

‘The Castellan’s Daughter’

Our tale opens in the year 1483 of the Christian era, and 888 of the Mussulman calendar. At that period, the Castle of Sassenage, in the province of Dauphiny, was the prison in which, by the treachery of the knights of Rhodes, had been confined Prince Djem, or Zizim, by which latter appellation, though an incorrect one, he is more familiarly known to Christian readers. He was the younger son of Mohammed the Second, and at the death of his father, contested the throne of the Ottoman empire with his elder brother, Bajazet. The fortune of war decided in favour of the latter, who became the eighth Sultan, under the name of Bajazet the Second. Djem was compelled to take refuge at Rhodes, whence the intricacies of his successful brother’s agents compelled him to fly to Italy; and after a variety of adventures and strange vicissitudes, he was at length imprisoned in the Castle of Sassenage.

Prince Djem was a young man who we must rather denominate beautiful than handsome. At the period when he was taken as a prisoner to Sassenage, he was only twenty-four years of age. His mild blue eyes, long chestnut hair, and pleasing smile added to a melancholy expression of countenance, failed not to inspire with interest all who came in contact with him. Contrary to the custom of his country, he wore no beard; and as he was attired in the garb then in fashion in the more civilized states of Christendom, he rather resembled an elegant nobleman of the meridian of Paris, than a descendant of the fierce and warlike Osman. He was passionately devoted to music and poetry – those twin sisters whose devoted charms exercise a soothing influence over even the most rude and uncultivated minds. In manner and disposition the Prince was also unlike his fellow-countrymen, being mild, amiable, and even fascinating – his conversation was agreeable and polished, and showing an enlightened mind – his taste for painting and sculpture was as refined as his devotion to the sister arts above mentioned: and his minions even failed to believe in those strong prejudices and dark superstitions which, in all ages, have shed such rich gloom over the character of the rigid Mussulmans.

The castellan or Lord of Sassenage was a widower. He possessed a daughter, of extreme beauty, whose name was Philippina Helena. At the period when Djem arrived at the castle, this young lady was only sixteen years of age; and her hand was sought in marriage by all the powerful chieftains of the vicinity. Her father destined her for the youthful, the gallant, and the wealthy Alberti de Morestel, the proprietor of a splendid abode and woodlands at a short distance from Sassenage. Philippina was, however, averse to the match which her father had contracted on her behalf: she was not blind to the merits of her admirer; but there was something rude and repulsive in his character, which threw all his real qualities into the shade. He was, moreover, of dissipated habits; and when he returned with his companions from the chase, the halls of his spacious castle rang with the noise of revelry, and the shouts of the wassailers, till the crowing of the cock. These circumstances made an unfavourable impression upon the mind of the fair Philippina, who was herself all gentleness and amiability.

From the preceding observations our readers will be prepared for the announcement that the beautiful daughter of the castellan soon captivated the heart of Djem, and was also imbued with a reciprocal passion. Their tastes were so assimilated – their dispositions so congenial, that they almost seemed to have been formed for each other, had not the difference of their religious persuasions constituted an insuperable barrier between them, in an age when so much importance was attached to particular sectarian tenets. Djem was treated by the castellan with the utmost distinction and respect, and lived in the fortress as a member of his family. He was therefore constantly in the society of the fair Philippina; and as the castellan was frequently engaged at a distance from his abode, either in the chase, or on visits to neighbouring chieftains, the young lovers had every opportunity of becoming well acquainted with each other, and improving the attachment which had sprung up between them. There was something so pure, so chaste, and so holy in this love, that not even the most rigid moralist could have objected to that silent union of two fond hearts.

This sincere affection was not for a long time revealed orally to each other; but it was mutually betrayed by tender glances, and those thousand little proofs of preference which invariably characterize true love, and speak, trumpet-tongued, louder than ten thousand voices. And yet the old castellan himself remained blind to the attachment existing between his daughter and the prisoner, – probably because, with the instinctive apprehension of lovers, they were particularly guarded and even reserved in his presence; and also because the difference of their creeds might at once be considered, in the ideas of a worldly-minded and selfish old man, a sufficient guarantee against the interchange of sentiments of love.

One morning, about two months after the arrival of the Prince at the Castle of Sassenage, the castellan summoned his daughter into his private apartment, and addressed her as follows: –

‘Philippina, this evening I intend to give a grand entertainment to Count Alberti de Morestel, and other nobles of the neighbourhood. Thou knowest that for a year past, thy hand has been destined for the count, who is deeply enamoured of thee. I expect that thou wilt take thy place, appareled as becomes thee, this evening at the festal board; and to-morrow morning, the holy ceremony of the marriage will be celebrated in the chapel. Count Alberti will then bear thee to his own princely residence, where thou wilt be at once his comfort and his bride.’

‘Father,’ exclaimed Philippina, falling upon her knees, and clasping her hands together, in a paroxysm of the wildest grief, ‘I implore thee, let me not be separated from thee – let me not be compelled to quit the place of my birth, the home of my childhood !’

‘Foolish girl !’ cried the castellan: ‘thou canst not remain with thy father after thou art married !’

‘I do not seek the high honour which Count Alberti desires to

bestow upon me: my tastes, my pursuits and his are so widely different, that I feel we should not live happily together.'

'The tastes of a husband and wife soon become assimilated,' answered the castellan.

'But I love not the count,' said the beautiful girl, sobbing violently.

'Every young girl does not love, in the romantic sense of the word, the husband whom her father selects for her,' rejoined the castellan persuasively; 'but love comes after marriage, and the constant attentions –'

'Love will never bless my union with Alberti,' interrupted Philippina, speaking emphatically.

'Tush! a truce to these idle fears – these maiden alarms – these girlish qualms! I am old, Philippina, and cannot expect to live long in this world; and I must see that my daughter is provided for ere death shall snatch me from the sphere where my protection avails her. Count Alberti is rich and noble – he is honourable and brave – he is handsome and chivalrous – and when his escutcheon is connected with mine, by the solemn and irrefragable bonds of marriage, I shall meet my fate, whenever it may arrive, without a care!'

'Father once more I implore thee – compel me not to form a union which, so far from conducing to my happiness, will stamp my everlasting misery. I love not the count – I feel that I can never love him – I dare not promise vows which I cannot fulfil!'

'Daughter, thou art young and innocent, and art unacquainted with the ways of the world, said the venerable castellan, in an impressive manner. 'I am well aware of the timidity which is natural to a young maiden's disposition; but I also know how to adopt measures to ensure my daughter's prosperity and welfare. Attend to my directions – the time will come when thou wilt smile at thy present conduct, and applaud my firmness. To-night I shall expect thee at the banquet!'

With these words the old man left the apartment; and Philippina hastened to her own chamber, to give free and unreserved vent to the ebullition of her acute grief.

Beneath the windows of the maiden's apartment was a long terrace, upon which she was accustomed to walk with Djem, who was not allowed to issue beyond the precincts of the fortifications – the only circumstance which reminded him of his captivity. Philippina had been for some time in her chamber, musing upon the fate which seemed to be in store for her, when the sound of footsteps upon the terrace beneath aroused her from her painful meditations. She looked from the casement and beheld the prince. A secret impulse, which she obeyed without precisely understanding its nature, induced her to join him on his walk. At first their conversation turned upon indifferent subjects; but at length the prince perceived that the manners of his fair companion were melancholy and embarrassed, and that her eyes were red with weeping.

‘Fair lady,’ he said, taking her hand, ‘thy thoughts are not of a pleasurable nature. Has aught occurred to ruffle the tranquility of thy happy life ?’

‘Alas ! happiness and I are doomed to bid adieu for ever,’ returned Philippina, the tears again starting into her eyes.

‘Say not so, gentle maiden !’ cried Djem: ‘who could inflict an injury upon thee ?’

‘One who labours under the impression,’ answered the lady, ‘that he is effecting an object calculated to ensure my happiness.’

‘You would, doubtless, speak of your father ?’ said Djem hastily, and still retaining the hand of his lovely companion in his own.

‘Your highness’s opinion is rightly formed. My father would fain compel me to espouse the Count Alberti de Morestel !’ said the maiden.

‘Espouse the Count Alberti !’ ejaculated Djem, thunderstruck by this announcement: then, after a long pause, he added passionately, ‘No, Philippina – never – never !’

The maiden’s countenance became suffused with blushes; and she did not withdraw the hand which Djem now pressed tenderly to his bosom. She cast an anxious and timid glance towards his face – their eyes met – and their love would have been mutually revealed, had it never been expressed in looks before.

‘Philippina,’ said Djem, ‘this marriage must not – shall not take place ! No – I now feel, dearest girl, that my own happiness is too intimately connected with thee and thy destinies to allow me thus to resign thee without an effort. Philippina – I love thee – love thee with an enthusiasm which no human exertion could suppress – no human power extinguish. I love thee as never before did man love – far better than the Meignoun of eastern mythology loved his beautiful Leilah ! O Philippina, thou would’st not inflict never-ending tortures upon a heart in which thou thyself hast encouraged the sweet passion which may become its joy ! Speak – dearest girl – what am I to expect at thy hand ?’

‘Your Highness has overpowered me with this sudden avowal,’ answered the maiden, scarcely audible in her voice, and more than ever embarrassed in her manner.

‘Ah I see that I am not indifferent to you !’ exclaimed the prince. ‘At length may I hope for some consolation amidst all my sorrows ! Mine, alas ! has been a hard fate, Philippina. The moment my illustrious father Mohammed the Second, died, the Grand Vizier despatched a messenger to my brother Bajazet, who was then Governor of Amassia, and another to me. I was at that time the Governor of Karamania, and the Grand Vizier destined me to ascend the throne. He kept the death of my father a secret; but it was discovered by certain recruits of the troops of Janizaries,

and a revolt immediately took place amongst the garrison of Constantinople. My friend, the Grand Vizier, was put to death; and the messenger whom he had despatched to me was arrested by the Governor of Anatolia, and beheaded. Thus did I lose the throne of the East, through a series of untoward circumstances, which have at length conducted me to Sassenage; and for this event alone do I thank my evil stars, since if have met, sweet girl, with thee !’

‘But you did not resign all hopes of the throne without a fierce and gallant struggle ?’ said Philippina, blushing at the compliment which he paid to her. ‘Tell me of your warlike exploits: it cheers my heart – it excites my spirits – it animates me with an unknown courage, when I hear of the dangers and vicissitudes which thou hast experienced !’

‘The moment I heard that Bajazet had arrived at Constantinople, and

ascended the throne,’ continued Djem, ‘I collected a few troops and marched on Brusa, the capital of the Ottoman dominions in Asia. Bajazet’s general came to encounter me: I defeated and took him prisoner. I entered Brusa, proclaimed myself Sultan of the Empire, and exercised the right of coining money and having prayers said for me in the mosques. Alas ! this shadow of imperial power only lasted for three weeks; and at the expiration of that time the Sultan himself marched against me with an immense army.

‘I sent an embassy to him, proposing to settle the matter in an amicable way, and offering to leave him in undisputed possession of the Ottoman dominions in Europe, provided he would assent to my sovereignty in Asia. This proposal was rejected, and an engagement took place. My general was defeated, and I was compelled to fly with the utmost precipitation into Syria: and from Syria I proceeded to Cairo, where I was received with the utmost distinction by the Mameluke sultan. His highness solicited me to tempt the fortune of war once more. I assented to the proposal, collected a few troops, and marched into Syria, where I speedily received considerable support.

‘The Sultan Bajazet again took the field in person; and after various skirmishes, forced marches, successes and reverses, my army deserted me and I was forced to take refuge in Cilicia. By the advice of my friends and adherents, I subsequently agreed to repair to Rhodes, where I arrived at the beginning of last year. For some time I was treated with the utmost consideration and respect; and D’Aubusson, the Grand Master of the knights of the order, promised not only to support my claims, but also to exert his influence with the various princes of Europe on my behalf.

‘But the intrigues and the gold of my brother Bajazet undermined my credit with the knights; and D’Aubusson frankly told me that my presence would lead him into hostilities with the Ottomans. It was determined that I should proceed to the court of France, and I accordingly embarked on board a vessel bound for Marseilles. We put into the port of Nice, whence I despatched a messenger to Paris. I remained four months waiting his return: but the plague having broken out at Nice, I was conducted by the Knights of Rhodes who accompanied me to Roussillon. In the

meantime the King of France, from whom I had expected protection, died; and the knights treacherously separated me from my own faithful attendants. I remained for a few months at Puy, and was thence conveyed to this castle. And now, beauteous lady – now that thou art acquainted with the full extent of the sad vicissitudes which I have experienced – add not another pang to my numerous afflictions – rend not this heart with thine indifference to my passion ! Say, gentle maiden – canst thou feel sympathy for the unfortunate descendant of Osman !’

‘Oh, believe me,’ answered Philippina, who had listened with the deepest interest to the narrative of her lover’s adventures, – ‘believe me, I cannot be indifferent to your misfortunes – I cannot refuse the sympathy which your sorrowful fate demands !’

‘Sympathy is a cold term, Philippina,’ said Djem: ‘why not grant me thy love !’

‘My love !’ repeated the maiden, in a voice almost choked with emotion. ‘Oh ! I dare not listen to thy words, when they touch upon such a subject. Haply some fond wife or tender mistress pines for thee in another land; and how could I plight my troth or give my heart to one who has other claims upon his affections ?’

‘Philippina,’ said Djem, hanging down his head, and suppressing his emotions by a violent effort, ‘I swear to you that no one has any claim upon my heart, and that it is thine —and thine only !’

‘And I give thee mine in return,’ murmured the maiden, a deep blush suffusing her countenance.

‘O Philippina, I thank thee for these words of consolation – the dearest, the most welcome that have fallen upon my ears for many a long and weary day !’ cried Djem: and he clasped the beauteous girl in his arms.

‘Blessed be the hour which conducted me a prisoner to the walls of Sassenage: blessed be the day on which I first encountered thee in thy father’s dwelling; – blessed be the fate which, by a chain of circumstances, has led me unto this moment of ineffable happiness !’

‘Alas ! our joys will be of short duration,’ said Philippina mournfully. ‘This night my father gives a grand entertainment to Count Alberti de Morestel and other nobles; and to-morrow – to-morrow, unfortunate prince ! will all our hopes be destroyed: for he has promised the count that I shall become his bride in the chapel of the castle !’

‘The union shall not take place !’ ejaculated Djem, in an impassioned manner: ‘I repeat—I swear by Allah and his Prophet that thou shalt not be thus sacrificed.’

‘Alas ! how wilt thou defeat the plans of my father ?’ demanded Philippina mournfully; ‘and could’st thou imagine that our own wild hopes – our fond dreams – our delusive, though brilliant visions, could ever be realised ? Our creeds – our religious tenets are insuperable barriers to our

union; – for even were my father to be moved by our prayers and entreaties – even were he to consent to our bridal – much as I love thee, I would not accompany thee to the religious house of *thy* persuasion; and thou would'st not sacrifice for *me* thy God !'

'Yes – Philippina,' uttered Djem, pressing her hand with rapture, – 'everything I would renounce for thee ! All my hopes of conquering the Ottoman throne, – all my veneration for ancient prejudices and ancient customs, – all my attachments to the creed which my father deemed sacred, – name, religion, diadem, and country – all, all will I renounce – all abandon, Philippian, for thee !'

'Then I am thine for ever, beloved Djem', answered the charming daughter of the castellan; and she sank into his arms.

He covered her cheeks, her forehead, and her lips with kisses ! and there – in the sight of heaven – they plighted their mutual vow, declaring that they would sooner die than prove unfaithful the one to the other.

That evening the spacious banqueting room of Sassenage Castle was crowded with guests. The castellan was seated at the head of his hospitable board, which groaned beneath the luxurious viands and the generous wines spread upon it; – at his right hand was the Ottoman Prince: on his left was Count Alberti de Morestel: and next to him was the beautiful Philippina. Her countenance was pale, and she listened abstractedly to the compliments which Alberti paid her, and to the protestations of affection which he breathed into her ears.

Alberti saw that his addresses inflicted pain upon her, – his quick eye satisfied him that her heart beat not for him: – and he immediately conceived that some rival possessed her affections. Nor was he long in detecting the truth. With the eagle glance of jealousy and wounded pride, he observed the occasional looks, which, rapid and almost imperceptible as they were, the lovers exchanged across the ample board. The count immediately recognized in Djem a successful competitor for the smiles of Philippina; and his proud and haughty disposition thirsted for revenge. He accordingly discontinued his attentions to the castellan's daughter, and addressed himself to the prince.

'How fares the illustrious descendant of Osman in a land which, with all its attractions, doubtless does not equal the one his highness has left ?' demanded Alberti, concealing his rage and spite beneath a well-assumed appearance of courtesy and urbanity.

'For a prisoner, I have no reason to complain, methinks,' answered Djem.

'And yet, my lord,' continued Alberti, 'the time must hang heavily upon your hands. Rumour declares your highness to be proficient in music and drawing: but these arts will not cheer the spirits at all hours. The chase, with which your highness is familiar, is debarred you; and you are

separated from the bevy of lovely Odalisks, whose charms constitute the great portion of Mussulman felicity.’

‘My lord,’ answered Djem blushing deeply, ‘I can assure you that my time hangs not heavily here; nor do I for one moment wish to relapse into those customs of my own native country, from which I have bene compelled to alienate myself.’

‘And yet,’ continued Alberti, coolly sipping his wine, and lounging back in the ample chair in which he sate, – ‘the fair women – those terrestrial houris – who have been wont to live upon your highness’s smiles, now pine for him who is far away.’

‘No, my lord,’ said Djem, with increasing agitation and embarrassment; ‘there are none who have cause to regret my absence, unless, indeed, it may be my well-beloved sister.’

‘And yet report speaks otherwise, my lord,’ continued Alberti. ‘The news now current all over Europe relate especially to the last act of treachery in reference to the affairs of your highness, of which the Grand Master D’Aubusson has been guilty. It appears that D’Aubusson, not content with the pension which the Sultan Bajazet regularly pays him, for the safe custody of your highness, has contrived to extort twenty thousand ducats from your highness’s illustrious mother and beautiful wife, who are now residing at the court of the Mameluke Sultan.’

‘His beautiful wife !’ repeated Philippina, mechanically; and a deadly paleness overspread her countenance.

Djem perceived the effects of the count’s words upon the castellan’s daughter; and his indignation was suddenly aroused to a pitch beyond endurance.

‘Dog of a Christian,’ he exclaimed, his whole countenance becoming livid and distorted with rage: ‘prate not upon mine affairs; defile not the name of a great prince with thy foul slander !’

‘Dastard, infidel, what means this insult ?’ demanded Alberti, starting from his seat, and hastening round to that part of the table when Prince Djem was seated.

‘Avaunt, eater of swine – unclean feeder !’ returned the prince, also rising from his seat: ‘an Osmanli is degraded by the society !’

Alberti raised his hand, clenched his fist, and struck the prince a violent blow on the cheek, exclaiming, ‘We well know that thou didst fly before thy brother in Asia Minor; see whether the buffet of a Christian will inspire thee with courage ?’

The Ottoman prince received the blow, and for a moment appeared uncertain how to act. A dead pause ensued – and silence prevailed throughout the spacious hall. That pause and that silence were, however, of a moment’s duration only. Djem suddenly appeared to receive some

inspiration which prompted him how to act; his cheek still tingled with the blow of the Christian's hand; – quick as the hound darts from the leash that is loosened, the scimitar of the Moslem left its scabbard, – the blade whistled like a feathered arrow through the air, – and the head of Count Alberti de Morestel rolled upon the floor.

In a moment the entire banqueting-hall was a scene of uproar. Indeed, it is impossible to describe the confusion which followed. The lady Philippina Helena fainted, and was borne from the room by the female attendants who were attracted thither by the disturbance.

The guests surrounded Djem, upon whose person they would have wreaked summary vengeance, had not the castellan interfered and implored the Christian chieftains to spare the Mussulman prisoner.

‘Peace, my friends – peace !’ ejaculated the castellan; ‘wreak not your anger upon the infidel – he is entrusted to my care, and I must answer for his safety with my honour – with my life ! This is indeed a dread crime which he has perpetrated; – but he is not a native of our clime – he knows not our laws !’

‘But he shall be made answerable to them, if there be justice in all Dauphiny !’ exclaimed one of the foremost of the guests, brandishing his drawn sword in a menacing manner.

‘Of a surety I shall surrender him into the hands of justice,’ said the castellan: ‘unless, indeed, the Vehmic^[1] take notice of the murder, which is not improbable, as its perpetrator is an imperial prince. I will in the meantime place him in watch and ward; and shall communicate the transaction to the proper authorities before noon.’

‘Tis well,’ said the assembled guests, one and all: ‘with this assurance we will remain contented.’

The guests took their leave; and Djem was conducted to his own apartment, at the doors of which sentinels were posted. His weapons, which he had been hitherto allowed to retain, were taken away from him, and he found himself a prisoner in the literal sense of the word.

He now began seriously to reflect upon his position: and he blamed the rashness of his conduct, which was calculated to separate him from the object of his attachment. He moreover recollected that he was answerable to the laws of a Christian, and not of a Mussulman community – that in the former even princes were not allowed to exercise vengeance with their own hands upon those who injured them, – and that his personal safety was seriously compromised by his behaviour. He paced his room, with anxious heart and uneven steps; and the adventures of the past few months of his existence rolled like a torrent to his memory. He seemed as if he were a solitary sailor, upon a frail bark, floating upon the surface of the ocean, at the mercy of the winds and waves, without a companion to sooth his cares, but with a star burning brightly on the horizon,

cheering him in the midst of that trackless way, and still holding out a promise – albeit a distant and uncertain one – of a neighbouring harbour of rest. Need it be said that this star, which shone upon the gloom of the young prince's thoughts, was the beautiful Philippina? – need we inform our readers that her image constantly filled his imagination, and alone reconciled him with existence?

Presently he remembered, and pondered seriously upon the origin of his dispute with Alberti de Morestel. He had deceived Philippina in respect to his real position; he had denied the existence of the wife who tenderly loved him, and who had disposed of her jewels and rich ornaments to procure a sum which she supposed to be calculated to forward his views or contribute to his comforts; – the existence of this affectionate wife he had denied, and Alberti had betrayed him. He knew not, – but he trembled when he reflected upon what might be the opinion Philippina had formed of his conduct; and his uncertainty on this head added to his sorrows.

The clock on the Castle of Sassenage had proclaimed the hour of midnight; and the prince was still pacing his solitary chamber. The footsteps of the mail-clad sentinel in the stone passage outside the door fell with monotonous regularity upon his ears, and the more the night advanced, the more gloomy became the meditations of the forlorn but illustrious prisoner. It was therefore with a feeling of superstitious alarm that he beheld a panel of the wainscot suddenly slide back from its setting, while at the same moment a tall female form, carrying a lamp in one hand and a large bundle in the other, appeared in the narrow passage thus strangely and mysteriously revealed. Djem was a brave man: and his fears were only momentary. He recovered his self-possession, and immediately recognized the pale but beautiful countenance of Philippina, the castellan's daughter.

He rushed forward to embrace her: but she shook her head mournfully, and advanced slowly into the apartment.

'Your highness is surprised to see me at this hour, creeping from an avenue unknown to you,' said Philippina, with a sickly smile.

'I am not surprised to see Philippina at a time when he who loves her so much needs her company and her sympathy,' answered Djem.

'My lord,' said the maiden firmly, 'mention not the name of love. I have been foolish – I have given way to the delusions of a delicious vision: but it is now past, and my eyes are opened to the dangers – the follies – the improprieties of the path which I was pursuing. And yet, God knows the innocence of my heart – the purity of my intention; – and your highness shall now judge of the disinterestedness of my motives!'

'Philippina, thou wilt drive me mad!' cried the Ottoman prince. 'What – canst thou renounce my love – sever my vows –'

‘My lord, thou canst not plight thy vows with sincerity, nor can I listen to them with honour,’ interrupted Philippina. ‘Thou hast deceived me, Djem – deceived one who put all confidence in thee ! But I will not reproach thee – I came not hither for that purpose.’

‘By Allah ! I would rather that you would’st reproach – contemn – revile me, Philippina,’ ejaculated the Mussulman, ‘than address me in a language which leaves no hope behind.’

‘My lord,’ exclaimed the Christian maiden, with a dignity which overawed the prince, and compelled him to admire, in spite of himself, the magnanimous behaviour of her whom he so tenderly loved: ‘I beseech – I command you to make no further allusion to the past. My determination is taken; and no power on earth will change it. But listen to me with attention, while I explain the purpose of my present visit. Thou hast this night perpetrated a deed for which thy life will pay the penalty. Nay – do not lay your hand upon your belt – your sword is no longer there, and the absence of your weapon is the symbol of your defenceless state. The Knights of Rhodes are in league with thy brother, and detain thee a prisoner in pursuance of a treaty concluded with the Sultan. A pretext for thy death will gladly be laid hold of by those who are thus combined against thee. I have therefore come to save thee. The confidence of my father – which the present emergency alone could induce me to betray – has enabled me to settle a plan for thy escape. At the distance of half a league from the castle, on the high road to Morestel, is a small cottage inhabited by my foster-brother and his parents. A couple of steeds, already saddled, are now awaiting there the moment for departure. My foster-brother will accompany thee ! – hie thou to the dominions of the Pope; – his holiness, as thou knowest, is well disposed towards thee, and will gladly proclaim thy title in competition with that of thy brother, against whom he has serious causes of complaint; – and at the Vatican will thou find an asylum and honourable treatment. Make thy preparations, and hasten – time presses !’

‘And thou, Philippina – what will become of thee, exposed to the rage of thy father, when he shall have discovered the escape ?’ demanded Djem.

‘I shall throw myself upon my knees before him to-morrow morning, and trust to his affection for forgiveness,’ calmly replied the maiden.

‘But the guards – the sentinels – how shall we pass them unmolested ?’

‘My father was heated with wine, and he sleeps soundly,’ answered Philippina. ‘I stole into his chamber and possessed myself of his signet-ring, which no inmate of these walls will disobey. But your Highness must use dispatch: – a long interval must be placed between thee and Sassenage ere to-morrow’s sun shall have risen upon the forest of Morestel.’

‘No, I will not separate from thee, Philippina – I will dare death – everything, sooner than expose thee to thy father’s rage,’ cried Djem enthusiastically.

‘And that course will only add to my present sorrow,’ said Philippina in a plaintive tone of voice.

‘Ah ! thou art grieved to part with me !’ ejaculated the prince; and he clasped the maiden in his arms.

She tore herself away from his embrace; but her cheeks were suffused with blushes, her eyes downcast, and her lips trembling.

‘Philippina,’ continued Djem, after a moment’s pause, during which an idea flashed across his mind; ‘I will not attempt to deceive thee longer – I will not insult thee by endeavouring to persist in a falsity or sustain a delusion. Yes – I am married; and I know that this circumstance is a barrier in thine eyes to our union. But thou wilt at least satisfy me with a hope – however distant – that, if the bond which attaches me to another should be broken by death – I may still –’

‘Yes, you may entertain that hope,’ said Philippina, ‘but alas ! –’

‘Thou hast given me the hope – I shall live for that alone !’ cried Djem joyfully. ‘And now, thou shalt be my guiding genius – I am prepared to follow thy directions.’

The prince hastily packed up a few necessaries; and Philippina, having opened the bundle which she carried in her hand, displayed a complete suit of female attire. She then withdrew into the dark passage, while Djem disguised himself in this apparel. In a few minutes these preliminary accomplishments were accomplished; and the maiden conducted him through several narrow passages and low, arched corridors, which at length brought them upon the very terrace where their vows had been plighted in the morning. They descended a flight of steps leading to the court-yard of the castle; and, as they had taken this secret path, the first sentinel whom they encountered was not aware from which part of the fortress they had come. At all events, the soldier on duty did not for one moment suspect that the Ottoman prince was before them, in the disguise of a female, as they well knew that sentinels were posted at the door of his apartment and in the chambers communicating therewith. The secret corridors were known only to the castellan and his daughter; and the mystery of their existence was as hereditary in the family as the ancestral estate itself.

The prince and his fair companion passed to the outer gate of the fortress; and then Philippina declared that they must separate.

‘And thou wilt not accompany me, dear lady ?’ demanded Djem, in a plaintive tone.

‘Insult not the Christian maiden with such an offer !’ exclaimed Philippina.

‘And will the Christian maiden remember her promise – that if the wife of Djem should die within a certain period –’

‘Name no limited period,’ interrupted Philippina firmly and in a dignified manner. ‘I am not a child, my lord, and will not conceal my feelings or my intentions at this moment of separation. I have confessed my attachment towards you; and I will now, with equal candour, declare before the God who hears my vow, and who will avenge you if I break it – that I will never espouse any other than him I love.’

‘Thanks – a thousand thanks, beloved Philippina,’ said Djem. ‘Behold, upon the middle finger of each hand I possess a ring: those two rings are exactly similar and are engraved with my cypher. Take thou one, Philippina, and wear it for my sake: and when the happy moment shall have arrived when we may be united, no more to part, a messenger from me will seek thy presence, and present thee with the companion ring to the one I now give thee; and that shall be a sign that thou may’st follow him whithersoever he may lead thee !’

Philippina took the ring; and Djem embraced her tenderly. Let not the prudish maiden or the stern moralist marvel at this conduct on the part of our heroine; – for she loved – and she was but an animate atom of frail humanity after all; – and that self-same prudish maiden or too particular a stern moralist would have done the same had the one been the lovely Philippina and the other the enraptured Djem.

The lovers bade each other adieu; and Djem proceeded to the forest of Morestel, by way of Monthuel. He found the cottage of the foster-brother of his beloved Philippina, and the necessary arrangements for his flight were all made in the manner she had described. The prince changed his garb at the cottage, and now appeared in the attire of one of the superior order of the local peasantry.

It is not however our purpose to dwell at any great length upon this portion of our narrative. The prince was discovered in the neighbourhood of the town of Morestel, and was conveyed to the castle of the lord of Bocalini – a fortress situated on the sea shore.

The unfortunate Djem, whose recapture had taken place in consequence of the strict watch which the Knights of Rhodes kept by means of their agents, not only upon him, but also on those to whose custody he was entrusted, he languished in his new place of incarceration for a period of two years.

About this time the King of France, the King of Hungary, the Pope and the King of Naples all entered into negotiations with D’Aubusson, the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, to procure the release of Djem – their object being to place him at the head of an expedition which Christendom meditated against the Ottoman crescent. But D’Aubusson, whose intrigues had effectively quashed any judicial inquiry into the assassination of the Count de Morestel, and whose aim was to retain the Moslem prince in his power, in consequence of the handsome revenue paid by the Sultan Bajazet for that purpose, for a long time defeated the projects of the leading monarchs of Christendom; and Djem still continued to languish in captivity.

In the year 1488 Djem was transferred to the custody of the Pope, the pontiff having granted several valuable privileges and a heavy indemnity to the Knight of Rhodes, in order to induce them to resign their distinguished prisoner. D'Aubusson himself received the honour of the cardinal's hat – a dignity certainly eminent, but little compatible with the character of a warrior, and especially inconsistent with that of a sovereign. Bajazet despatched an ambassador to the Pope, to implore him to retain Djem in custody, and to make arrangements with respect to the sum to be paid for the expenses of the prince; and when these matters were settled to the satisfaction of the Ottoman envoy, he presented the pope, in the name of the Sultan, with several valuable relics – amongst which were the lance that had pierced the side of Jesus upon the cross, and the sponge in which the vinegar and gall were given him to drink. ^[2]

During the lifetime of Pope Innocent VIII Djem was treated with all the consideration due to his rank, talents, and his misfortunes. At the death of this pontiff, the infamous Alexander Borgia mounted the papal throne; and Djem was then confined in the castle of Saint Angelo. But in the year 1494, King Charles VIII of France penetrated into Italy, at the head of the conquering chivalry of Gaul; and Alexander Borgia was compelled to sue for peace. Charles granted him his prayer, but on condition that the Ottoman prince should be given up to the power of France. The generous soul of the French monarch had been moved by his piteous tale, the tears and the prayers of the unhappy sufferer; and he resolved to effect his emancipation from the hands of the base and mercenary despots. Charles proceeded to Naples with his victorious army, and left Djem behind him at Rome, protected by a detachment of French men-at-arms, and under a solemn pledge not to attempt to escape.

Alexander Borgia, whose avarice was defeated by the loss of the annual pension paid by the Sultan Bajazet, was still determined to turn the continued presence of the unhappy prince in his capital to some account; and while the French monarch was occupied in subduing the south of Italy, he despatched an envoy to Constantinople to negotiate terms for the death of Djem. Bajazet hastened to conclude a bargain so advantageous to himself; and the Roman envoy returned to his master without a moment's delay, having only remained four-and-twenty hours in the Ottoman capital.

At the same moment that this messenger retracted his steps to Rome, a private envoy from the Sultan of Egypt reached the same destination, with despatches for Djem. The contents of those documents were most important to his interests, and most flattering to his hopes. They announced the death of his wife – the only link between him and Egypt – the only barrier between him and Philippina. If he lost, on the one hand, a means of communication with a friendly portion of the Mussulman world, he gained, on the other, the key to an avenue of happiness for which his heart had long panted. Ten years had elapsed since he left Sassenage – ten years of captivity since he had seen his beloved Philippina – ten years of doubt and uncertainty, fond anticipation, withering hope, and acute suspense. All that he had heard of the castellan's daughter, during that tedious interval, was comprised in two words – namely that she

was alive and unwedded ! Ah ! how fondly did he cling to the idea that she remained faithful to the vows she had plighted to him.

The moment he received the despatches from the Sultan of Egypt, he entrusted them together with his signet ring, to a faithful dependent named Hussein, and despatched him forthwith to the Dauphiny. The instructions of the envoy were to obtain a private interview with the daughter of the Lord of Sassenage, present her with the testimonials of the prince's permanent affection towards her, and claim the fulfilment of the promise she had made him upon the night of his departure from her father's castle.

Hussein arrived without accident at the fortress of Sassenage. A few months previously the old castellan had breathed his last; and Philippina Helena was now pining in the lordly abode which was now her own, when she received the pledge of fidelity sent by him whose image, ever since his departure, had never left her memory. Though long years had passed away since the first moment when the germs of love for him were planted in her heart, that affection had known no change – save to become more firmly rooted in her soul with the lapse of time. She was now in the full bloom of womanly beauty – years having matured, but not impaired her transcendent personal loveliness. Her cheek, it is true, was pale: but her eyes were still of a deep violet blue – her hair was still luxuriant – her mouth could wear a sweet smile – and her figure had only exchanged the airy lightness of the sylph for the voluptuous proportions of the Hebe. Djem had first known her as a beautiful girl – she was now a splendid woman.

Not for one moment did she hesitate what plan to adopt. Distant as the hope of such an event might have appeared to the calm observer of human affairs, to her the arrival of this happy moment had always seemed certain. She had dwelt upon this hope in hours when there was none other to sustain her; it had fortified her on the bitter day of anguish when the spirit of her only surviving parent took wing – it had given sunshine to her days, and been a companion to her in the vigils of the night. Her preparations were now speedily completed: a trusty and faithful dependent was left in charge of Sassenage; – and, attended by only one female domestic, the beautiful Christian lady accompanied the emissary of the Ottoman exile to the walls of the Eternal City.

At length Philippina reached the mansion where the prince had resided since the treaty which had placed him under the protection of the French. Hussein went before to announce her presence, while she waited in a saloon upon the ground floor, magnificently furnished. In a few moments Hussein returned, with an intimation that the prince was somewhat indisposed, that the Pope had just left him, and that he had sunk into a deep slumber, from which his medical attendant was unwilling to arouse him.

‘The prince is ill !’ exclaimed Philippina, starting from her seat: ‘then am I arrived in time to perform my duty towards him who has retained his faith to me. Conduct me to his chamber – none shall minister to him save myself.’

Hussein ventured not a remonstrance, but instantly led the beautiful visitor into the apartment where Djem was reposing upon a sofa, in the Oriental fashion. The blinds were closed; but a soft breeze penetrated through them, wafting upon its wing the odours of the sweet flowers in the garden beneath.

Philippina seated herself upon the sofa, by Djem's head, and anxiously gazed upon his countenance for some minutes.

'Alas ! how changed !' she murmured to herself, while scalding tears flowed rapidly down her cheeks: 'anguish, imprisonment, and a deep sense of wrong have done the work of a quarter of a century upon his countenance. But to me it is still lovely – still all that I can prize – and that I shall ever admire in this world !'

While she was yet musing thus, Djem opened his eyes. A glow of pleasure instantaneously spread itself over his features, giving lustre to his eyes and colour to his cheeks. In another moment the lovers, thus happily united, were locked in each other's arms; and Philippina did not now withdraw her lips from the ardent kisses which her admirer imprinted on them.

'At last we meet again, beloved one !' said Djem, gazing fondly upon the lovely creature, who had sunk upon her knees by the side of the sofa. 'Ah ! from the first moment that I exacted from thee the promise which has led to this day's joy, have I ever clung to the idea that the hope which prompted it would be fulfilled !'

'And my bosom has constantly cherished the same thought,' whispered Philippina. 'But you are ill, Djem – you have been very ill ! Oh, you have doubtless suffered much !'

'I have suffered – yes – Allah knows how I have suffered !' returned the prince. 'But I shall soon be well now, Philippina – since thou art restored to me ! Thy presence was as necessary as light and liberty to the captive in the dungeon. Already do I feel my spirits rising – a joy to which I have long been a stranger infuses its elixir through my veins.'

'And I will minister unto thee – anticipate all thy wants – and tend thee until health restores the bloom to thy cheeks,' said Philippina, in that endearing tone which, when coming from the lips of woman, can sooth the lacerated spirit, and pour balm into the wounds where the iron of affliction hath eaten into the soul.

'With so fine a nurse my recovery cannot be far distant,' cried Djem: then in a playful voice he added, 'And now, lovely fairy, let thy services commence at once. This sudden joy may produce a reaction which I could not support ! Let me sustain the feeling by an artificial stimulant. Yonder stands a flask of Chian wine – sent ere now from the cellars of the Pope himself: be thou my handmaid, and pour me forth a goblet of the generous liquid.'

Philippina flew to execute the wish of her beloved Djem. She filled a golden goblet and presented it to the prince, who kissed her hand as he received the chalice from her. Then, ere the smile which accompanied the act had fled from his countenance, he raised the goblet to his lips, and drank off the contents.

The cup fell from his hand – a low moan escaped him – he reeled back upon the sofa – and his eyes became motionless and fixed. His lips remained apart – but the breath of life no longer issued through their portals, nor played in his distended nostrils.

Philippina was alarmed at the sudden change in his appearance – she felt his hand – she chafed his temples – she threw water on his brow – she felt his heart – she pressed her lips to his: but at length she was compelled to admit even to herself, that no hope remained for her in his life – that the spirit of Djem had fled for ever ! The same subtle poison with which Alexander VI was accustomed to rid himself of those cardinals who were obnoxious to him, and by means of which he subsequently put an end to his own existence, – that same poison had been used to terminate the life of the prince, at the very moment when that life seemed about to be characterised by an epoch of felicity and love !

Several hours elapsed ere any of the attendants of the prince entered the apartment where he and Philippina had once again been united. At length Hussein became alarmed at the protracted silence which was maintained in that chamber, especially as the hours for refreshment had passed unheeded by its inmates. He proceeded thither – but how sad a spectacle met the eyes of the faithful dependent, when he entered the saloon where in the morning he had left two fond lovers ! The corpse of Djem lay stretched upon the sofa, his brow bedecked with flowers, which the unhappy lady had taken for that mournful purpose from the vases in the balcony; and by his side – with her face turned towards his own, so that her last dying gaze might be fixed upon the countenance of him she adored – lay the faithful Philippina, cold and motionless, but still lovely and serene ! Near her was the golden goblet; and the flask upon the table was found to be empty !

^[1] Regional court

^[2] So say the histories of the Popedom as well as those of the Ottoman Empire.