began also to feel thirsty; but, although I was aware that there were numerous springs in the ravine, I did not dare to spend time in going to

look for water, lest, in the interval, the Ghardians should approach, and I lose the chance of averting the terrible fate that awaited them.

I found a few wild olives; but they were as bitter as gall, and I had to chew some fern-leaves to get rid of the nauseous taste they left in my mouth.

The rocks over which I had to make my way were almost entirely bare, save that here and there patches of vegetation were seen, which at a distance looked as though the ground were cultivated, but which, when I approached them, proved to be nothing but wild shrubs, with an occasional barren fig-tree.

I now had quite as good a view of the desert as had been afforded from the point which I had used as my observatory; and I thought it was perhaps better for me to keep on and get as far as possible from the men who were lying in ambush, since, if the caravan came in sight, I would have to get to it by some means or other, and it would be much better to be at a distance from those who would try to prevent me from doing so. I therefore, while crawling along, kept as close as possible to the border; and I can truthfully say it was the roughest road I ever traversed in my life.

It was towards three in the afternoon, as well as I could judge by the position of the sun, when I came to a collection of ruins that seemed to have been at one time the habitations of human beings;

and, ruins though they were, I was glad to see them. I had heard, while with the Tuaricks, that these mountain-districts were inhabited; but as yet I had not met a living soul, nor had I seen the slightest token of cultivation of the soil.

Although invigorated by the air of this elevated region, I began to suffer terribly from want of food; for since noon of the preceding day I had tasted nothing save the roasted yucca I had found among the cinders where the Tuaricks had bivouacked during the night. The farther I went, the safer I felt, and it was now high time to bethink me of my bodily wants; so I began to search for where-withal to restore my rapidly failing strength. I looked around, but all in vain. Many a plant did I dig up, whose leaves made me think that they sprang from bulbous roots; but it was labor lost, —I could find nothing; and disappointment made the pangs of hunger seem still more intolerable.

In the course of my search for food, I found the remains of some Moorish forts and castles, and a little farther on, I came upon another village in ruins, destroyed, in all probability, in the recent war of the Bashaws. These ruined villages had consisted of stone and mud buildings; most of the former had been plastered together with mud, while others, again, were simply excavations in the solid rock.

Continuing my explorations, I found an excavation which led to a subterranean passage along the

side of the rock, but which seemed to be a natural cave, rather than one worked by human hands.

My intrusion awakened a great host of lizards, which crawled out from every nook and crevice, and their aspect was so hideous that I gave up the proposed exploration and once more took to my dangerous road on the mountain-side.

From the height where I now stood I had an extended view of the plain, stretching out like a vast sea; while to the left I could look over the Atlas valley, in which were scattered patches of cultivation, with here and there a palm and groups of fig-trees; while farther to the north the heights were crowned with what seemed to me dense olive-woods. At the side of the rock were several flights of natural steps, which apparently had received some finish from Arab ingenuity, and by means of which I descended.

The air now became quite cool, and the sky grew heavily overcast: a tempest seemed to be threatening. I looked for some place of refuge, but could see none; and so, hungry and exhausted, I lay down on the bare ground, covered myself with the sack, and awaited the coming of the storm. And a fearful storm it was,—such as I had never witnessed before. The thunder was not in separate peals, as we are accustomed to hear it, but a continuous roar, seeming to shake the mountains to their base.

On one occasion, while ascending the Orizaba, I

witnessed the rage of the elements in the celebrated Chiquihuite of that range, for I happened to be passing through the clouds at the moment when the thunder was roaring in its wildest fury; but it was child's-play compared with what I saw in the Atlas. I shut my eyes, and tried to stop my ears with leaves, but all to no purpose: not only did I hear every sound, but the nerves of hearing were so rudely shocked that there was a hissing in my ears for some time after the storm had ceased. And yet, strange to say, while during the storm the sky was dark, not a drop of water had fallen from the clouds, and in a few minutes the sky was as clear as before, the only change being that a pleasant northwesterly breeze was blowing,—the *bahree*, as the Arabs call it.

When the sensation in my ears had passed, and while still lying on the bare ground, I heard a noise like that of a streamlet running over stones. Following the sound, which grew louder and louder as I advanced, I discovered at the bottom of a deep ravine, bubbling out from beneath the shade of palms and olives, a well hidden amidst rugged steeps and hanging rocks. The water was of the purest quality and clear as crystal, and was more welcome to my parched lips than all the wines I ever drank, before or since. There was a plentiful supply of dates on the trees, and, after making a sumptuous meal, I gathered enough of the fruit to last me for the next twenty-four hours, and,

placing them in the bag, I again ascended the flight of natural steps.

When on the top, on the same place where, before descending, I had taken my observation, and surveying once more the wide waste, I could see nothing,—my friends had as yet not made their appearance; and as the sun was now far down in the western sky, I resolved to abide where I was until the morning. I selected a position from which I could have an uninterrupted view of the desert; “for,” thought I, “if the Taleb should bivouac anywhere in the neighborhood, I will discover his camp-fire during the night, and then I will travel towards it till I reach it;” for there is no better guide in the desert at night than the camp-fire.

Before making my dispositions for the night, I once more surveyed the scene spread out before me. To the right lay the pass,—the only one that a caravan could take to traverse the mountains, especially if it consisted of camels and other animals; therefore, if my friends were coming, I was sure they would have to traverse that pass; and, there being nothing to hide them from my view should they approach, I was well satisfied with the spot I had selected,—a barren rock, the top of which was about twenty yards square,—an isolated mass of stone, one side forming the wall of a deep abyss, while the other faced the desert, and was covered here and there with straggling vines, of which some hung loosely; others seemed

firmly rooted in the crevices of the rock. Setting down my dates, I went to a grove not far distant, and filled my bag with dry leaves, which formed my bed for the night, the bag serving for my coverlet.

The expanse of country that lay before me now constituted a sight of surpassing splendor. The rays of the setting sun seemed to convert each grain of sand into a prism; and far as the eye could reach the desert was resplendent with all the hues of the rainbow. I gazed at the glorious spectacle in rapt admiration, forgetting hunger and fatigue, until, the life-giving orb sinking beneath the horizon, and the shades of night enveloping the world in darkness, I bethought me of the repose I so much needed; and, arranging my primitive couch, I was soon in a deep slumber.

I must have slept for several hours; for when I had lain down I felt utterly exhausted, and I awoke quite refreshed. Springing from my couch, I gazed anxiously towards the desert, but could not discover the slightest glimmer of light. To the right, where the pass was situated, I saw a cloudy vapor arising; and I came to the conclusion that it must proceed from a fire kindled in the gorge by those who, like myself, were awaiting the arrival of the caravan.

As I stood there in anxious expectation, my thoughts reverted to my own peculiar position; and a sadness crept over me as memory brought

up before me the forms of those whom I had left far behind me,—parents, sisters, brothers, friends, and relations. My eyes filled with tears, and from the depths of my heart a fervent prayer went up to the throne of Him who alone could protect me and lead me safely out of the labyrinth in which I was involved

Never before had I gazed so attentively at the stars as I did on that night. Sleep seemed to have forsaken my eyelids, and soon the faint streaks of light in the east announced the approach of the coming day, with all its anxieties and perils. I looked once more at the desert, and, still seeing nothing but the dreary sand, I sought my stony bed and stretched myself upon it, and—the cool morning air exerting a soothing influence on my frame—the drowsy god ere long reasserted his dominion.

When I opened my eyes again, the sun was far above the horizon. I jumped up, and looked towards the desert, but could see nothing. I turned my gaze to the right, and there—oh, horror!—was the tail of a caravan, as it is called, entering the pass. It must—it must be the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia, the brother of Deborah! I forgot the existence of the steps, the abyss, the precipice in front of me. Rushing to the edge of the rock, I began to scramble down, without a moment's thought as to the danger I incurred. I grasped the vines that were rooted in the crevices:

they afforded a frightfully precarious support, but no other means offered. Down, down I crawled. My hands were bleeding, my knees, with which I tried to support myself, were lacerated; but I heeded not the pain. Down I went; and I had already gained the greater part, when I heard the report of firearms. Faster, faster,—a short distance only, and I will be at the bottom. All at once, however, the tender vine, too weak to support my weight, gave way. A strange light crossed my sight, the frail support broke, and down I went headlong to the bottom of the precipice.

CHAPTER XXII.

BEDOUIN HOSPITALITY.

AT the foot of the Gibel Sahara lies a small village, consisting of thirty or forty black camel's-hair tents, ten or fifteen mud houses, and a couple of stone houses. Some of the houses have a walled yard in front, and usually they are in clusters of three or four. In one of the stone houses lives the sheik, and in the other the marabout, who every morning and evening bestows the *fatah* on the believers in the Prophet. A few sheep and goats, with some camels and asses, are all the animals the villagers possess. In the houses the traveller can get hardly any thing: no meat is killed or sold, and bread is not to be had for love or money.

These Bedouins are like some of the Swiss people who gain their livelihood by guiding travellers over the glaciers: for a pittance they show the caravanists the way through the difficult mountain-pass of the Atlas. On the approach of a caravan they hasten to offer their services; and the lucky one who is engaged as a guide considers himself extremely fortunate, for his reward is sure to be

a sheep or a goat, which he takes home to augment his flock.

Another means of support with these people is the date-tree; and although the plant does not flourish in this region, they manage by its aid to keep soul and body together. The dates usually ripen in October; but sometimes a premature rain falls, destroying the fruit, and then their hope of subsistence is gone.

From the juice of the date-tree these villagers make a liquor called *laguni*, of which the Arabs in general are very fond, and which, although fermented, has very little of the alcoholic taste. The juice is obtained by making an incision in the top of the tree, taking care to reach the centre, and, a funnel being attached, the sap flows into a vessel, the palm yielding about ten quarts every morning during the season. A tree may be bled for two months if a fresh incision be made every day. This operation, however, will kill the plant if continued too long; but, cautiously practised for a few days, it often restores a sickly or scanty-bearing palm, apparently acting upon it as pruning does upon European fruit-trees.

They also procure a means of subsistence from the cabbage or heart of the date-tree. It is boiled, spiced with pepper, and occasionally olive-oil is added: the taste resembles that of the chestnut, or, rather, that of the sweet potato (*yucca*) of the West Indies. Delicious as this dish is for these

poor people, it is very rarely that an opportunity presents itself for them to enjoy it; for the cabbage is never cut except when the tree has fallen, since the loss of its crown invariably destroys the plant.

The date-tree of these mountains is the poorest among the fifteen classes known to the Arabs. The *deghehnour* is considered the best for keeping, while three other kinds are preferred fresh.

Concerning one of these last species, a pleasing legend is told, which is known to every Arab who is fortunate enough to possess such a tree.

There was a poor woman named Touadjah, aged and childless, who was very devout, and who longed in vain for the means of making a pilgrimage to Mecca. So poor was she that she had not even money wherewith to purchase a string of beads; but, gathering date-stones, she contrived to pierce them, and strung them into a chaplet. With these she daily and hourly performed her orisons, and, constantly visiting the marabout of Sidi Abd-el-Kader, implored the Prophet that he would not charge her poverty upon her as a crime, but would admit her to the same place in paradise as she would have gained by a visit to his shrine. When she died, the chaplet—her only earthly possession—was buried with her. The spirit of the Prophet visited the spot, and the tears he shed caused the date-stones to germinate. A clump of trees sprang up over the grave, whose fruit proved to be far superior in sweetness to any hitherto known.

The well from which these villagers draw their supply of water is more than a mile from the place, and the road to it is exceedingly rough; so that the task of the poor women who bring the daily supply of the life-giving fluid is by no means an easy one.

In a house whose walls looked as if about to crumble into ruins, and the roof of which consisted of dried palm-leaves, laid on so sparsely that at night the stars could easily peep through,—in one corner of this so-called house, on mattings made from the palm, lay the fevered body of the anxious watcher for the Ghardaian caravan.

When I opened my eyes, a beautiful Arab girl—a perfect mountain-gazelle—sat at my side, fanning me with a palm-branch, and gazing tenderly upon me with her large dark eyes; and, perceiving that I was about to speak, she placed her fingers on her lips, as if to warn me to remain quiet.

I looked around, and tried to recollect what had passed; but it was in vain. I seemed to become even more confused by finding myself in that dark hovel, with the face of the woman before me, whom I could not remember having ever seen before. I closed my eyes again, as if by shutting out the objects around me I could concentrate all my senses on the past.

Slowly that past assumed a definite form. I began to recollect that I had fallen from a height,

but that was all; and I opened my eyes again, to ask where I was, how I had come there, and what had become of the caravan. But the one who seemed to nurse me or watch at my side laid her hand on my mouth, preventing me from satisfying my curiosity.

"You must not speak," said she, "until the marabout permits you to do so."

"The marabout? What has he to do with me?" And, in spite of all her warnings, I asked, "Am I a prisoner?"

"No," answered she, smiling; "but you are not well yet, and, if you continue to talk, the blood will come again."

"But who are you? Who is the marabout? Who are the people among whom I am?"

She did not answer, but left me immediately. I tried to get up, but could scarcely move my body, and, endeavoring to raise my right arm, an acute pain shot through my frame, making every nerve quiver. I tried the left arm, and found that I could move it easily, which showed me clearly that the other was wounded, or perhaps dislocated.

Feeling around with the left arm, I found that my head was bandaged, and I slowly began to comprehend my situation. I had fallen from the rock in my haste to warn the caravan, and had been terribly injured; but how I came here, who the people were, whether I was free or a prisoner, how long I had been among them,—all these questions

came up, and I awaited anxiously the arrival of the female who had left me so precipitately.

In a short time I heard steps approaching, and the next instant the Arab girl appeared, accompanied by an old man, who hurriedly advanced towards the place where I lay. Without addressing me, he leaned over me and murmured something that I could not distinctly hear; but, from the words "Allah" and "Mohammed," I supposed that it was a prayer. He then laid his hand on my chest, and afterwards both hands on my temples, which I subsequently learned was to ascertain the state of the pulse, and then, addressing the girl, said that Mohammed had heard his prayer and that I was out of danger.

Although I could understand what he said, it was not pure Arabic, but a dialect of that language, mingled with technicalities which are peculiar to the various tribes of the Sahara. From the manner in which he spoke, and his whole appearance, I was convinced that I had nothing to fear, at least for the present; but, to be sure of my position, I addressed to him the same questions as I had already done to the girl. He smiled, and, seating himself at my side, proceeded to make known to me the circumstances of my rescue from death at the foot of the precipice.

Two Bedouins, early in the morning of that fatal day, had seen in the distance the approach of a caravan, which seemed to be coming in the direc-

tion of the mountains; and they at once hurried to meet them and offer themselves as guides in crossing the Atlas range. But, as the chief had among his people men who had more than once crossed and recrossed the mountains, the services of the villagers were not needed; and, after receiving a few dried-up biscuits as a gratuity, they returned to their home.

When at a short distance from the spot where I met with the accident, they noticed the fez that had fallen from my head in the descent, and, after a brief search, discovered my body weltering in blood. They dismounted, and, finding that I was not quite dead, placed me on a camel and took me to their village, which lay some seven miles to the left, and which I have described in the beginning of this chapter.

The finding of a Rumeë in this out-of-the-way place was something that they could not easily explain; and it is likely that curiosity as to what I was and whence I came was a far stronger motive with them than the wish to save the life of a human being.

On my arrival in the village I was placed in charge of the marabout, who is always looked upon as the wisest and most learned man of the community, and he at once set about endeavoring to restore me to consciousness. Having satisfied himself that life was not extinct, he washed my face in cold water, and, applying the strong fer-

mented *laguni* to my nostrils and temples, he was soon rewarded by seeing me begin to breathe. But now another difficulty presented itself, for I commenced to throw up blood in alarming quantities. At last, however, he managed to stop the flow by administering to me the bitter and astringent juice of the unripe olive.

Having thus attended to the vital organs, he next undressed me, to ascertain how much I had been injured externally. Although every part of my body was bruised by the fall, there was no wound that endangered my life. He found the right clavicle dislocated, and a cut on the back of my head, which called for immediate attention.

The pharmacopœia of these mountaineers consists of very few remedies. The marabout tried to bring my shoulder into its right place, bandaging it as skilfully as a European physician could have done, and placing on it some leaves steeped in *laguni* made aromatic by herbs whose medicinal properties are known only to the marabouts of the different tribes. The bruised and wounded parts of my body he covered with the mashed leaves of the *kaahla*,—a plant which I afterwards found to be of a gummy nature, and which probably owes its healing properties to its power of excluding the air from the part to which it is applied. This done, I was placed on my rude bed, and put in charge of the young girl above mentioned, who was one of the wives of the marabout.

The most unfavorable symptom now was a raging fever that consumed me. My body was burning, my lips were parched, my tongue was dry and black as a piece of leather, and I became delirious. The only internal remedy that my unlettered physician administered was a draught of the fresh juice of the palm before fermentation, which in that state is sweet and has a laxative property; while to quench my thirst he gave me a beverage made from a kind of fern that grows between the rocks, and which, when pounded between two stones and steeped in water, forms a cooling mucilaginous drink.

Perfect quiet was enjoined by the sheik of the village, who expected to hear some extraordinary revelations on my recovery. Every morning and evening he came to inquire after the state of my health, giving strict orders at the same time that no one should be allowed to enter my presence when I should recover, so that he, as the superior authority, might be the first to hear the story of the mysterious Rumeé.

When I heard of my miraculous escape from death, and of the care the marabout had taken to restore me to life and health, I could not refrain from grasping his hand and impressing on it a kiss, which bespoke more of my gratitude than I could have expressed in my broken Arabic or in any other language.

“Not to me, but to Allah and his Prophet, do

you owe your recovery," said the old man, requesting me at the same time to remain quiet; for, as he said, the bad spirit had not yet left me, and might, by the slightest imprudence on my part, be brought back again.

One question, however, I could not help asking:—"What of the caravan?"

"Fear not," cried I, imagining that I saw him hesitate, "to tell me the whole truth. Uncertainty is more torturing than would be the positive knowledge that they have perished."

Thereupon he assured me, by the life of the Prophet, that neither he nor any of his people had any knowledge of what had happened in the pass; but he promised to make inquiries, and to hide nothing from me, let the news be bad or good.

This first reawakening to life, the excitement it produced, the uncertainty of the fate of the caravan, my helpless position, the thought of the future,—all together proved too much for my weak frame; and, feeling exhausted, my eyes soon closed, and my feverish mind obtained a temporary relief in a long and refreshing sleep.

When I opened my eyes again, I saw before me the marabout and his young wife, offering me a bowl of camel's milk. This beverage I had never relished when in health, and in my present state it was still less inviting; but my attendant would take no refusal.

"Drink it," said he. "Look at the Tuaricks.

they are strong and powerful from drinking camel's milk; it will give you strength also, and, once strong, the Sahara will do the rest. The Sahara is the sea on land, and, like the sea, is always more healthy than the cultivated spots of the earth."

There being no alternative, I submitted, for I was as weak as one who has just passed the crisis of a typhus fever; and, indeed, as I desired above all things to be strong again, I would have swallowed a more nauseous medicine than the camel's milk to attain that end.

"How long have I been in this state of unconsciousness?" I asked.

"Nine times has the moon gone around the earth since we first found you," said the marabout.

"And how much longer will it be before I am entirely well?"

"The moon which has now disappeared will have to come again ere you will be able to care for yourself."

This was sad news. I was always of an impatient nature: how was I to endure this enforced stay among strangers, who, although thus far they had treated me kindly, had perhaps some sinister ulterior motive? Yet I could not change the dictates of fate: I had to resign myself and hope—hope for the best.

Towards night the marabout gave me a drink consisting of a mixture of *laguni* with a few drops

of the milky juice of the unripe fig, which, he said, would make me sleep. He spoke the truth, for immediately upon taking it I felt a drowsiness creep through my whole body, and a deep sleep fell upon me, which lasted throughout the night.

Upon my awaking, another dose of camel's milk, this time heated, was brought to me; and for five days this was the only nourishment of which I partook. Yet I was thankful, for my strength was returning rapidly, and I could already walk across the room without assistance, the only inconvenience being that I had to carry my arm in a sling, and felt much pain in my shoulder.

I had not as yet seen any of the people of the village but the marabout and his young wife, the latter of whom never left my side except at night, when her husband took her place.

On the sixth day of my convalescence, the marabout brought a visitor: it was the sheik of the village,—there called *rais*, which, in all probability, has its origin in the Semitic word *rosh* ("head"). He was the supreme authority of the place; and after having informed me of the rank of my distinguished visitor the marabout absented himself, leaving me alone with the *rais*.

He was a pleasant-looking, rather jocular fellow, and had it not been for the marabout, who had made me acquainted with his position, I certainly would never have dreamt of his being a man in authority. He wore a dark old ragged fez, around which was

wound another piece of rag whose color had long since faded, and which was arranged in the form of a turban. His body was covered with a long brown shirt, open at the breast and reaching to the knees, while over the whole was thrown a bour-nouse whose color betokened an antiquity rivaling that of the rag that formed the turban.

I will not try the patience of the reader with the conversation that passed between us. I answered all his questions as truly as I could, hiding nothing from him except my escape from the Waregla and Tuarick people; and when in the course of conversation I found that the village whose supreme power he represented had often been plundered by marauding Tuaricks, who are the bandits of the Sahara, and that their poverty was attributable to those robbers, I did not hesitate to tell him how I had fallen into their hands, of my escape, and of my desire to save the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia.

The features of the rais brightened while I went on in my narrative. He had known the father of the Taleb, and had been engaged with him in the war against Abd-el-Kader; and after I had concluded he said that it was the Prophet who had sent me among them, and that I might rest assured of his friendship and that of his people.

The rais Ahmed was a very intelligent Arab, in the prime of life, and had the reputation of being very stringent in his administration. He was called

kus, or hard and determined ; but to me he seemed the reverse. One thing I had to promise him ere leaving,—that I would not relate to any of his people what I had told to him. I readily assented ; and I could see immediately that in making a secret of it, known only to himself, he wished to acquire a greater importance among those whom he ruled. He promised to return soon and take me to his house in state, there to enjoy his hospitality as long as I might desire to remain in the village.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SEARCH FOR THE CARAVAN.

MY convalescence (thanks to the camel's milk) was rapid. I was now allowed to eat dates, which I enjoyed very much; and the rais, the morning after his visit, sent me some goat's milk, which my nurse told me was a great luxury in that part of the country. This present was accompanied with a brace of birds, which looked like partridges, and some coffee. I had not words to express my gratitude to the rais; and when the girl served them up before me, and I insisted on her accepting a portion, she refused, telling me that she had never tasted meat in her life.

The next day the rais sent his secretary to see me and invite me, if I was able to come, to his house. I asked the marabout, and he giving his consent, I accepted the invitation. How sad did I feel on taking leave of my kind nurse, especially as I was so poor that I had absolutely nothing with which to reward her! I promised to come and see her again; upon which the marabout remarked that that was impossible, as henceforth, not needing her services any more, I would not be

allowed to visit her. Had I been aware of that fact sooner, I would certainly have improved the opportunity, while alone with her, of giving her at least a hearty embrace. As it was, however, in the presence of her husband and the envoy of the rais, all I could do was to thank her in the warmest terms, and wish her all the pleasures that the Prophet had in store for the faithful both in this world and in the world to come.

While I was making this my maiden speech in the Arabic language, she stood silent, listening attentively, and in answer to my impassioned words I could see that her expressive dark eyes filled with tears, which, but for the restraint of the presence of the two men, I would have kissed from her beauteous cheeks.

With the secretary on one side and the marabout on the other, I traversed the village,—if by that term may be dignified a straggling collection of mud houses, with small patches of cultivated ground in front.

Till that moment I had not given my wardrobe a thought; but now, when on my way to be presented in state to the chief, I could not help laughing at my appearance; and yet, despite my torn and blood-stained clothes, I looked more elegant than did his excellency the rais Ahmed.

The house of the latter being at some distance, I had to pass by nearly all the houses, mud-holes, and tents; and I could see that the inmates—espe-

cially those of the weaker sex—were eagerly looking after the mysterious Rumeé who had come to their home as a *maktoub* (“predestination”), and whom they pronounced more *baheá* (“beautiful”) than they. As we proceeded, the men whom we met closed in behind and followed; so that by the time we arrived at the house of the rais I had a crowd of at least fifty men behind me.

About twenty yards from the chief's dwelling, stood three very dark-looking Arabs, each of whom had a green palm-leaf in his hand, and who, after saluting me with the *salaam aleikum*, conducted me to the residence of his excellency. At the entrance, the three Arabs placed themselves on one side, while the marabout and envoy-extraordinary stood at the other, and, passing through this guard of honor, I found myself in the presence of the rais. He was seated on something similar to an ottoman, which was covered with a panther-skin, while in front was a temporary seat for the use of the stranger.

When I had been seated and the customary salutations had passed, the men with the palm-leaves admitted the villagers, who arranged themselves, in Arab fashion, around the walls of the room, while the marabout and other functionaries sat on mats that lay at the foot of the ottoman occupied by the rais. Coffee was served me, as also to most of the visitors, and then the never-failing pipe.

The rais, who in one of his visits had instructed me how to relate my story in public, now asked me whence I came and whither I was going, as though he knew nothing about me. My story was soon told, and truthfully, except that when I arrived at the point where I had lost myself in the desert, I stated (according to previous agreement between the rais and myself) that I had brought a great number of valuable presents with me, but that the Tuaricks had entirely despoiled me. When I had concluded, the rais got up and told his people that I was a great personage, and that I would return at no very distant day, with presents for them, and with many men, to punish their enemies, the Tuarick robbers.

The speechifying over, a present was made me by the rais, the very sight of which sent a chill through my body; but soon the matter was explained to me. It was a *thob*,—a kind of *monitor pulchra*,—a species of large lizard which is common in that part of the Sahara, but which I had not seen before. Some of the Arabs eat them, and say they are medicine for a pain or weakness in the back,—an idea which was most likely suggested by the strength of the reptile's back, which is scaly and bony and strongly bound together. They are good eating, as I afterwards had the opportunity of knowing. The flesh tastes something like that of the kid. The tail is esteemed the greatest delicacy.

The Arabs of this part of the country tame these lizards, and some of them grow very large. The one I was presented with measured thirty inches in length and about twelve around the thickest part of the body. The head is large and tortoise-shaped, with a small mouth, and, like the body, is covered with scales. The tail is about four inches long, and composed of a series of broad, thick, sharp bones. The animal has four feet, or, rather, hands; for, as the Arabs say, "it has hands like *Ben-Adam*" ("mankind"). The body is of a dark-spotted gray color, with lightish spots on the belly. The *thob* runs very awkwardly, on account of its bulky tail, and looks exceedingly like a miniature alligator or crocodile. It is almost harmless; but its appearance is rather forbidding. It hides in the dry, sandy holes of the Sahara. A drop of water, says the Arab, would hurt it.

The Saharan merchants, in traversing this part of the desert, frequently make a good meal of the *thob*; and I must confess that though, before I became accustomed to it, it looked rather disgusting to me, I eventually learned to prefer the tail of the *thob* to any other kind of meat that the desert affords.

The ceremony of presentation being now over and the people having dispersed, the rais installed me in my new home. He was pleased with the effect of the story, for his authority had increased wonderfully in the eyes of his people; and as to

myself, I was looked upon as a high and mighty personage, although in fact I was nothing but a king among beggars.

In the evening the rais presented me to his wives and family. They occupied a separate apartment of the stone house; and, these villagers not being over-scrupulous, I was admitted into the harem of his excellency *sans cérémonie*.

This harem resembled the stall in which mules are kept over night in the taverns that one frequently meets in Mexico, except that the latter have a shingle roof, while the Arab edifice was covered with dried palm-leaves, through which light and air had free access. It was a spacious yard divided into four compartments, the division being effected by mud walls about three feet high, the object being, as was afterwards explained to me by the owner, to separate the females of various ages. In the first were the sultana and all the wives who had no longer any children of their own to care for; in the second, the wives with the sucking babies; in the third, the small children; and in the last, the marriageable females, to whom was intrusted the care of the children in No. 3.

Nowhere in all my travels through Africa had I seen polygamy so extensively practised as among these mountaineers; and upon my asking the reason, my host said, "We need to populate these mountain-regions, and desire the stock to be of our own race."

As I noticed a large number of females in the harem, I asked the rais if all of these were his wives, but was answered in the negative; and I was thereupon informed of a custom that I had heard of as existing in some localities of the White Nile, and which in after-years I found among the Guaric Indians, in the interior of Brazil.

The rais, among these people, exercises ecclesiastical as well as civil authority. He is both peacemaker and marriage-maker, and has entire control over all who reside in his domain. Should one of the male Arabs take a fancy to an Arab female who has no owner, he is not obliged to court her favor, but, going to the rais, he confides the matter to him. The rais makes an appointment with him for the next morning, and during the night he sends the marabout to the house of the female, with an order for her to appear before him at the set hour; and this mandate, coming as it does from the rais, through the holy man, is invariably obeyed. In due time man and woman appear in the presence of the rais and the marabout, where the suitor makes a formal demand for the hand of the fair one, who is bound to silence. It now devolves upon the rais to make the appraisal. He examines the female from top to toe, makes her walk, dance, jump, &c., and according to her agility, youth, good looks, &c. he fixes her price. If she bids fair to be strong enough to carry all the water needed for the irrigation of the

patch which she will have to cultivate, and if she be at the same time young and handsome, the price is sometimes set as high as fifty quarts of *laguni* and from four to ten *kafas* of dates. If the suitor agrees to this,—for occasionally there is considerable higgling, and the price is now and then abated a trifle,—the time is appointed for the delivery of the commodities; and when that indispensable requisite has been complied with, the Arab is the rightful owner of his wife. As soon as he is ready to pay the price, he carries it to the rais, who apportions it as follows:—two-thirds belong to the rais, and the other third is divided into two parts, one-half of which goes to the marabout, and the rest to the parents of the girl, or, if she have no parents, to her next of kin.

From these matrimonial contributions the rais supports his numerous family, as does also the marabout. Neither of these dignitaries does any work, as they are intrusted, the one with the government and the other with the religious affairs of their domain. The wives of the rais and of the marabout are likewise not permitted to do any work; and hence the young females, who are not over-industrious, are desirous to be wedded to one of these two functionaries, which accounts for the multitude of wives they possess.

When the price fixed upon has been paid, the sultana of the rais places herself at the head of the married females of the harem, and all walk in

procession to the house of the bride, to escort her to the chief. At the entrance the marabout receives her and leads her into the presence of the rais and the bridegroom. The supreme authority now takes a date-stone, which is colored with crimson paint, pierced, and hung on a string, and places it around the neck of the bride; and every female seen in the street wearing the painted date-stone is known as a married woman. This amulet is first sanctified by the prayer and blessing of the marabout. This functionary then cuts a lock of the bride's hair from the crown of her head, and ties with it her forefinger to that of her newly-wedded husband, chanting the while some verses from the Koran; after which they are considered man and wife.

On leaving the state-house, the whole population of the village, who are waiting outside, offer their congratulations and accompany the happy couple to their new home. Arrived there, *laguni* flows freely, and the merriment begins. In the afternoon all the young married women of the place take the bride and try her strength as to the carrying of the water. She is presented with a new *gurbah*, or water-skin, and, accompanied by her married sisters, who dance and sing all the way, she is led to the well. Here she fills the bag with water and carries it to her new home. If she shows the least sign of fatigue, it is a bad omen, for she will probably make a bad housewife; and I was

told that frequently on such occasions a divorce has taken place on the very day of the wedding. While the bride is absent, the bridegroom is also put to the test. He has to take a shovel (of primitive make) and dig the ground in front of his house, and according to the quantity of work performed by him the prognostications as to his future welfare are favorable or the reverse. When the wife arrives from the well, all the women who had accompanied her form a circle around the newly upturned ground, while she, stepping into the centre, begins the irrigation, accompanied by the discordant song of her companions. This ceremony over, the company disperses, and bride and bridegroom enter their new home.

Should one of these mountaineers die childless during the first year, the rais is obliged to take the young widow to himself, renting out her place to the highest bidder, or, if he prefers it, giving house and widow to some new suitor. If the widow is young and good-looking, the rais generally keeps her, while, if she be ugly, he understands how to get rid of her. It is also the duty of the rais to take care of all the unmarried females whose parents die ere their daughters have found husbands; and this in part accounts for the numerous stock I found at the time of my presentation in the harem.

These mountaineers are very ignorant. In all probability the marabout himself is unable to read.

The verses of the Koran they know only by oral tradition; and as to the religion of the Christians, they believe that they also are followers of Mohammed, though in a different form from themselves, and some are of the opinion that they are white Arabs, being of their peculiar color because of their living in regions where water is abundant and where the sun is not so hot as in Africa. It is very seldom that a European enters their mountain-home; but when one does happen among them, his treatment is entirely different from what he would experience from Arabs who have had much intercourse with the Christians.

The *salaam aleikum* that was vociferated by the crowd of females at my appearance in the harem was deafening, all running towards the division-wall, some even getting astride of it, to obtain a glimpse at the pale Rumeé, the fame of whose beauty had preceded him.

The rais then showed me his wives; and he could do it without the least uneasiness, for, had I ingratiated myself during my stay, it would certainly not have been with the object of making him jealous. They were good-looking enough, having the advantage over the Arab female of the desert in being vigorous and of robust build, on account perhaps of the fresh mountain air; but they were literally covered with filth, and although they must have been aware of my intended visit, and had had plenty of time to put on their best apparel,

they were attired in the nonchalant *demi-négligé* of Madame Eve, which, while it displayed to advantage their well-turned forms, exposed at the same time their frightful want of cleanliness.

In the second compartment were those who were "blessed mothers;" but, if the reader will pardon the expression, they reminded me rather of pigs with their litters. The only attractive form, so far as I could see, was that of a young dark-eyed female, seemingly not more than eleven years old, and with a sucking babe on her breast.

If in the second compartment I was reminded of the unclean animal, the third was even more suggestive; for in it all the little ones—the "olive-branches" of the rais—were lying on the floor, some screaming, others sleeping, others fighting, but all huddled together in a state of nudity.

In the last division were the young and marriageable daughters of the chief, namely, girls of ten, eleven, or twelve years: of these there were some seven or eight. There were also several widows, awaiting the happy hour of finding a husband, and two or three orphans, under the protection of the rais. None of the inmates, however, had any attraction for me; for, while the Arab sees beauty in girls of ten or twelve years, the European is accustomed to look upon them as mere children; and when the epoch arrives at which he might admire them,—namely, the age of fourteen or fifteen,—they are in all probability

the mothers of two or three children, neglected and sometimes even faded.

After we had returned to the house and partaken of some food, consisting of goat's milk and date-cake, I was invited to attend a funeral. Curious to witness the rites of this primitive people over their dead, I gladly accepted.

Between the rocks, some distance from the village, was a spot which was set apart for the burial-ground. When we arrived, the corpse was already there: it was a young mother of sixteen who was to be consigned to the grave. On a piece of old matting lay the youthful form, surrounded by the husband and his nearest male relatives: for no female is allowed to touch a corpse or to be present at a burial. A grave was dug about fifteen inches deep and twelve wide; it was impossible to make it deeper, on account of the rock. It is fortunate that there are no hyenas or jackals in that part of the country. The dead do indeed "rest in peace." Into this narrow crib of earth the departed was laid, after the marabout had chanted some verses of the Koran, which were repeated by those who stood around. She looked so lifelike that I could scarcely believe her dead; for on the face of the Arab death does not leave the unerring mark that it impresses on the pale features of those who belong to more genial climes. I felt her hands: they were ice-cold. I was told that in other parts the Arabs sometimes bury people while the body is

still warm, and that it frequently happens that the grave closes over those in whom life is not extinct. They are always in great haste to get the corpse under ground, believing that the soul cannot have any peace so long as the body lies unburied. In this instance the woman was laid on her right side, with her head to the south, and her face to the east, or towards Mecca. She had on a small chemise, and around her head and feet and loins was wrapped a frock of tattered black Soudan cotton. The last part of the funeral service consisted in the marabout's taking some earth and stopping up her ears and nostrils. This was done to preclude her reviving should life not be extinct. This last ceremony performed, all the bystanders threw earth on her until the grave was entirely covered; then stones were heaped on it and formed into a mound, after which all returned to their homes.

As time passed on, the attraction of novelty began to disappear; and with returning strength I became impatient and restless, and plans for the future absorbed my thoughts.

One day I requested the rais to give me some men to accompany me to the fatal pass. To this he not only consented, but offered to go with me himself. The next day was appointed for the excursion, and at four in the morning we started. We were not to go by way of the desert, but were to follow a deep ravine in the mountains until we arrived at the pass. After about three hours' walk

we arrived at the place, in the mountain-pass of the great Atlas,—on the spot which had witnessed the awful fate of my friends.

After having rested a little while, I proposed to walk to the mouth of the pass, where I had seen the caravan disappear, and follow it up, hoping to get some clew to the fate of the Taleb of Ghardaïr and his beauteous sister. But I could not see the slightest indication of any thing unusual having transpired, except that here and there were strewn jagged pieces of stone, which had evidently been thrown from a height and by the force of their fall had been partially embedded in the earth. Still farther on, I found a heap of cinders,—doubtless the remains of the fire which the Tuaricks had kindled that night when they lay in ambush, and the smoke of which I had seen from my solitary look-out.

As we proceeded, the men who accompanied me called my attention to a dead camel, whose uninjured skeleton, with shreds of flesh adhering to the bones, sufficiently testified that it had not lain there many weeks. I examined the bones carefully, to see if there were any bullet-marks, but could find none; and, my curiosity being now thoroughly aroused, I urged my companions onward.

In a short time we came to some clumps of brushwood. Here a hand-to-hand fight had evidently taken place, for the brush was broken in many places, and fragments of a bright-colored

fabric were on the branches, as if from a torn dress. I picked up, also, the broken hilt of a sabre, and a water-skin with a bullet-hole through it,—further proof that the attack had been made; but it was impossible to guess which party had proved victorious.

I was not yet satisfied; for, as a caravan very rarely marches in a compact group, particularly in the mountain-pass, where sometimes not more than two camels can go side by side, the caravan of the Taleb of Ghardaia must have stretched over the space of at least a mile, and I thought that by keeping on the track I might find something that would help me to arrive at a positive conclusion.

We found nothing, however, until, upon coming to a sudden bend, the rais called my attention to the side of a gully, where a little mound indicated that a body lay beneath. I begged the men to aid me in uncovering it; but they declined, and we passed onward, although I was more than ever tormented by suspense; “for,” said I to myself, “to whomsoever belonged the inmate of that grave, that party must have been the victors;” since, as I was aware, the Arab never accords the rites of burial to a foe slain on the field.

A mile beyond this, we found, behind a jutting rock, a skeleton which we had little difficulty in recognizing as that of a Tuarick. My companions gave vent to a joyous exclamation, while I became still more anxious to uncover the grave we

had passed, and ascertain who the inmate was. Something told me that that silent grave would reveal the result of the fight which beyond all doubt had taken place. I directed the greater number of the men to keep on, while the others I persuaded to return with me, for I cared not to be alone with the dead.

We soon arrived at the grave, the Arabs, however, keeping at a respectful distance; for nothing is more repugnant to the feelings of this people than handling the dead. Rolling off the stone that formed the mound, nothing but a thin layer of earth veiled from my gaze the object of my curiosity; and yet, anxious as I was to know who the inmate was, I involuntarily paused. A superstitious feeling seized me, and the words I had read in childhood on a grave-stone in a little village churchyard of Moravia,—“Disturb not the resting-place of the dead,”—came before my mind with startling vividness.

The Arabs, seeing me pause, thought I was about to give up my undertaking; but they were mistaken. I soon began to look for a piece of wood with which to scrape away the earth, but, finding none, I had to use my hands; and I set to work with all the eagerness of the hyena as he disinters the body of the unhappy traveller whose destiny it has been to die in the Sahara.

After working for about twenty minutes, I had to desist, not because of fatigue or superstition, but

on account of the overpowering stench that arose from the grave. I feared I would have to give up entirely, although so near the point of satisfying my curiosity; but, after resting a few minutes, I summoned up all my fortitude and went on with my mournful task. With my face turned to one side, I removed the earth with one hand, while with the other I held my nose, so as to diminish as much as possible the effect of the corrupt air that arose from the grave.

All at once I felt something that was not earth, and, turning around, I found that I was working at the wrong end: I had got hold of the forepart of the foot. Covering it quickly, I began to remove the earth at the head of the grave; and before long I reached the body. Slowly I uncovered the face of the sleeper; and as I gazed on the blackened features, I recognized, with inexpressible sorrow, the well-known lineaments of my faithful Yussuf. As the image of the merry boy as I had last seen him alive came before me, my feelings overpowered me, and I burst into tears.

My companions now approached me with words of consolation, and begged me to stay no longer in a place whose associations must be so sorrowful. After a farewell gaze at poor Yussuf's remains, I covered them again, softly, as a mother with tender love covers the form of her sleeping first-born, that nothing may disturb his repose. Yet I did not leave the last resting-place of my unfortunate

attendant until I had knelt and offered up a fervent prayer to the God of the Christian to have mercy and take unto himself the soul of the poor infidel.

By this time those who had gone farther into the mountains had returned. Their report was quite satisfactory, inasmuch as they had found the bodies of two Tuaricks on the road, leading to the conclusion that the party of the Taleb of Ghardaia had remained masters of the field. I knew that the Taleb, before leaving Tlemcen, had provided his men with firearms of the latest make, which would give him a great advantage over the people who had attacked him, and the grave of poor Yussuf argued the defeat of the marauders, since otherwise the Tuaricks would have let him lie where he fell. Satisfied thus far, but sick at heart, I returned to the village, where I instantly sought my mat, and, after drinking a quantity of *laguni*, was in a short time wrapped in deep sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE ROUTE AGAIN.

AFTER my expedition in search of traces of the caravan, I became restless, and longed to be once more on my travels. I acquainted the rais with my desire; and although he expressed regret at the prospect of losing my company, he promised to aid me, and it was agreed that as soon as a caravan should make its appearance, no matter what its destination, I should be apprised of it, and might decide whether to go or to remain.

The sixth day after I had made up my mind to leave, news came that a merchant-caravan from Fez was encamped in the desert, about six miles from the pass. As soon as the mountaineers who had been engaged as guides to lead them through the pass had brought this welcome tidings, I took leave of the people among whom I had enjoyed such unwonted hospitality. Men, women, and children accompanied me to the outskirts of the village, and the kind-hearted marabout pronounced the *fatah*, without which no journey can be undertaken, after which he kissed me on the cheek, beseeching Mohammed to protect me on my journey,

and expressing the hope that, should we never meet again in this life, I might have a happy entrance into paradise, there to greet once more my mountain-friends.

Not until I had left the village some distance behind me did I think of what I was to say to the caravanists,—what contract I should make with them, and what my prospects were for paying them, should they demand remuneration. I was poorer than the meanest marabout, my clothes were in tatters, my shoes were in holes, and as to money, I had seen none for months. Nevertheless, I kept up a bold heart; for rather than stay any longer in this terrible desert prison I would engage myself as a camel-driver.

The caravan consisted of several hundred men, a few women, and more than four hundred camels laden with merchandise which they had brought from Fez and other parts of Morocco. The mountaineers who accompanied me to their camp informed me that there were in reality three caravans, which had met and were now travelling in company; one belonged to Morocco, the second to Fez, and the third to Taradant. They had already crossed the Atlas Mountains which extend between Morocco and the desert, and were now about to cross those on this side of El-Ahied, after which they were to separate, one party being bound for Ghardaia, another for Tafilalt, and another for Temassin.

I found the camp divided into three groups, and I soon made my way to the person in command of the first division that I met. After exchanging the customary *salaam*, I told my story as briefly as possible and made him acquainted with my wishes; but I got very little encouragement, he seeming to think that my indifference as to where I should be taken was in itself a ground of suspicion.

"Why don't you go to Ghardaia," said he, "as that was your destination when, as you say, you started from Tlemcen?"

"Take me with you to Ghardaia," replied I, "or to any other place; but I would much rather go to Algiers, if that be your destination."

"But I am not going to either place," was the answer. "You had better apply to the other caravans."

I at once acted on his suggestion, and went to the next group; but there I received nearly the same answer.

"We are going to Tafilelt," said the man to whom I addressed myself, "and there you might wait for months before finding a caravan bound for Algiers."

This man, however, seemed to regret his inability to serve me, and in the friendliest spirit conducted me to the chief of the third caravan, which, as he told me, was going direct to Ghardaia.

"Here is a poor fellow who wants to go to Ghardaia," said he to the chief. "Will you not take him in your train?"

The man thus addressed was lying on a carpet spread on the ground, smoking a pipe, and busily engaged in tracing some figures with pencil and paper. At the sound of my companion's voice he raised his head, and for the first time I saw an Arab with a light beard. "Sit down," said he, "and tell me first who you are."

His language and manner made up for my previous disappointments, and in the fulness of my heart I proceeded to give him the unvarnished truth. When I had finished, he called for a pipe and offered it to me, pressing me also to partake of a cup of coffee; but I could not tell whether he had decided to take me with him.

A long silence ensued,—at least it seemed long to me,—during which he seemed to be debating with himself what answer to give. At last, however, he spoke; and I was rejoiced to find that he had pitied my desperate case.

"Vous êtes ici chez-vous, monsieur le docteur," were his first words; and, taking me by the hand, he proffered me the hospitality of his camp, and a free passage, not only to Ghardaia, but even to Tripoli, should I wish to go thither.

My kind host proved to be a renegade Christian, whose history I shall give in detail in the following chapter; for the present let it suffice to

say that he was a Frenchman, who for more than sixteen years had been trading between Morocco and Ghardaia and other oases of the desert.

The caravan was to start in an hour; and my newly-found friend, remarking the dilapidated state of my wardrobe, metamorphosed me in the course of the next fifteen minutes into an Arab of the purest water, so far as externals was concerned, after which he pointed out to me the camel I was to ride. He seemed in ecstasies at the prospect of having me for a companion; and it is needless for me to say that I reciprocated the feeling.

Mounted on a splendid young camel, and riding alongside of my host, I was in a short time as perfectly at home as though I had been a member of the caravan from the outset. One hour afterwards, we were on the march. I soon became acquainted with the people who composed the retinue of the renegade. Some called me *Taleb* ("learned man"); others, *Tabeeb* ("doctor"), or "Christian," dropping for this occasion—probably out of respect to their master—the usual accompaniment of the epithet "dog."

Soon we entered the pass,—the spot that had for weeks past occupied so large a place in my thoughts. Here, but for my mishap, I should have entered, with the Taleb of Ghardaia, in the company of Deborah; not far from here I passed the most wretched day and night of all my life; and in this vicinity I would have found my grave

had it not been for the good people of the mountain who came to my rescue and nursed me into health and strength.

As we passed the spot where Yussuf was buried, I related to my host the circumstance of my finding the grave and disinterring the body; whereupon he remarked that in Africa, especially in the desert, nothing is to be wondered at; "for," said he, "the desert is an outer region of the world, of which the European, however thoroughly inured to hardship, can form no conception."

The air of the mountain-region was invigorating to mind and body, and, except that I had to be constantly on the alert to guard against my camel's stumbling over the rocks and throwing me to the ground, my journey thus far was an exceedingly pleasant one. The *kailah*, or heat of the day, when the sun is in the meridian, we passed under a group of olive-trees, called *ochim*, or "the two brothers;" and here I enjoyed an excellent meal in company with my host.

I may remark that in Africa the Arabs give to isolated groups of trees the name of "sisters" or "brothers," and to certain peaks of the mountains that of *mou* ("father"), or *omm* ("mother"); while in after-years, during my travels through Mexico, I found the rule reversed. Between Perote and Puebla are two small isolated lava hills which are called *los dos hermanos*; while near the Cofre stands a lofty isolated tree which is denominated El Padre.

After the *siesta* we started again. Now, however, we had a frightful descent before us, and all, dismounting, walked alongside of their camels. This is the most difficult spot in the mountain-pass: it is so steep that to one standing on the top it seems incredible that unwieldy animals like camels can make the descent.

Towards evening we encamped in a charming valley; and but for the strange faces around me, the Oriental dress, the camels, &c., I could have imagined myself in one of the picturesque valleys among the Carpathian Mountains, through which I had often rambled in boyhood. Here we found a number of shepherds, reclining under the spreading trees, and tending their flocks. Our people bought some fresh milk, giving biscuits in exchange; for money in this part of the Atlas range is of very little value.

At this point the mountaineers who had acted as guides were dismissed, their services being no longer required. Many *salaams* did I send back to my kind friends, and particularly to my faithful nurse, the young wife of the marabout; and on her account I even ventured to presume on the generosity of my host, requesting him to give me a few biscuits to send to her,—a request no sooner made than granted. Whether they ever reached her or not, I cannot say; but I felt that in sending this slight token of friendship I had fulfilled a part of my duty, infinitesimal though that part might be.

The next morning we started early, for we wished to arrive at a village called Rumje before mid-day. I yielded to none of my companions in anxiety to be there as soon as possible; for in the village in question all caravans stop, and I hoped to hear some tidings of the people in whose fate I felt so deep an interest.

After we had travelled for what seemed to me at least three hours, I asked one of the camel-drivers how far we were from the place. His reply was, "Three hours." Two hours afterwards I asked the same question; and the answer was still, "Three hours;" and two hours after that the abatement from the original distance was—wonderful to relate—exactly half an hour! An Arab will frequently tell you a place is just under your nose when it is a full day's journey off, pointing at the same time as if he saw it close at hand.

The same peculiarity is noticeable among the peasants of Central Hungary. Ask a Hungarian how far it is to the next town, and he will tell you, "*Mil es dárab*" ("a mile and a bit"); but the bit is always four or five miles over and above the original mile.

By two P.M. we arrived at the village of Rumje. Having already given a description of what the Arabs call a village, I need not repeat it here; for to describe one is to describe all. The only distinction in the case of Rumje is that it is the seat

of the *cadi*, or governor, whose sway extends over this and five similar places.

It happened to be the day of tax-gathering among the villagers. Ludicrous as may seem the idea of taxing a people who are as poor as the soil on which they live, nevertheless a bullying official and half a dozen naked Arabs—called soldiers by an extensive stretch of courtesy—were prowling about, wresting from these miserable beings their scanty means of supporting life. The scenes I here witnessed were heart-rending, beyond any thing I had ever known of the misery of the Polish or Gallician peasants who are periodically stripped by the royal tax-collectors.

From one Arab was taken his camel, the sole support of his family, from another a sheep, and from another a quantity of dates. The dwellings were forcibly entered and ransacked, and people who refused to pay, or who had nothing to give, were dragged by the throat through the village and severely beaten. As I gazed on the lamentable spectacle, I could almost fancy myself in some wretched village of civilized Europe, whence perhaps the Arabs have introduced the *modus operandi* of tax-gathering; but I could not repress my astonishment at witnessing such indications of tyranny in these remote mountains. The sheik and the elders determine how much each man and family in the district has to pay, while they themselves live on the toil of the poor.

When I made my appearance among them, they manifested a very kindly spirit towards me; and, the man who accompanied me having told them that I was a *Tabeeb*, in an instant I was surrounded by a multitude of men, women, and children, who came to consult me. The prevailing diseases are ophthalmia and a species of intermittent fever; but, as the only pharmacy known among these people is that of nature, and as I was less acquainted than their marabouts with the *materia medica* of their mountains, I could do nothing for them.

The treatment adopted for the fever is sufficiently remarkable. The patient comes before the marabout, and, upon the payment of a fixed sum, receives from him an almond split in two, on each half of which is written a cabalistic sign. One of these halves the patient swallows some hours before the paroxysm, after which he is obliged to keep in constant motion until the hour when the fever usually comes on has passed; the second or third day afterwards, he takes the other half, after which there is no need for a repetition of the dose.

I was not exceedingly anxious to learn the secret of the cabalistic sign; but I left no means untried to obtain the seed or almond on which it was written. After much labor I got possession of it, by pretending to the marabout that I was also a sufferer from the malady, and, having great

faith in his cure, wished to make trial of it. He gave it to me, and, after examination, I found it to be intensely bitter,—so much so that I would prefer to take a double amount of the sulphate of quinine; yet it must be the bitterness that banishes the fever, and not the cabalistic signs, as the ignorant are led to believe.

The people of this district live exclusively on fruits grown on trees, for agriculture there is none. The women weave barracans for domestic use and for sale. They are mostly dirty and ill clothed. The men ordinarily have but a single barracan wherewith to cover themselves. I did not see a man with a shirt on, while the smaller children were generally naked. The women wear a woollen frock, and ornament themselves with necklaces, armlets, and anklets; while the wives of the sheiks throw a slight barracan or sefsar round their heads and shoulders. None of them can be called pretty, and but few of them are even good-looking, the only noticeable features being their fine aquiline noses and large, black, gazelle-like eyes.

I went directly to the sheik, to get, if possible, some information concerning the Ghardaians, but was sadly disappointed on being told by that functionary that he never troubled himself about the name of a caravan; all he cared for was the tribute exacted from travellers who passed through the valley. No wiser than when I entered this so-called village, I returned; and when I acquainted

my host with the result, he remarked that he could have told me as much beforehand.

The sheik soon arrived to collect the tribute of the caravan; and while he was thus engaged, I entered into conversation with one of the elders who accompanied him: for I resolved to avail myself of every opportunity of acquiring information.

These mountaineers are in no respect like the Arabs of ancient times. They are a miserable set, who have not only lost all the spirit and courage that animated the men who flocked to the standard of Mohammed, but have not even arms with which to defend themselves against the most trivial annoyances. Petty robberies are frequent in their neighborhood, and the people are often compelled to gather their crops before they are ripe, lest they should be stolen. Those who steal the provisions are poor famished devils, having nothing to eat. With them it is simply a question of theft or starvation. This is the alternative that presents itself to the Arab in many parts of these mountains.

The sheik, after receiving the tax, asked for a cup of coffee, with sugar,—a dish which is considered by these people a great luxury.

One of the most remarkable features about the sheik and his companions was the dazzling whiteness of their teeth, which I suppose arises from the simplicity of their food. The same peculiarity is noticeable, as far as my experience goes, among all the Indian tribes of America.

Towards four in the afternoon we started, so as to reach El Kasem at night, where we intended to remain till the next day ; for not more than half a day's journey beyond that we would cross the Atlas, to be once more in the desert.

That same evening I had something of a fright. I was descending a small eminence, my camel being led by the driver, and was deeply absorbed in thought, when all at once, not more than five or six feet before me, I saw a serpent. It was black, with a white belly, and on its back were white spots. It measured from eight to ten feet in length, and was about as thick as my wrist. This was the first and the last serpent I ever met in the desert. I do not desire to be understood as asserting that there are no serpents in the desert, because I met but this one : nevertheless, one thing is certain, that the stories of monsters peopling the sandy wastes may be safely set down as nothing more than the vagaries of fertile imaginations.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RENEGADE.

WE were now on the other side of the mountains, and once more the vast waste of the Sahara was before us. Our *gurbahs* were filled at the last well; for it would be three days ere we again came to water. I drank here until I was fully satisfied, and also indulged in the unwonted luxury of a bath; for I had learned to appreciate thoroughly the beneficent fluid while in duress among the Tuaricks, who had measured it out to me in a vessel that would not hold more than twenty thimblefuls.

When we were fairly upon the road, I reminded my host of his promise to relate to me his history; for I knew that the adventures of a man who had abandoned the religion and country of his birth and adopted those of the wandering sons of Ishmael could not fail to be of absorbing interest.

"Very few Europeans have ever heard my story," was his answer; "but you also have suffered, and will know how to sympathize with me; and, besides, the narrative, if it serve no better purpose, will help to beguile the tedium of travel.

“My name was François T——. I was born near Lyons, in France. My father was a farmer, in moderate circumstances, but sufficiently well off to afford his children a good education. There were three boys, of whom I was the third, and two sisters, my juniors. At the time of which I am about to speak, my eldest brother was established in business, and the second had just graduated at the University of Paris, and had come to practise his profession as doctor of medicine in our village ; while I, then in my eighteenth year, attended the college in Lyons.

“In that city lived a distant relative of our family, under whose charge I had been placed since the death of my mother, nine years before. Once every year I went to visit my father and sisters, and remained with them during the vacation.

“Part of the house where I lived in Lyons was occupied by another family. The father was a silk-weaver, who worked in one of the great factories of the city. His scanty salary was utterly inadequate to the maintenance of his household ; but he had two daughters, one of fourteen, the other of sixteen, both of whom worked in the factory with their father. I might be said to have grown up with these girls, for since the age of nine I had lived in the same house. In my tender years I was accustomed to look upon them as all boys do on girls of the same age ; but when I was sixteen

and Helen fourteen, I felt that I took more interest in her than in her sister ; for I desired to be always in her company, and in the evening, after she had come home from work, it was my delight to accompany her in her walks. As we had been playmates from childhood, this attachment seemed natural to her parents as well as to my relatives, who sometimes would try to tease me by saying that I would make an excellent husband for Helen.

“ Things went on in this way until I was eighteen and Helen sixteen. She had grown into a charming woman, full of life ; and although she had to work daily at the factory for ten hours, she never complained, but in the evenings would laugh, sing, and dance, as though she had been the child of wealthy parents, with nothing to make her anxious. She had youth and health, and that seemed to be all she required to make her happy. Her earnings she never looked upon as her own, but gave them to her parents, thankful if they could spare her a trifle with which to purchase articles of dress.

“ Helen was a blonde, with large blue eyes, a complexion that would have put to shame the purest alabaster, and small coral lips, inclosing a set of pearly teeth which were remarked by every one who saw her. These charms of countenance, added to a form of surpassing loveliness, seemed, indeed, to make her too beautiful to be the daughter of a poor silk-weaver.

"She was the pet of her parents, on account of her joyous spirit. When she was absent the house was inexpressibly gloomy; but the moment she made her appearance all was life and merriment. How could I, who saw her and conversed with her every day, refrain from loving her? I cared no longer for going home to the country to spend the vacations; for where Helen was not, there it seemed to me that life was not worth the having.

"It was my father's intention to leave me a few months longer in Lyons, to finish my studies, and then take me home, to intrust me with the care of his estate. I did not fancy this prospect. I would have greatly preferred being a soldier, but dared not rebel against my father's will; and, inspired by my love for Helen, I built castles in the air, hoping some day or other to be settled on my father's farm and bring her home as my wife. In two months my course of study would be finished; and I imparted to Helen my future plans, for I was convinced that she returned my affection.

"An event now transpired which threw a dark shadow over the life of my darling. Her mother, a poor feeble creature, who had suffered for years with a chronic disease, found relief at last in death; and although her demise had been expected for years, yet when it at last arrived, it made a sad change in the circumstances of the poor family. Helen had to take charge of the household, her sister preferring to work at the factory.

"Helen was of a romantic disposition, while her sister was of a more practical turn; the one was always lively, while the other never smiled, but went to her work as though she were a piece of machinery. While Helen was sometimes so extravagant as to spend a sou or two for flowers with which to adorn herself, her sister was extremely careless of outside appearances, and preferred to spend her scanty allowance in cake or fruit, which, however, she would share with her brothers and sisters. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, while Helen had crowds of admirers, her sister was almost unnoticed. So great was the contrast between them, that none would have dreamt of their being related to each other.

"The time at last came for me to return permanently to my home. Sad as I felt, however, I consoled myself with the thought that, once there, I would announce my love, hoping, with the aid of my sisters, to obtain my father's consent to my union with the silk-weaver's daughter. All this I told Helen; and she promised to remain true to me, no matter what length of time might pass before I came to claim her as my own.

"Our parting was a sad one. My father, who was present, looked upon our manifestations of sorrow as quite natural, supposing that, as I had grown up in her company from the age of nine, I considered her as a sister, and that our grief at parting would soon be forgotten. Little did he

suspect that it was a stronger feeling that caused my tears to flow.

“Letters had now to take the place of the personal intercourse of so many happy years. We wrote to each other often, and our missives were full of protestations of love and fidelity on both sides. My sisters were my confidantes; but poor Helen had nobody to whom she could pour out her feelings.

“One year had passed thus. Helen at no time had written as often as I would have desired, while my engagements did not permit me to write more than once a week; but at last the intervals between her letters grew longer and longer, and, becoming uneasy, I resolved to go in person to ascertain the cause.

“I arrived at Lyons towards evening, and thought I would give my love a pleasant surprise, by stepping in unannounced. As I approached the house, my heart beat violently, for it was a year since I had seen her whom I loved more than any one else on earth, and who in a short time I hoped to claim as my wedded wife. It was quite dark when I entered the house; and, knowing as I did every corner of it, I went directly to Helen’s room. I pushed the door ajar, and stepped in, expecting to hear her joyful exclamation of surprise; but the room was empty. After a few minutes of bewilderment, I went to the next apartment, and there I saw a face I had never seen before,—that of an

entire stranger. I stammered out an excuse, explained the cause of my precipitate entrance, and begged to know what had become of the family, particularly of Helen. But I could get no satisfactory answer: all that the present inmates of the house could tell me was that they had not been there for two months, that the former occupant had died, and that his family had disappeared immediately afterwards. I was stunned by this intelligence, and could not bring myself to believe it; for how came it that Helen had said nothing of her father's death or of their removal? But two months had elapsed since I had received a letter from her; and in two months how many things may not occur?

"I now sought the rooms of my uncle, but found that he too had removed; and, perplexed and dispirited, I returned to my hotel, resolving to apply on the morrow at the factory where the silk-weaver and his daughters had been employed.

"Accordingly, at an early hour the following morning, I took up my position on the steps that led to the large building, hoping to find some one who could give me tidings of my beloved, or perhaps to see her in person. The bell of the factory rang. Men, women, and children came flocking to their daily toil, to sell ten hours of life for twenty, forty, or fifty sous; but among them all I could see no face that was familiar to me. When all had entered, I went to the office of the esta-

blishment and inquired; but there I was no better off than before. The clerk did indeed know the persons of whom I was in quest, but they had not been at work for three months. I was about to turn away in mute despair, when it struck me that perhaps he knew of their whereabouts; and I besought him to tell me where they lived. To this he replied, in an impatient tone, that his duty was simply to note down the hours of work performed by each laborer, and that he had nothing whatever to do with the people who had left the establishment.

“For a minute or two I stood in uncertainty, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and, turning around, I recognized an acquaintance, a young man, a weaver by profession, who had formerly been a frequent visitor of Helen’s father. I was of course delighted to see him, and, cordially grasping his hand, inquired eagerly concerning the silk-weaver’s family.

“‘Helen and her sister,’ said he, ‘are no longer at work here. Since the death of their father, some rich relative or kind protector has provided for them, and they now live quite at their ease.’

“I was glad to hear this, for poor Helen’s sake; but I could not comprehend why she had not communicated it to me. Was it perhaps because she wished to surprise me? My friend gave me their address; and I hurried away to find her whom, as it seemed, I loved with redoubled fervor, on

account, perhaps, of the difficulty I encountered in meeting her.

“The house was situated in one of the suburbs of the city. It was a neat rustic cottage,—one of the many that are found in the outskirts of Lyons. I felt happy to know that the circumstances of my Helen had changed so much for the better; for the work at the factories sooner or later undermines the constitution, and the bloom and freshness of youth soon fade away under the influence of the noxious gases and vitiated atmosphere of the work-rooms.

“Upon arriving at her residence, I knocked at the door, and in a few seconds it was opened by an elderly lady, who asked me whom I wished to see. I was so excited that it is likely my conduct appeared rude. I had supposed that every one knew me as the accepted lover of Helen, and hence I was about to enter the house without further ado; but the woman, evidently alarmed at my excited manner, placed herself before me and repeated her question.

“‘Why,’ said I, ‘I wish to see my Helen,—to go at once to her room, without the formality of an announcement; for I know that the surprise of seeing me can be to her nothing else than an agreeable one.’

“At this the matron gravely shook her head, remarking that it would be absolutely necessary to announce me before I could see the young lady in question.

“The dignified air with which she pronounced the words caused me to pause, and I began to think that perhaps I had been misinformed,—that this was probably the residence of an entire stranger; and, if so, I was well aware that my conduct would justify the inmates in calling upon the police to interfere. I looked around me, at the rich carpets, the tasteful furniture, the beautiful pictures that adorned the walls, and I became half persuaded that I had failed in the object of my search; for surely such good fortune could not have fallen to the lot of the silk-weaver’s family without Helen’s apprizing me of it. Covered with confusion, I begged the old lady to excuse my apparently unwarrantable intrusion, telling her that I was in search of a certain Mademoiselle Helen D——, a near and dear friend, and had been informed that this was her residence, but that I was satisfied there had been some mistake.

“To my astonishment, the matron asked me to be seated, and left the room for a few minutes, returning with the announcement that mademoiselle was at present engaged, but would be happy to see me at five o’clock that afternoon.

“This message, while it satisfied me that I had found my beloved girl at last, struck me as unwontedly frigid; for I had expected to find her rushing with joy into my arms as soon as she heard my name. However, there seemed to be nothing for it but to be patient, and I took my

leave, saying that I would return at the appointed time.

“I cannot tell you how I managed to spend the intervening hours. I did not even give a thought to my bodily wants, although I had not tasted food since the previous evening. Exactly at five o'clock I presented myself at the door, which, in response to my eager knock, was instantly opened by my old friend of the morning, who ushered me at once into a tasteful little boudoir, on the opposite side of the hall from the room into which I had been shown in the morning. The apartment I now found myself in was quite small; the floor was covered with a rich carpet, heavy brocatelle curtains excluded the glare of day, and voluptuous pictures adorned the walls. It was a very bower of love; and I was still inclined to think there must be some strange misapprehension,—that it was impossible that my Helen could be the occupant of this luxurious abode. She had always been notable for the depth of her affection towards her brothers and sisters, and surely she would never consent to live away from them; but that they were not here was sufficiently testified by the solemn stillness that reigned through the house.

“As I sat there, wondering what was to be the solution of this mystery, a door was softly opened, and a young and lovely woman glided into the apartment, attired in that combination of simplicity and elegance that betokens the hand of the

artist and heightens tenfold the charms of form and feature.

"I at once rose from my seat, satisfied that I had not yet found my betrothed. I stood bewildered, the darkness of the room serving to increase my confusion, until the lady advanced, and, extending her hand, said, "What is it, monsieur, that I can do for you?"

"The language and tone were those of a stranger, but the voice was not: it was indeed my Helen, my only love, my angel. Fervently grasping her hand, I was about to impress a kiss upon it and draw her to my heart, when, stepping backward a pace, she checked me, and in icy tones requested me to be seated and acquaint her with the purpose of my visit.

"Her manner agonized me. 'Why this strange assumption of indifference, dearest Helen?' exclaimed I. 'Do you not know me? Is it possible that I have changed so much? My dress, it is true, is that of a farmer; but my heart is unchanged. Absence has not diminished my love for you, but has rather added to it a hundredfold.'

"She smiled, and, after begging me once more to be seated and endeavor to calm myself, replied,—

"'I have not forgotten you, Monsieur François. Your farmer's clothes have not changed your features, for you have not altered in the slightest since the day on which you left Lyons to go to your country home.'

“‘And did you not promise then to be mine, Helen?’

“‘I did,’ answered she; ‘but it was merely the promise of a thoughtless girl. Nay, perhaps if you had taken me with you then I would have accompanied you joyfully; but——’

“‘But what?’ gasped I, anxious to hear my doom pronounced at once.

“‘But,’ continued she, ‘circumstances and time, poverty and misfortune, have since then wrought a wondrous change.’

“‘Poverty!’ I replied. ‘Why, Helen, you are surrounded by evidences of luxury beyond any thing I have ever seen until this moment; and yet you speak of poverty?’

“‘Hear my story to the end, François. When I speak of poverty, I speak of my condition when you bade me farewell. Not long after your departure my father suddenly fell dangerously ill. We had never had the opportunity of providing for a day of misfortune like this, and our destitution soon became frightful. I went to the factory and begged for an advance of wages, but met with an instant refusal. There were three little brothers to support, besides my father; and the scanty earnings of my sister did not suffice to provide us with bread. To increase our wretchedness, the dreary winter was upon us, and to the pangs of hunger were soon added those of cold. My poor father steadily grew worse, and it was evi-

dent that the end was approaching. The oldest of my brothers went out to beg for bread, but was arrested as a vagrant and sent to the house of correction. Society, as you are aware, has but two modes of treatment for wretched poverty: if you beg you are taken up as a vagrant; if you steal, you are sent to prison. If you are too feeble to work, then society kindly allows you to starve.' Here she paused, her emotion seeming to overpower her. After a few minutes' silence she resumed her narrative.

"When I heard what had befallen the poor child, I consoled myself with the reflection that for one of us, at least, society and the law had provided. I then took my two little brothers by the hand, and went from neighbor to neighbor, asking for a loan, however small; but they laughed at me: they said they had hardly enough to keep themselves alive; and I returned as I had gone: nay, rather, I brought with me more misery, for my hope of receiving help in this way was now dissipated.

"The situation of my father grew worse from day to day. The poor man wished to die, all that made him cling to this miserable existence being his anxiety for the future fate of his children. Death had compassion on him at last: but do not ask me how and where he was buried; for even after death society makes a distinction between the poor and the rich.

“Our family had now grown less by two,—the father in the grave, a brother in the house of correction; and the bread bought with the earnings of my sister sufficed to keep the remainder alive. The extreme cold and our want of clothing, however, made us miserable. Many a time did I think of writing to you, but a feeling of maidenly delicacy prevented me.

“But the worst was yet to come. My poor sister overworked herself, and at last fell sick. Our only support was now gone. I got a permit to take her to the hospital; and, her disorder being the typhus fever, I had very faint hopes of ever seeing her again in this life.

“I was now alone with my brothers. The rent for the hovel in which we lived was due. We were threatened with ejection, and were liable to be thrown into prison for debt. One dark night, in despair, I gathered up the few rags that remained, which a rag-dealer would hardly have admitted into his shop, and, taking the two boys with me, I stealthily left the house. I did not know where to go; and, fearing that the gendarme, seeing me carry a bundle, would suspect me, I hurried towards the Faubourg D——, where there are some old buildings that were formerly used as granaries, intending to take up our abode there in some corner or other until I could get work wherewith to support us. But the very thing I was striving to avoid happened at the gate of L——.

A police-officer halted and questioned me, and in reply I told him the plain truth; but, being accustomed to hear nothing but lies, he would give no credit to my story, and marched me off to the place which society has provided for vagrants. At last I and my poor brothers had a lodging for the night, and that without pay,—the first act of kindness which I owed to my fellow-men.

“The next morning another officer conducted us before the magistrate. I was accused of theft. The bundle of rags which I and my brothers carried were placed before us as *corpus delicti*,—rags which the meanest thief would not have condescended to stoop for had he noticed them in the street. I told my story; but the magistrate did not believe it. I was asked to prove my character; but how could I? I did not know anybody except some of our former poor neighbors, and these I feared to call on, for had I not left clandestinely, and without paying the rent? At last a happy thought struck me: I asked the magistrate to send to the factory where in happier days our family had been employed. The officer noted down the name and place, and in the mean time we were returned to the lock-up, where I was ushered into a cell filled with the dregs of the city of Lyons. I remained there for two days and two nights, while my brothers were thrown into another cell.

“On the third day the jailer told me that I

was free. He handed me the bundle of rags, and took me to the outer yard, where I met my brothers, who, poor children, were overjoyed at seeing me. I was informed that the expenses of the *procès-verbal* had been paid by a gentleman who had left on a slip of paper his residence, where I was to go after my liberation.

“‘I was very anxious to hear about my elder sister; and I bent my steps at once to the hospital. On my arrival there, I experienced great difficulty in obtaining information; for in such institutions the poor have no name,—they are known only by numbers. After a great deal of searching, I was told that No. 142 had died two days before, and had been buried on the same day. Do not think that I cried. Ah, no. I was already steeled, and had it not been for the poor children, to whom I was now all in all, I could have gladly taken her place.

“‘My thoughts now turned upon the generous being who had befriended us at the prison; and, guided by the slip of paper he had left, we were soon in front of his residence. It was a splendid mansion, and I dreaded to enter. I stood in the street, looking alternately at the paper and at the number of the house, until I was observed by the inmates, and a servant, dressed in rich livery, opened the door and invited me in. I obeyed, though with great trepidation, directing my brothers to wait outside. In a short time a young

man appeared, who immediately recognized me, and inquired after the welfare of my father, my sister, and myself. It was the only son of the silk manufacturer to whom the works belong where our family had been employed. He had seen me often at the factory, and now recognized me immediately by the color of my hair.

“‘ When I had narrated to him all the misfortunes that had befallen me, he promised to interest himself for me and mine, and at once ordered one of his servants to accompany me and my brothers to the widow of one who had been for a long time foreman of his factory, and who was a good friend of my father, there to remain until he should call. And, in fact, I had not long to wait. He arrived the next day; and the interest which he took in my destiny grew from minute to minute: so that I began once more to feel happy.

“‘ My brothers were placed in a school, he paying the required fees, while I enjoyed the bounty of his unlimited generosity. In a few short days I was my former self again. I felt as I had done in those happy times when the clouds of misfortune had not yet darkened my sky, with this difference, that I no longer needed to work, and was dressed and provided for by the hand of my noble protector.

“‘ If misfortune often changes our exterior in a single night, good luck is not without its physical effects; and after a month had elapsed I could

scarcely recognize myself. My protector came every day, constituting himself not only my benefactor, but also my teacher. He gave me lessons in music and drawing, selected books which I was to read during his absence, and delighted in having me repeat to him from memory all that I had read, when he was near me. So much kindness and generosity could not fail to make me not only admire, but also love him,—yes, love him with all my heart; and little enough it is with which to repay all he has done for me.’

“‘But how comes it, Helen, that you live in this house?’ asked I, my heart nearly rising into my throat, and threatening to suffocate me.

“‘A month ago,’ said she, ‘he removed us from the house where we lived to this, which he promises is to be my own as soon as I attain the age to hold it in my own name.’

“‘Helen,’ cried I, ‘why did you not write to me? I could not have offered you all this luxury, it is true; but I could have done something; I would have worked my hands off for you.’

“‘You were too far away, François; and, besides, it is too late now. I love but one man, and that man is my generous benefactor.’

“‘Helen! Helen!’ I exclaimed, ‘you have not told me all. You have purchased all this luxury at the expense of honor.’

“‘Sir,’ she replied, in a haughty tone, ‘by what right do you speak thus to me?’

“‘Can you ask? Your pledged word, your former love, surely entitle me to the office of reprover.’

“‘Enough, sir. If my friendship has no value for you, then try to forget me, as I will try to forget that I once possessed a friend, who, instead of sympathy——’

“I could listen no longer. I rushed from the room and into the street, like a maniac, and ran, whither I knew not, until, utterly exhausted, I stood on a broad lawn, where I threw myself on the ground and gave vent to my feelings in bitter tears.

“Two days after this interview, at ten o’clock at night, I was pacing up and down in front of the residence of my lost Helen. I had not come to see her; I was waiting for the appearance of the destroyer of my happiness. He was in the house, but would soon take his leave.

“I had scarcely waited an hour when I heard the door open, and saw two shadows appear in the little garden that led to the street. They talked in such low tones that I could not distinguish what they said. I saw them embrace each other; and it is impossible for me to describe to you what I felt when I saw the woman throwing her arms across the man’s neck, and heard her wish him a pleasant ‘good-night.’ It was the voice of Helen; my head became dizzy, and I had to lean against a wall for support. Soon, however, I was myself

again; and by the time they had parted I was ready to follow the steps of my enemy. Before he had gone far I overtook him and placed myself directly in his path. I knew his name; for during the preceding forty-eight hours I had made diligent inquiry concerning the destroyer of my happiness.

“‘Monsieur B——,’ said I, ‘you have made life a void for me. You have robbed me of my betrothed. I demand instant satisfaction for this unspeakable wrong, which can be atoned for only by your blood.’

“So unexpectedly did I come upon him that he started back in alarm; but the next instant, probably imagining that he was accosted by a robber, he raised his cane and struck me over the head and face. Beside myself with rage, I felled him to the earth with one terrible blow. He lay on the pavement as though dead; and, hearing steps approach, I hurried away, leaving him to his fate.

“Early the next morning I went to the office of the diligence to take passage for home. In my excitement I had neglected to make my toilet; but I observed on my way through the streets that passers-by stared at me curiously. I thought it was perhaps on account of my eyes being inflamed, for I had cried the whole night; but, when we arrived at the gate of the city, the officer on duty there looked at me attentively, and, going back to

the guard-house, brought out a paper, which he perused carefully and which must have been a description of the affair of the preceding night; for he at once commanded me to follow him. I did so; and when I entered the room, I perceived by the glass that I had a black mark over my face, caused, without doubt, by the blow I had received in the previous night's encounter."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE "BAGNE."

THE renegade continued :—"My fate was sealed. I was informed that I was a prisoner ; but on what charge the officers would not tell me. Their orders were to arrest any suspicious person who might attempt to leave the city ; and my haggard countenance, together with the livid mark on my face, seemed sufficient reason for my detention.

"I felt neither surprised nor frightened : I was entirely indifferent as to what might become of me. When I was taken to head-quarters, I followed the officer mechanically, paying no heed to the crowd that pressed around me, nor to the cries of some of the rougher ones, 'See, there is the murderer!'

"At the examination I was accused of having waylaid a peaceful citizen, and, after leaving him for dead, robbed him of his gold watch and a large sum of money. I stoutly protested my innocence of robbery ; but, as these preliminary examinations are mere formalities, my protestation was not heeded, and I was ordered to be held for trial at the next term of court.

"The story of my imprisonment, of course, was

spread by the newspapers throughout the country. Some of the journals described me as one of the most daring robbers that had ever infested the high-roads of France. Others reported that I had just come from the Abruzzi,—that after having committed the most daring crimes in Italy, I had come to try my hand on my native soil. The most interesting and remarkable fact of all, however, was that the monster was not yet twenty years old.

“Those were days of harvest for the newspapers. Some went so far as to say that on the day on which I had been captured I had resisted the attempts of four gendarmes, desperately wounding two in the encounter, while the others had only escaped with severe bruises. These reports spreading among my jailers and through them among the prisoners, had at least one good effect,—my fellow-prisoners, of whom some were really assassins, at once recognized me as their superior.

“Another good result was that my father and his family were not alarmed; for, although they saw my name in the papers, they thought it must be another person of the same name, because the atrocious crimes that were described could not have been committed by me. Hence they did not think it necessary to make any inquiry, and patiently awaited my return. When days and weeks, however, passed away, and still I did not come, my elder brother came to Lyons, and was admitted

to my presence. I need not describe his surprise and grief at finding that it was really his brother. We fell into each other's arms and mingled our tears, while I related to him all that had occurred. 'It will be a death-blow to our aged father,' said he; 'but we must lose no time: you must be saved.' And he left, promising not to leave Lyons until he had secured the service of the best lawyer that the city could afford.

"Two days before the court was to assemble, my two brothers arrived. My father could not come: an interview with me would have broken his heart. He said constantly, 'I know my poor boy is innocent, and he will come out bright as the sun.' Such was also my expectation; for I depended on the justice of my country, and I was sure I would be acquitted.

"The long-expected day at last arrived. At the hour of the opening of the court, the streets were crowded, people from the country for eighty miles around having come to see the criminal. When I was brought into court, I recognized many of my former schoolmates, who nodded to me, as if to inspire me with courage. My two brothers and my counsel sat at my side, while opposite to me and near my right sat the public accuser, the advocate of the crown, with the man who was the cause of all my misfortune.

"When my case was called, a silence as of the grave ensued. All present were eager to catch

every word; and when I had answered as to name, age, profession, &c., the crown advocate began the accusation. I have already told you the principal points of which I was accused,—namely, an assault with intent to kill, and of having stolen a gold watch and a pocket-book containing forty thousand francs in bills of the Bank of France.

“He made an elaborate speech, concluding by saying that a severe example should be made of the prisoner at the bar; for if at the age of twenty he had been guilty of such an atrocious act, of what would he not be capable when, progressing in crime, he had reached the age of thirty or forty? ‘Look at that youthful and seemingly innocent face,’ said he; ‘it is that of a mere boy: yet it is the face of a criminal capable of the darkest deeds. While I pity him for his youth, I am far from considering it an extenuation of his crime; for if thus early he has become a proficient in villany, what may he not be in advanced life? No: for the sake of society, for the sake of justice, a terrible example should be made of him.’

“The prosecuting attorney having opened the case, the witnesses were called. The first on the stand was the destroyer of my beloved. He deposed that, while walking quietly homewards on the night in question, he had been confronted by a man who asked for his purse, and, upon his refusal, he was knocked down and beaten until the assassin left him for dead. He lay thus until a

policeman, finding him on the pavement, took him to a druggist's, where they succeeded, by the aid of restoratives, in bringing him to his senses. Upon feeling his pocket, he then found that he was minus his watch and the forty thousand francs which it had contained, in bills of the Bank of France. He, however, was gracious enough to beg the court not to punish me too severely, but to take my extreme youth into account.

"When he had finished, the druggist and the policeman were called. The latter testified to having found my accuser senseless in the street, and to taking him to the druggist's and there assisting in restoring him to life; while the druggist simply confirmed the statements of the other, all agreeing that there had been an aggravated assault and battery.

"It was now the turn of my counsel to open the defence. His appeal was entirely to justice, and his speech was replete with common sense and sound judgment. He read some exceedingly complimentary letters from the professors of the college where I had been educated, showing that I had been always noted for my gentle disposition. A letter was also read from the mayor of my native village, in which it was stated that for the last year I had assisted my father on his estate, and that I had not been absent more than three days ere the affair took place. As to the charge of robbery, it was simply absurd: I needed no money,

for my father had always supplied me abundantly. In fact, with the single exception of the mark on my face, there was not the slightest evidence that I had been the aggressor.

“The judge now charged the jury. The charge was simple and brief; and the jury, after having retired for a few minutes, returned with a verdict of guilty of highway robbery and assault with intent to kill,—recommending me, however, to mercy on account of my extreme youth.

“The judge now pronounced the sentence:—imprisonment for sixteen years in the Bagne of Toulon, without appeal.

“Do not ask me to describe my feelings when I heard the dreadful words that sealed my doom. One of my brothers fainted, the other was led away more dead than alive, while I—— A fortnight afterwards I had the chain on my neck and was branded,—branded as an outcast, branded as a criminal forever exiled from society, branded like Cain, but not guilty like him.

“My chain was forged to that of a criminal of the blackest dye, at whose side I learned to revolt and blaspheme against my Maker. I refused to believe in a God who could allow human justice to be so blind. I cursed the day that I was born; yet never did I curse the woman who had been the cause of all my misery, for how terribly had she suffered: nay, when I thought of her and of my poor old father, my eyes filled with unwonted

tears. At times I shook my iron chain as the lion shakes his mane, and swore to be revenged on mankind the moment I regained my freedom; but the next instant I would be as thoroughly subdued as a child. Four years—nay, four centuries rather—did I thus pass, chafing madly against my bonds.

“Have you ever read,” asked he, abruptly, “Victor Hugo’s ‘Last Days of a Condemned Man’? Have you admired the wonderful genius with which the author places himself in the position of the condemned man on the night before he is led to the place of execution? I have read it,” said he, “and admit the marvellous power of the language; but, believe me, the most gifted author can but feebly portray the feelings of the man who is really condemned. Ah, my friend, if the guilty man suffers thus, who shall describe the emotions of the man who is condemned unjustly? His sufferings are double, the cold iron presses harder, the iron ball that he drags on his feet feels like a mountain, while—— But no: let me go no farther.

“My companion—for so I must call the real criminal who was chained with me—had contrived a plan of escape. I shall not occupy your attention with the details: sufficient to say that it succeeded: we were free—free. Ah, how I then appreciated that liberty of which society had robbed me! I fled. In the daytime I slept in the densest thickets of the woods, not venturing upon the highway until night had covered the earth with its friendly mantle; for

now I was guilty, not of the crime for which I had been sent to the galleys, but of having broken my chain, of having tried to regain my liberty.

“When, after a tedious journey, I reached the home of my childhood, I found that my father had died soon after my condemnation. My brothers welcomed me as one from the dead. But after the joy came fear; for a severe penalty is denounced against those who hide a man that has been branded. The sentence of condemnation to the galleys is a moral death-sentence for life. The leper will find some sympathizing heart, some kindly hand to give him bread; but from the galley-convict, even after he has served out the term of his sentence, every one will fly. He passes through populous cities like a wild beast; he dares not ask for bread, much less for shelter; no heart feels for him, no hand presses his. And why? Because he has been branded by men: innocent or guilty, it matters not,—he has worn the chain around his neck, and that is sufficient.

“I need not enter into details. I remained with my brother some weeks, hidden in my father’s house,—in the house in which I had the right to say to society, ‘Touch me not: this is a sacred place. Here I was born; here for the first time I saw the light of that world which has dealt with me so unjustly.’ During the day I slept in the darkest part of the cellar, coming forth at night to breathe the fresh air. This state of affairs could

not continue long; and in a few weeks arrangements were made to convey me on board a vessel that was to sail for our newly-conquered colony Algiers. The captain, a friend of my brother, was the only one in the secret, and upon him we could depend. I arrived safely at the port; but I had not been more than two hours on shore when I was arrested and placed in one of the darkest cells of the Kasbah.

“What was my crime this time? I will tell you. During the voyage, on a very hot day, I took a bath. The mate, who was not on the best of terms with the captain, must have seen the Cain’s mark. He said nothing; but when we arrived at Algiers he denounced me, to obtain the pitiful reward paid to the detector of a runaway galley-slave.

“After four days’ incarceration, I was condemned to serve out my time in the penal colony, with the prospect, at the end of my term, should I prove an honest criminal, of being enrolled among the Zouave regiment, which is made up of convicts of the vilest description.

“The labor was hard, but not to be compared to that of the Bagne of Toulon. The degrading chain, which at the latter place constantly reminds the convict that he is regarded as lower than the wild beast, is not in use in Algiers. But a second imprisonment is felt even more keenly than the first; and as I had succeeded once in freeing myself, the

thought occurred, why not try the second time? And try I did. A Moorish woman, who had more sympathy for the young Christian than had those of his own creed, aided me in my undertaking; and once more I succeeded in breaking the chain of legalized slavery.

“For months I wandered in the mountains. The nomad Arab, whom civilization and Christianity have not as yet taught to fly from his erring brother, gave me shelter and shared with me his scanty meal. Among the Bedouins—those wild children of the desert—I found hospitality; and the men whom Christians call barbarians taught me not to despair. How could I refrain from feeling gratitude, from blending my thoughts with theirs, and adopting their precepts as mine? The maxim, ‘Love thy brother as thyself,’—a maxim taught by Christians, and which, through civilization, has received many interpretations,—is seldom practised; while the Arab knows the doctrine only as it is given through the mouth of the Prophet in the Koran. By degrees I became what I am,—a Mussulman not merely in habits and costume, but at heart.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OSTRICH-HUNT.

THE renegade's story being finished, I had once more to turn my attention to the surrounding objects, in order to relieve the tedium of travel.

I found the surface of that part of the desert where we were now journeying diversified with a few small ranges of hills, while the plains were covered with slate-colored stones, which in some instances resembled granite.

Upon our encamping, I witnessed the operation of feeding the camels. The animals are made to kneel down in a circle, head to head, the she-camels, however, being kept separate. When the circle has been formed, the fodder is thrown in, and each camel claims the portion immediately in front of it.

There are many "Mahry of the Haj" among the camels. These are quite white, and are very fine animals. Their eyes, however, are very small and sleepy-looking, and one would imagine, from their appearance, that these camels are not so intelligent as those of the coast. They also differ in size, some being as diminutive as others are gigantic. The

she-camels cannot be left together, because they always bite each other. The males never bite the females; but their gallantry does not restrain them from stealing the fodder of the gentler sex whenever opportunity offers.

We encamped for the night on a plain surrounded by low hills and covered with sand and stones. The moon shone with surpassing splendor, calling forth the admiration of the whole caravan. The renegade recommended me to sleep under his tent, and not, as of late I had been accustomed to do, in the open air; "for," said he, "the moon is corrupted, and many stories are told of persons dying under her malign influence." I had heard of people in the East Indies becoming blind by imprudent exposure to the moon's rays, but never met with an instance of it in the desert.

Through my acquaintance with the renegade I learned many things which I could not have acquired otherwise; and on the evening in question I collected a number of words and their meanings, for my own special dictionary. Speaking of the Sahara, I asked for the signification of the word, and received the following information.

Sahara, according to some authorities, signifies a perfectly flat country, or a country of plains; but this would appear to be a doubtful interpretation. The learned among the Arabs give various names to the different parts of the Sahara, according to the geological character of the country.

Teeafee is the term for the oasis, where life is passed amid springs of never-failing water, under palm and fruit trees, securely sheltered from the burning *shoub* (simoom).

Keefar is the sandy, arid plain, which, watered occasionally by the winter's revivifying, refreshing, and fructifying rains, yields at such times a growth of herbage on which the nomad tribes pasture their flocks.

Falat is the region of sands, in the immensity of sterile wastes.

Ghoua are groups of sand-hills of indefinite height.

Sereer are generally plains, where nothing but sand-hills are met with.

Wâr is a rough plain covered with large detached stones, and difficult to travel over.

Hateea is a spot producing nothing but small, stunted shrubs.

Wishék, productive sand-hills and plains, where the wild palm-tree flourishes.

Ghabah, cultivated Sahara.

Sibhah is the usual name for salt-plains: in Algeria they are called *Shot*.

Wady is the designation of a long, deep depression,—the bed of a river or torrent, or a ravine.

Gibel is applied to all hills and mountains.

There are many words which are mere technicalities, but which would perhaps make an in-

teresting dictionary, even for the European, of the Arabic language.

The next morning we broke up camp early, and soon came into a region where the ostrich is often met with. Since the French have had possession of this part of the desert, the ostriches have almost entirely disappeared, in the same manner as the buffalo vanishes from the plains of North America when the settlements of the whites make their appearance. The renegade promised me a treat for this day; "for," said he, "if I am not mistaken, we shall meet with the majestic king-bird of the desert, and then we shall have some sport."

I have already mentioned that the caravan with which I was travelling was composed of three distinct parties, who for a certain distance were journeying together. It seems that, the night before, they had all agreed to have an ostrich-hunt the next day; and I was naturally quite anxious to join in the sport. There seems to be a strange fascination for the Arabs in an ostrich-hunt; and they become almost frantic with joy at the appearance of the bird.

Towards ten o'clock we were told that there were ostriches in sight. The renegade took out his telescope and could distinguish six of them, but at a great distance. The capture of an ostrich is the greatest feat of hunting to which not only the Saharan sportsman, but also the meanest Arab, aspires, while in richness of booty it was in former

years next to the plunder of the caravan. The sport is, however, attended with much cost and toil: I was informed that the capture generally involves the sacrifice of human life, as well as of a horse or two. So wary is the bird, and so vast are the plains over which it roams, that ambuscades or artifices are impracticable, and dogged perseverance in running the bird down is the only resource.

The horses employed for the hunt are trained for that purpose. They are accustomed to do without water for a long time, like all the horses that have to make journeys in the desert, and are fed on dry dates, which is considered the best means for strengthening their wind. The hunters of the tribes to the east of the Mozabites generally have small skins of water strapped under their horses' bellies, and a scanty allowance of food for four or five days distributed judiciously around their saddles.

The North African ostriches, unlike those of the Cape, generally flock together to the number of from four to six, and do not wander more than twenty or thirty miles from their head-quarters. As soon as they are perceived, two or more hunters follow them at a pace just sufficient to keep them in sight, being particularly careful not to alarm them or drive them at full speed, for then they would soon be lost to view. The rest of the pursuers quietly proceed in a direction at right angles

to the course the ostriches have taken, as it is their habit to run in a circle. The pursuers seek some eminence, where they await the supposed route of the game. If they are fortunate enough to detect them, they set out in pursuit of the fatigued flock, and frequently succeed in running down one or more, though it often happens that in this pursuit some of the horses fall exhausted. The ostrich, when overtaken, offers no resistance. A skin of one of these birds in full plumage is worth from forty to one hundred Spanish dollars; but a trader rarely meets with a specimen of this kind, because the Arabs are in the habit of thinning out the feathers.

On one occasion we observed two birds standing for some time in the same spot, and upon our riding towards them they rapidly scudded off. It is not easy either to follow the ostrich or to trace his steps, for at full speed his stride measures from twenty-two to twenty-eight feet; and the impression of two toes at such wide intervals affords but a faint guide to any but the expert Bedouin huntsman. We managed to follow the track of the birds to the spot where we had first seen them standing, and found the sand there well trodden down. Two of our Arabs at once dismounted and dug into the sand with their hands, and soon brought four fine fresh eggs from a depth of about a foot under the surface of the warm sand. In flavor they are equal to hen's eggs, and are therefore excellent eating. An omelet made from the ostrich eggs was a wel-

come addition to our desert fare. They are a very convenient and portable provision; for the thickness of the shell preserves them sweet and fresh for at least a fortnight.

For five days we marched through the desert waste without meeting any thing to break the general monotony. On the sixth day, in the morning, there was a sudden change in the scenery. We were now in the Chebkha, a network of the B'ni Mozab; and a true network it is, of naked, sharp, rocky hills, apparently running in ranges at right angles to each other, with enclosed basins as sterile as the network itself,—not a tree, not a leaf, not a shrub.

We encamped under a tall cliff amidst the sand. Not far from us bivouacked a small party of Bedouins, of a tribe dependent on the B'ni Mozab, whose lean flocks manage to pick up a little herbage at the foot of the Chebkha. That evening we had a sumptuous repast; for we bought a sheep from the Bedouins, and the renegade ordered a portion of it to be prepared for us two *à la cuisine Française*.

The next morning, when we had been two hours on the road, a sand-storm burst on us,—such as I had never before encountered. Our camels were nearly blinded as they struggled on against the wind. Not a trace of the steps even of the animals immediately in front could be perceived. By turning one's back to the wind, an object at twenty

yards' distance might be dimly seen; but that was all. Our only guide was the sun; for the sky was cloudless, the sand merely sweeping for a few yards above the surface. Sometimes the gusts almost swept me from the saddle. The renegade lent me a pair of spectacles and a silk handkerchief, the latter of which I tied tightly over my face; but in spite of all my precautions I was almost blinded and suffocated. It was more bewildering than the heaviest snow-storm I ever experienced; and I had experienced a fearful one when but fourteen years old, in the Carpathian Mountains, in Hungary,—a storm which I really believe to this day carried me through the air for some distance: yet in violence it was surpassed by the sand-storm. It lasted about two hours, and then suddenly died away. When we halted for dinner, it was resolved to remain over night, to give rest to the poor animals, as also to ourselves.

Early the next morning I rose. All was silent and dark around me. The early hour in the desert, when no one is astir, is very dreary. At a distance I saw the glimmer of an Arab camp-fire; and while walking towards it I heard a sound which, once it strikes upon the ear, can never be forgotten. It was the wail of a hyena in the distance. I returned quickly to the camp; for I was not over-anxious to encounter the "grave-digger," as this noxious beast is called by the Arabs of the desert.

Soon the hour arrived when the people were aroused. The camel-drivers rose, groaned, shook their bournouses to get rid of the fleas, and thus the toilet for the day was completed. Gradually the other members of the caravan came and surrounded the fire. The coffee was prepared and drunk, pipes were smoked, the camels were loaded, and off we started again.

Our day's ride was over rocks all-but impassable for the camels, while here and there were sandy valleys with some scanty vestiges of vegetation. Here, fortunately, we met an Arab who was guarding his herd, and who set us on the nearest track, so as to save us some twenty miles of desert-ride. It was through a ravine,—one mass of naked rock, rough stone, and coarse debris from the neighboring mountain, without a scrap of earth or a sign of growth,—and so rough that we had to dismount from the camels. Towards sunset we debouched from the gorge, and directly in front of us lay the town of Ghardaia.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GHARDAIA.

ON a conical hill, closed in by rugged mountains, lies the town of Ghardaia. It covers the entire slope of the hill, and spreads out at its base. The most noticeable objects are the huge mosque-tower, and a smaller tower by its side, which is inclined from the perpendicular, like that of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. To the right, on an elevation higher than the one on which Ghardaia is built, are the ruins and wall of an ancient town, called by the B'ni Mozab Baba Sâad. This was the earliest fortified position of these people. The mud-plastered, flat-roofed buildings of the town itself are arranged like terraces, tier above tier. Some are faced with arcades on their roofs, while a few have pillars in front. As the traveller draws nearer, he sees the town of Mellika, covering a small conical peak; while to the south, on a similar elevation, is the town of Bounoura;—each of which has its Semaâr tower rising far above the surrounding buildings.

Upon arriving at the plain of the extinct river of the Wed Mozab, our caravan, which, as already

stated, was composed of three different parties, halted; for two were to separate here, while that which I accompanied was destined for Ghardaia.

The renegade was now writing a letter, called the "letter of admission;" for it is a rule that no caravan can pass the city without permission having been asked in writing. In this paper the petitioner has to state how long he intends to stay, the nature of his goods, the number of men and camels in his caravan, &c. This rule has been in force since the breaking out of the feud between the present Taleb and the ruler of Waregla, and is intended entirely as a precautionary measure.

When he had finished his letter, he handed it to me, saying that the only favor he had to ask of me in return for his services was that I should write a postscript to it; for, knowing how I stood with the Taleb of Ghardaia, he was convinced that my recommendation would be of great value to him and his during their stay in the place. I was glad to have any opportunity of repaying his kindness; and I accordingly wrote the following note:—

"The man who asks the protection of his Excellency the Governor of Ghardaia has shown himself most friendly to one who was recommended to the protection of your Excellency by Ibrahim of Tlemcen; and I therefore pray for him as well as myself.

(Signed) "GABOR."

Two Arabs were now despatched with the letter; and I anxiously awaited the result, which, however, as the renegade told me, we must not

expect before late in the evening, as the Taleb cannot act for himself, but has to lay the minutest thing before the council, which consists of three of the most prominent citizens, called councillors of state.

In the plain where we had halted, directly in front of the city, was a cemetery; in the centre of which stood a low, cavernous tomb. I took a stroll through the resting-place of the dead, and during my solitary walk I reviewed the events that had transpired since I had left Tlemcen. I looked back with mournful regret at the agreeable hours I had passed in the company of Deborah and her beautiful but seemingly passionless companion Zelma. I did not forget poor Juanette, who, I imagined, must have bewailed my loss in the desert more than anybody else; and a deep sigh that escaped my breast was a tribute to the memory of poor Yussuf. I thought over the occurrences of my desert travel,—my capture by the Tuaricks, my stay with them, my escape, my solitary wanderings in the Atlas, then the fall, the sickness and stay among the mountaineers, my encounter with the renegade, and now my arrival at the city of Ghardaia, the place of my destination when I left Tlemcen; but how different from what I had anticipated were the circumstances under which I approached it! Next came another thought, What has become of Deborah and the rest? Have they arrived safely, and, if so, how

will I be received? Will that reception be an adequate return for what I have undergone in their behalf, or will they refuse to credit my story? While occupied with these thoughts, I saw the renegade coming towards me. The messenger with the letter must have returned. My heart beat with unwonted rapidity. I hastened to meet him. "What news?" said I. "None at all," was his answer. "The Taleb is absent, but will return early in the morning."

Disappointed and impatient, I returned to the camp; and there the renegade, knowing that I would like to appear before the Taleb in a presentable garb, particularly should I have the good fortune to meet Deborah, offered me clean clothes, which I gladly accepted.

To beguile the evening hours, I took a walk around the city. To go to the principal gate I had to traverse another cemetery: it was the oldest in the place. Before me lay Ghardaia, with its thirty thousand human beings, and under me the graves of their ancestors for one thousand years. The plain to the right was yellow and sandy, and of considerable extent, dotted throughout with black Arab tents, studded with palm-groves and bright green patches of unfenced open gardens, each with a deep well, as I afterwards learned, close by. Outside the gate I met a great crowd of men and women; and I had to disperse the groups of amazed urchins that crowded

around the *Kafeer*. Not wishing to remain long away from the camp, I returned, and soon was in my tent, where I smoked my pipe in company with my host until a late hour, after which I retired for the night.

Early in the morning I arose, took a good sponge-bath, and began my toilet. When it was finished, I looked as though I belonged to the higher class of Arabs, and I felt quite contented with myself, and grateful to the man by whose aid I had been metamorphosed from a shabby desert traveller into an aristocratic-looking Arab; I even began to imagine that the Arab dress becomes the European better than it does the Arab himself.

By nine o'clock the messengers who had been sent with the letter returned; and with them came two Mozabites, dressed in the costume which I have described in a former chapter. As officers of the household of the Taleb, they bore on their turbans the sign of the crescent, cut out of a piece of red cloth. The renegade received them; but, perceiving from his fluency in Arabic that he was not the man of whom they were in search, they asked after "El Gabor,"—"El" being equivalent to the "Don" of the Spaniard, the "Signore" of the Italian, or the "Monsieur" of the French.

The renegade beckoned to me to approach, and the officials, finding that I was the individual to whom they had been sent, saluted me with the *salaam* and the gesture which the inferior among

these people always uses in addressing one whom he regards as his superior. They then handed me a small paper box, which contained a little *guzub* ("grain"),—a sign that the hospitality of the town was offered to me. This grain comes from the *Ghafouly* (*Holcus sorghum*, Linn.). It grows to the height of eight or ten feet; the stalk is as thick around as that of the sugar-cane; the grain is of a white color and about half the size of a dry pea, of a round, somewhat flattened shape. It is a much coarser article of food than the maize. Accompanying the box was a piece of coarse paper, headed with the "*Elhamdullah!*" ("Praise to God!") in which the Taleb, with the permission of the *Subkhanah Allah* ("the most sacred majesty of God"), bade me welcome to the city. At the same time they handed to my host a permit to come and remain in the city, while verbally he received an invitation not to leave Ghardaia without paying a visit to the Taleb. "So far so good," thought I. I would have liked to inquire concerning Deborah and the others; but my host told me, in the French language, not to do so, and not even to inquire of the Taleb himself, as it would be considered very impolite, except he himself introduced the subject.

The officers asked me when it was my wish to enter the city. I told them immediately, but found that it was necessary for them to take my answer back first, after which a camel would be

sent for me by their superior. I would willingly have waived all ceremony ; but—" *Vivere hoc cum populo, cum illis moriri*"—I had to submit, and accordingly told them that I would be ready whenever his Excellency chose to send for me.

As soon as they were out of hearing, the renegade said, "You are now sure of a hearty welcome ; for this is an honor which they pay to none but the highest personages. And now, my friend," added he, jocosely, "I can imagine you already married to Mademoiselle Deborah, and become the counsellor, adviser, and great seal-bearer of the Taleb of Ghardaia. Should this be the case,—as I am pretty sure it will be,—I recommend to you not to adopt the Arab custom of plurality of wives. Stick to one, and to one only. Make her your friend and confidante. Do nothing that you would desire to hide from her, or, if such a misfortune should befall you, confess it to her ; for, after all, the wife is the best friend man has." I promised to keep his lesson in my mind for some future occasion, not being as yet ready to enter into the estate of matrimony, and there being no probability of my becoming a Mohammedan.

Two hours later, a body of men mounted on camels were seen emerging from the city gate and riding towards our camp. "Here they are," said my host. "They come for the future brother-in-law of the Taleb of Ghardaia." It was in fact a deputation sent to conduct me to the city. In

their midst was a white camel richly caparisoned, the saddle-cloth on which I particularly noticed as being of French manufacture. Before I mounted, I exacted from my host a promise to come and see me,—I could not say to what place as yet, but was sure he would not have much difficulty in finding out the whereabouts of the Kafeer.

Ghardaia is surrounded with a stone wall cemented with mud, and we had to make a long circuit to enter the principal gate. The procession or deputation, with the Kafeer in their midst, on the rich saddle of the Taleb's white *nagh*, attracted the attention of all passers-by, as well as of the crowd of boys who were capering over the shins of the reclining seniors that lined the walls.

The street through which I was led was excessively narrow. The houses, all of one story, were windowless, and had remarkably narrow doors. Some of them had holes in the wall, through which haïks, burnouses, cotton handkerchiefs, &c. were sold; and fruit-stalls stood in long rows, with watermelons and pomegranates, capsicums, however, constituting the principal stock. At the end of the principal street we entered the market-place, a wide, irregular square, having on one side an arched gateway with a square tower over it. To the right of this stood a large house with some claim to architectural character, having an open arcade in front and a long colonnaded veranda above. Thither I was led: it was the

abode of the Taleb of the Djemmâa, or President of the Republic.

Upon dismounting from the camel, an officer approached and handed me a large wooden key, which I accepted, though without the slightest idea as to what I was to do with it, until he, seeing my ignorance, told me that this ceremony signified that I was admitted as a guest into the state-house. He then took the key from my hands, and introduced me to two other officers who stood near a broad stone staircase, and who were waiting there to lead me into the presence of his Excellency.

How awkward does a man feel who is unacquainted with the ceremonies and customs not merely of an entirely strange people, but even of those belonging to different classes of society! Often have I pitied the country damsels or young men who had been invited for convenience' sake to some high, fashionable party, at which they made their first *début*, and have been tempted to laugh at their uncouth manner; but had they seen me in Ghardaia, the laugh would have been all on their side.

The officers in whose charge I had been placed bade me walk up; but instead of going before me to point the way, they followed after me. Happily, it was not the tower of Babel, for I would have gone on as long as the steps continued. On the uppermost staircase I met my old acquaintance, the Taleb of Ghardaia, the brother of Deborah,

the President of the Republic. He looked the same, except that his dress now very clearly denoted his rank. He gave me a cordial *salaam*, and pressed my hand with great eagerness, though his mien was hardly that of one who was overjoyed to see me. Perhaps, as the supreme authority of the city, he felt it incumbent on him to maintain a dignified demeanor. At any rate, I noticed at the first glance his care-worn and serious air, bordering even on sadness.

In a few minutes I was conducted into a large apartment, richly carpeted and with divans all around. This was the council-chamber of the Djemmâa.

The Taleb, leading me by the arm, proceeded to one of the divans, and sat down, bidding me to be also seated. This done, the example was followed by all the rest who had followed to the state-house and had a right to a seat in the Djemmâa. Neither coffee nor pipes were served, their use being prohibited to the B'ni Mozab; but, instead, the Taleb got up and made a speech, introducing me to his friends. He informed them that I was a Tabeeb (doctor), and had been recommended to him by one of his best friends of Algiers; that I thus had a claim on him, and, consequently, on the hospitality of the city and its inhabitants; that I was a great traveller, who had come from a country whose existence they had never so much as heard of before (Hungary), and that he hoped my stay

would be made so agreeable to me that I would never think of leaving them. At the close of this speech, which was pronounced with as much dignity as that of any lord in the House of Peers in England, the entire assemblage rose to their feet and exclaimed, "Elhamdullah!"

The ceremony of introduction over, two officers approached me, and I was led into the guests' room, where refreshments were placed on a stand, and I was left alone. After a while, a young man brought in a large bundle. It was my leather bag with which I had started from Tlemcen. How glad was I to receive it! All my things were in it, just as I had left them when I had wandered from the camp on that unfortunate evening on which I fell into the hands of the Tuaricks.

Towards evening the Taleb called on me, and at his request I related to him my adventures after my capture, to all of which he listened intently, his features, however, betraying not the slightest emotion at my narrative. When I had finished, he told me how much uneasiness my disappearance had occasioned them. "We mourned you as dead when we found that you did not return," said he; "and especially *she*, who thenceforward became more sad than ever."

A thrill of joy ran through me on hearing these words, and I felt as though the sum of happiness would be to be led into her presence, there to relate all I had suffered for her; but I remem-

bered the instructions of the renegade, and was silent.

I was now left alone again for the night. I was burning with impatience to see Deborah. Could I but find out where Juanette was,—she was French and fond of intrigue,—she would lead me to her mistress, no matter what the violation of etiquette; for once more I experienced the feeling of restlessness which had impelled me to my aimless ride on the evening of my capture by the Tuaricks.

In the morning an old Mozabite came in the name of the Taleb to wait my pleasure. I would have preferred seeing the ruler himself; for I was at a loss to understand the frigidity of his manner. Perhaps it was because he wished to invest himself thereby with dignity; but, as I was a guest in his house, why did he not come to see me when I was alone? There must be some secret behind all this; and I determined to solve the mystery at our next interview. One question in particular obtruded itself:—Why had he not taken me into the presence of his sister on the preceding day? Pondering this matter, the answer came as follows:—What claim have I on Deborah and Zelma in the eyes of the Taleb? What are they to me more than fellow-travellers from Tlemcen? And the more I reflected, the more clearly I saw that it was my duty to wait patiently until it should please him to lead me into their presence.

The official who was to be my cicerone through

the city made me acquainted not only with the place, but also with the political institution, &c. of the government of the B'ni Mozab.

The republic of the seven cities of the B'ni Mozab is governed by the Djemmâa, elected by the separate states, and presided over by the Sheik Baba, or religious chief of Ghardaia. Besides this, each city has its own parliament for the settlement of its domestic affairs; and Ghardaia has two kadis, one for each section of the city. The senior, however, presides over the municipal Djemmâa, which consists of twelve members, elected annually by the votes of all householders, but virtually chosen for life. On all important occasions the Sheik Baba presides, but ordinarily he delegates the chair to the senior kadi. The Djemmâa meets every Wednesday, or rather a committee of three members and the president, for the despatch of minor business. None of the B'ni Mozab officials are paid except the negro servants who deliver summons and wait upon strangers, keeping the key of the general guest-house. The Jews have their own sheik, who takes cognizance of internal disputes, but is powerless in cases where one of the litigants is a Mussulman.

As I strolled along through the different streets, the people whom I met showed me the greatest deference; for they knew that I was the guest of their chief, and in all probability took me for some mighty personage.

In the afternoon I went to visit the old ruins of Bâba Saâd, deserted since A.D. 1260. The whole contour of this city is perfect, occupying a flat-topped hill. The walls, though beginning to crumble here and there, are in wonderfully good condition, owing to their being situated in a district where rain falls on an average but once in three years; the interior is, however, gone. In the plain around it, I saw, in the patches of cultivation, the first barley since leaving Tlemcen. As far as the eye can reach, are groves interspersed with patches of this grain; while the wide road which winds through the Wed Mozab is filled with troops of camels defiling up the long avenues, and you hear the constant tinkle of sheep-bells floating on the clear air. Here and there a patch of sand is occupied by black tents, low and wide. The dwellers therein are Mozabites, nomads for a time; while their camels, sheep, and goats find a scanty subsistence in the vicinity. I entered some of the gardens that surround the city, and found them beautifully laid out, showing that woman is the same everywhere; for here, in the heart of the desert, as well as in civilized Europe, the tender sex delights in the cultivation of flowers. In most of these gardens are strangely-devised mud hovels, to which the inhabitants retire during the summer heat, and where they also store their fruits and tools for the winter.

The same evening, as I was walking through

a grove of palm-trees, I heard in the distance a merry din, like that of a dozen charity-schools let loose, rise on the still air. I sauntered on, to discover the cause of this home-like sound, and, on emerging from the wood, found myself close to the chief cemetery. At the edge of it was a flat, lime-floored, circular space, not unlike a threshing-floor, but much larger. Around this were squatted about eighty men, each with a huge dish of kuskusu before him. The open space was filled with men, boys, veiled women, and unveiled girls, rushing wildly, like a swarm of bees, from side to side, and catching up handfuls of the savory morsels. My apparition caused a great sensation. A cry of "Ingles, akhool, akhool, kuskusu m'leia" ("Englishman, eat, eat; the kuskusu is good") rose from all sides; and I was forced to go the round and taste from many a dish, while the boys and girls crowded about me, touched my clothes, and danced and clapped their hands with glee. I could scarcely comprehend the purport of this feast, at which I counted at least six hundred carrying off dates in their burnouses; while there were at least double that number on the ground. The only reply I could obtain to my inquiries was a wave of the hand towards the marabout's tomb in the centre of the cemetery. On my return home, I learned that I had been honored by a share in the death-feast of Bab-oul-Djemmâa, the founder of Ghardaia, in commemoration of whose anniversary the rich

provide and the poor enjoy over his grave a liberal largess. Striking was the scene,—pure, unmingled, hilarious enjoyment beaming from every face in the throng.

There are no spirits permitted to be used among the B'ni Mozab; and although they manufacture an intoxicating liquor from the date, even that is used only for medicinal purposes, and its sale is restricted to the hakeems of the Jews, who have obtained permission from the ruling powers to sell it. Nevertheless, it is to be feared that sobriety is not universal among these people; though excess is compelled to be very secret, or condign punishment would follow. It will thus be seen that the "Maine liquor-law" was by no means an original measure, the principle of prohibition having been in force among the B'ni Mozab for a thousand years. In all my travels in Africa, I never indulged in the use of liquor. I tasted the *laguni*—the date-spirit—just for the sake of tasting it, but that was all; and I am convinced that I was better without than with it.

In my rambles I met a very curious lizard, called *j'ed dabb*,—curious to me, at least, on account of the medicinal properties ascribed to it by the Arab hakeem. They assert that a person bitten by the cerastes has only to cut off the head of the *dabb*, make an incision in his own scalp, and apply the lizard, when the virus will infallibly be drawn out by its attraction and absorbed.

On returning to the city, I visited the Jews' quarter, which is a distinct portion of Ghardaia, with separate gates. The whole of the Hebrew population is employed in the working of metals, —chiefly as jewellers and silversmiths, with a few farriers and blacksmiths.

I never saw black Jews; but those of Ghardaia are as dark as the Hindoos. From the Jewish quarter I went to the market. The square was surrounded by men sitting on the ground, in rows three deep, some buyers and some sellers, the latter with the wares on their knees or piled up by their side. A negro proclaimed aloud the article to be sold, while an assistant carried it around the square for examination; it was then put up and sold or bought in. Among other articles sold were date-stones, which are used as food for camels. These stones are pounded to powder in mortars, and then fed to the animals.

One of the principal industries of the B'ni Mozab is the preparation of leather and the dyeing of woollen and cotton stuffs for exportation. They tan large quantities of morocco leather, and also a leather of a very brilliant yellow color. For the latter purpose they use a fungus found upon the *Pistachia Atlantica*,—a species of polyporite not much known to botanists. By the natives it is called *s'rrha*, and is of a dull yellow color, staining the hand very deeply; it is very scarce, and commands an extremely high price.

To make the leather soft and pliant as kid, they steep the hide for weeks in a decoction of ripe dates and water beaten into a thin paste; then they tan it in an infusion of nutgall of the *pistachia terebinthus*. The product, although soft, is not like the leather prepared with the rind of the pomegranate.

Their mode of bleaching wool is very curious. They steep the fleeces in water mixed with the powder of a limestone in which there is a great deal of chalk and very little sulphate of lime, which they call *timschund*, and the operation is repeated until the wool becomes as white as cotton.

For yellow dye they use several plants. The *bukhamsta* is the stem and root of a woody plant found in the desert. Primrose color is obtained from the blossoms of a species of hyssop or caper (*capparis ovata*) which grows abundantly around Ghardaia, and is called *tihl oul' out*: the flower is large and yellow, and serves also for stanching wounds. For red they use the root of a small desert spurge,—a species of *euphorbia*. They also use a wood called *l'uhk*, which is brought from the interior of Africa. A beautiful red is likewise obtained from the seed of *tak'ouit*, a desert plant.

In the centre of the market-place is a large platform made of stone, where the tailors and shoemakers work all day, having stands there, just as among us the butchers or vegetable-venders occupy stalls in the public markets.

Ghardaia is the thoroughfare for caravans crossing and recrossing from or to Tunis, Fez, Algiers, Morocco, Soudan, or Timbuctoo, and trading in dates, barley, wool, cotton, indigo, leather, gold-dust, ivory, and the raw produce of Central and Northern Africa. Before the eastern gate of the square is a raised whitewashed *mastaba* for prayer, on which every evening the faithful prostrate themselves in devotion.

The women do not appear much in public, but are by no means so secluded as in the towns of the Mussulmans; and their dress is widely different from that of the Arab women elsewhere. Their hair is twisted into a huge knot on each side of the forehead, and another behind on the left side. These are neatly plaited and fastened with large golden pins, or, more generally, with silver skewers, and powdered with red and white beads. On the right knot they wear rich golden pendants, in place of the ear-rings, as is the custom with the women of the Western World. The ladies are rather too dark for my taste; and, besides, I did not like the custom of the red patches they paint on their foreheads, and some even paint the point of their nose. They wear silver rings on all their fingers, as also bracelets and anklets. Their general wearing-apparel is the haïk, striped black and red or black and blue.

Slavery is permitted in Ghardaia, and therefore there is a great admixture of negro blood among

the B'ni Mozab, and most of the wealthier inhabitants are half-castes. The slaves are protected by law against corporeal punishment, are well treated, and allowed to earn money. They eat out of the same dish with their masters; and if they manage to save sixty or eighty dollars, they can buy their liberty.

Having thus far seen all that was worth seeing, and gathered all the information that was to be obtained, I returned to my abode, leaving for the morrow the task of noting down all that I might consider of interest about Ghardaia and its people.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GRAVE.

WHEN I reached my tent, it was late, and I went to bed immediately, for I felt fatigued ; and scarcely had I laid my head on the pillow when I fell fast asleep. In the morning a little negro boy appeared with a large bouquet of flowers, which he placed in an earthen jar near my bed ; but ere I could ask him who had sent them, the urchin had disappeared. Perhaps, however, I would have been infringing on the Mozabite etiquette had I given any expression to my curiosity on the subject.

After I had partaken of my morning meal, which was served up in my own room, the Taleb made his appearance in company with two of the elders of the city. The customary salutations having been interchanged, a lengthy conversation on divers topics ensued. The chief related at considerable length the circumstances of the encounter with the Tuaricks in the pass, and especially dwelt upon the fact that his improved French fire-arms—those which he had bought at Tlemcen—had been the most efficient of the agents in deciding

the victory against the marauders. The Ghar-daïans had killed some eighteen Tuaricks, after which the others fled to the mountains. "The only loss we experienced," said he, in conclusion, "was that of your poor boy Yussuf, who was hit by a stone hurled from the height in the pass."

He now begged me to recount my adventures to his companions, with which request I complied, the elders manifesting more interest than even the Taleb himself.

After I got through, I ventured a question; "for," thought I, "though it be forbidden to ask after the Mozabite women, it will perhaps not be considered impolite to inquire concerning Juanette, whom these people look upon as my country-woman;" and I put the question as concisely as possible. The Taleb replied that Juanette had gone back before they entered the pass; that the poor girl had grown extremely home-sick, and, after I had lost myself in the desert, had sunk into the depths of despair, and that, meeting a caravan that was going to Bisknor, they had given her into their charge to be taken northward.

That day the renegade arrived, and had an audience with the Taleb. He stayed with him over an hour, after which he came to see me. On beholding him, I stretched out my hand towards him, saying,—

"My friend, there is very little prospect, as matters now stand, of my becoming the brother-

in-law of the Taleb; for as yet, so far from seeing Deborah and Zelma, I have not even heard their names mentioned."

"Etiquette," said he, with a smile. I could see, however, that the smile was a forced one, and I besought him to tell me all he knew about the matter; but he assured me that he was as ignorant of the whereabouts of the women as I was myself.

I told him that I was tired of the life of the Mozabites, and that if he was going to Tripoli, or back to Morocco, I would accompany him; for as to these Arab Quakers, after one has seen their city and the vicinity, one has seen all; and the only creatures who could render my stay agreeable were hidden from me as effectually as though they were in the grave. To all this the renegade made no reply; and, as I remembered how jocose he had before been on the subject, his silence caused me to reflect.

"I wish you would take up your abode with me while you stay in Ghardaia," I exclaimed, at last; "for here nobody talks to me: in fact, I see nobody to whom to talk."

"That is just what I came to propose to you," replied my friend; "for the Taleb has invited me to share your abode with you, if it be not inconvenient."

I was glad of the opportunity to have the renegade with me; for we could chat freely, and help

each other to pass away the time. In the course of the day I requested him, as he was more at liberty than I, to make some inquiries about Deborah and Zelma: they were to me "the forbidden fruit," and the thicker the veil of secrecy that enshrouded them, the more anxious did I become to see them. He promised that he would do all in his power to find out their whereabouts, and remarked, with something of his former levity of manner, "What would you say were you to find out that Deborah is already married?"

"Married! Impossible! From the little I know of her, I am sure she would rather die than marry one of these people, for whom she can feel neither love nor sympathy, after having lived so long in the well-educated European society of Tlemcen. The idea is absurd."

"Not so absurd as you think," said he. "She consented to return to her oasis-home,—the greatest sacrifice that could have been required of her; then she must have been ready for all that might follow; and I should not be surprised were I to find her established in the harem of one of the dignitaries of the city."

"Well, in that case, I promise you not to trouble myself about going to see her."

The renegade now left me, promising to return as soon as he should ascertain the fate of Deborah and Zelma.

The reader may perhaps think that I was "in

love" with Deborah; but I can assure him that I was not: although I felt more than a common interest in her fate, and, consequently, awaited with impatient anxiety the return of the messenger, who had a better opportunity than I of finding out her whereabouts. Late in the evening he came back with the welcome tidings that he had found out Deborah's abiding-place, and that she was still unmarried. I begged to be instantly led to her; and after a few minutes' persuasion the renegade consented to accompany me.

We went to the eastern gate. I had observed during the day, when I had gone out, a solitary stone house outside of the city wall, surrounded by a well-cultivated garden. There, I thought, must be where Deborah has taken up her residence; and I was now sure that I had not been mistaken, for when we had passed the gate my friend led me in that direction. To reach the house we were obliged to pass the cemetery, of which there are four outside the gates of the city. Although by no means superstitious, yet I never liked to visit the resting-place of the dead, especially at night; but now, as the way through the cemetery led to the spot where I was to meet Deborah, the place looked almost cheerful. The road was by no means straight: there were many side-paths which we had to enter; and I was fain to give myself up entirely to the guidance of my friend.

Since we had entered this "garden of the dead,"

my companion, who had had unusually little to say on his way hither, had become quite silent, except that he remarked, in a sort of soliloquy, "Happy are those who have finished their earthly pilgrimage, and now enjoy the eternal rest." To this, however, I made no answer, for I had no disposition at that moment to think of the dead.

Ere we had traversed the length of this burial-place of the Mozabites, I saw, on the right of the path which we were to follow, a kneeling figure, draped from head to foot in black, about fifty paces in front of us; and, grasping the arm of my companion, I halted, indicating the direction of the apparition, with visible nervous excitement.

"Be not alarmed," said my companion, in an encouraging manner, "but follow me; or, if you choose, remain here until I speak to the mourner, when you will be convinced that it is no ghost, but flesh and blood like ourselves."

Thoroughly ashamed of my momentary weakness, I accompanied him, until we came up to the shrouded figure, which we found to be kneeling as if in devotion by the side of a newly-made grave.

The renegade addressed the mysterious night-watcher, but received no answer. He then knelt down at the side of the grave, motioning to me to do the same. I obeyed; but I did not pray. I was too busily engaged in gazing at the statue-like form before me, whose slight motions every

now and then were the only indications that it was not inanimate.

"Do you know," said, at last, a soft and melodious voice, that seemed as if it came from the grave itself,—“do you know to whom this grave belongs, and the name of the departed one for whom you are offering up your prayers?”

"I do," said the renegade.

Raising herself slowly from the grave, the mysterious mourner stood erect before us. Her face had up to this time been covered with a heavy dark veil; but now it was withdrawn. I rose, and, approaching her, I saw, by the rays of the moon, struggling at that instant through the clouds, that it was Zelma, the companion of Deborah. I needed no explanation. I fell on my knees once more; and my prayers now were heartfelt.

Early the next morning the Taleb came to see me. The visit to the grave of Deborah had been prearranged between him and the renegade. We did not attempt to console each other: there are certain griefs whose best consolation is silence. I did not stir out of my room for eight days. On the ninth day I took leave of the Taleb and of the members of the Djemmâa of Ghardaia, all of whom accompanied me to beyond the city gate.

Mounted once more on my camel, one question arose in my mind, not as to where I should next go, but a much more sensible one.

Now I have seen Ghardaia, the great oasis in the Desert of Sahara,—have fully satisfied the curiosity that burns in the breast of certain men and drives them into the wide world for the sake of travel. I have crossed the Atlas Mountains, have braved the danger of the encounter of jackals and hyenas, have slept under the tent of the nomad Bedouin, trodden the sacred carpet of the Mussulman, and fraternized with the sunburnt sons of Islam; and, after all, what have I achieved? Was it for the mere satisfaction of being able to say to my friends, should I ever have the fortune to meet them again, that I have traversed the great desert of Sahara?—that I have seen the ostrich in its sandy home, and heard the wailing of the hyena as it prowled in search of the carcass of the unfortunate victim who has perished in the desert? If for that, and that alone, then I would recommend to any one who may be foolish enough to wish to imitate me, to stay at home.

As these and similar thoughts passed through my mind, a sadness crept over me, and I wished myself back in the humble cottage far away in Hungary, where, perhaps at that very hour, my aged parents were wondering where their adventurous boy was now roaming. I saw in imagination my dear mother shedding a tear, and saying, “Who knows if he is alive?” Ah, what would I not have given at that moment to be able to send my spirit on wings of filial love to those who were

the only ones that felt an interest in the far-off wanderer, and tell them, "Yes, yes, he is alive. God gave him health and strength to cross the desert. He is now far away from you, among the B'ni Mozab in Africa, in the great desert of the Sahara; but soon he will return, and, in your midst, at his home once more, at the friendly fire-side, he will relate to you all his adventures, and will gladden your declining days with the narrative of his experience in the wide world." But, alas! that good fortune, the only reward I expected for all my adventures, that sweet recompense, was not to be my lot; for, upon my return, two mounds adorned with tombstones marked the spot where reposed the mouldering remains of those who had loved me best on earth; and instead of relating to them my adventures, I moistened with my tears the sod beneath which lay the lifeless forms of those whose warm embrace I had looked for, with eager anticipation, as my sole reward.

THE END.

