

‘The Janizary, or The Massacre of the Christians’

On the eastern frontier of Bavaria, towards the close of the fourteenth century, dwelt an old man of the name of Schildberger, upon the small farm which himself and his two sons cultivated, and where they passed their time in tranquility and happiness. The mother of the young men had died when they were in their infancy; but their father had reared them with even unusual parental care, and regarded them as the dearest ties which bound him to existence, as well as the most inestimable treasures that could render that existence happy.

Karl, the elder, was a noble-looking youth, with fine dark eyes, a Grecian cast of countenance, and a tall muscular frame, which was, however, modelled in the most symmetrical proportions. He was always the conqueror in the sylvan sports of the district in which he dwelt – ever the first to climb the loftiest tree of the forest, and the most skilful of all the neighbouring peasants in transfixing the winged tenants of the woods with his sharp-pointed arrow.

Sisman, the younger son, was of a more tranquil and retiring disposition, and was equally opposite to his brother in personal appearance. His long flaxen hair floated over his shoulders; his throat, which was invariably left exposed, was as fair and beautiful as that of a woman; his mild blue eyes denoted the amiability of his temper, and his slender form, elastic and graceful, seemed unfitted for the rude labours of the field or the forest.

Notwithstanding this difference in character and appearance between the two brothers – and although their tastes were entirely discrepant, the younger devoting all his leisure time to books and studious pursuits – the most perfect harmony existed between them, and old Schildberger enjoyed the most complete domestic bliss with his two much-loved sons. In the village to which Schildberger's farm was adjacent dwelt an old man, who was also a widower, and who possessed a beautiful daughter of the name of Marietta. The father of this charming girl had served under the kings of Hungary in their wars against the

Turks, and had acquired a sufficiency of booty to enable him to retire to his native village at an advanced period of life, purchase a small farm, and congratulate himself upon being enabled to pass the remainder of his days in peace and tranquility.

Marietta was her father's pride and hope, and was the exact image of the much-loved partner whom he had lost. At the age of twenty she was still unmarried; but the village gossip assigned her, in anticipation, to one of the brothers Schildberger – but to whom, public rumour did not decide. Neither had made any direct proposal – at least, so far as that same gossip could determine; and both were equally frequent in their visits to Herman's cottage – both equally assiduous in their attentions to Marietta.

On her part she seemed by her behaviour and manners to have formed no preference: her dark blue eyes were animated with joy when Karl bore off the prize at the village sport, and she melted into tears when Sisman sang one of those affecting ballads of the country which suited his melodious voice so well, or listened with interest and pride when he maintained an argument upon some difficult subject with the priest or the schoolmaster of the little village. But that marital decision, to which neither the young maiden herself nor the two brothers appeared inclined to arrive, was one day settled by the fathers.

‘Schildberger,’ said Herman, on a fine summer evening, when the young folks were diverting themselves in the rustic dance – an amusement, by the way, in which Sisman seldom joined, – ‘we have known each other for many years—we are equally matched in the possession of this world’s wealth and we shall soon be called away from the scenes where my daughter and your sons are now disport. Shall we not perpetuate this friendship in our families ? Shall we not cement it by nearer and dearer ties ?’

‘I understand you,’ answered Schildberger, ‘Karl loves moments of his heart – and he is only a year older than your daughter. They will be well matched.’ ‘Agreed,’ said Herman; ‘and for my part I do not care how soon the nuptials take place. This day month let them be made happy.’ The agreement was ratified with an extra tankard of foaming beer; and that same night Herman communicated his decision to Marietta, who blushed deeply, smiled almost involuntarily, and offered no objection.

On his part, Schildberger informed Karl of the arrangement entered into and the young man received the tidings with rapture. But Sisman – poor Sisman – also loved Marietta with the most deeply seated, impassioned tenderness, although he had never suspected the real nature of his feelings with regard to her until the truth flashed upon him when he overheard his sire make the before-mentioned announcement to Karl. The younger brother said not a word – betrayed not his secret by a single apparent emotion; he buried his grief – his bitter, bitter disappointment in his own heart, and therefore felt the sting the more acutely.

The very next morning, by a strange coincidence, a Bavarian nobleman, who dwelt in the neighbourhood, stopped at the door of Schildberger’s cottage, to request wherewith to quench his thirst. Sisman hastened to supply the best flagon of beer which the house could produce; and John Greif, the noble alluded to, was immediately struck by the appearance of the youth, who was at that time only eighteen years of age, Karl being three years his senior.

The father of the two youths issued from his cottage at the moment, to solicit the nobleman to honour his humble dwelling by partaking of some refreshment within its walls; and Greif, after having courteously declined the hospitable offer, spoke to the old man of Sisman. The father, with the natural garrulity of a parent upon such a subject, immediately expatiated upon the admirable qualifications of his younger son; so the baron proposed to take him into his service.

Sisman accepted the offer with thanks, and without giving his father time to decide for him. The young man was anxious to remove, at least for a time, from the vicinity of Marietta, and to avoid as much as possible all chance of betraying his own passion to his own brother: – his motives were excellent, although his father did not comprehend them; and, after many vain endeavours on the part of the old man to dissuade his son from leaving the paternal roof, the representations of the noble and the entreaty of Sisman prevailed.

The baron promised the old man that his son should visit him from time to time; and he moreover declared that he would take upon himself the care of providing for him in after life. Such flattering prospects as these had their influence with a father naturally anxious to promote his children's welfare; and the same motives succeeded in reconciling Karl to a separation from his brother.

Sisman became a species of page or valet to the baron, by whose family and household he was treated with the utmost kindness and consideration. He had plenty of leisure time upon his hands, and he diverted himself with the few manuscripts which existed in his master's library – if a huge oaken chamber, with two shelves in it, deserve the name. From these books, Schildberger the younger obtained an insight into the Ottoman character; and he longed to accompany his master, or some other chieftain, upon an expedition against the fierce Moslems. This feeling on his part was the result of curiosity, and not of military enthusiasm; and it was gratified sooner than he had anticipated, or perhaps even desired.

Scarcely had he been three weeks in the service of John Greif, when that nobleman published a proclamation throughout his fief, calling upon those who owed him feudal service to hasten and range themselves beneath his banner, as he intended to join, without delay, the main body of Bavarian troops, which was destined to join the Christian league against the encroachments of the Ottomans. Sisman at once signified his intention of accompanying his master, in the hope that his enlistment in the baron's forces would exempt his brother Karl from service.

Karl, as the farmer's eldest son, was the one who, according to the laws of feudal tenure in those times, should have braced on the iron panoply of war and followed his lord to the field; but Karl was engaged to wed the beautiful Marietta, who loved him sincerely – and Sisman had no such tender tie to bind him to one particular spot, or render him careful of his life. John Greif consented to exempt the elder brother from service, on condition that Sisman should accompany the expedition in his stead.

The poor old father, who was heart-broken at the idea of separating from his boy under such painful circumstances, nevertheless found himself compelled to agree to this arrangement; and Sisman departed, with the blessings of his sire, the heartfelt gratitude of Karl, and the fervent wishes of Marietta for his success to cheer him in his wanderings afar from home.

The Elector Palatine and the Count de Mumpelgarde, Castellan of Nuremberg, commanded the Bavarian auxiliaries, of which corps the followers of John Greif formed a considerable section. In the early part of spring, in the year 1396, the chiefs of the Christian army held a grand consultation at Vienna, and the plan of proceeding was laid down.

About the same time that John Greif crossed the Bavarian frontiers on his way into Hungary, with the other auxiliaries of the same Palatinate, Karl and Marietta were united by the village pastor. A few weeks after that event, and while Karl was happy in the arms of his beloved bride, the allied army commenced its march against Bajazet-Ilderim, the third descendant of Osman.

The Hungarian army marked its passage through Servia by the most horrible pillage and devastation. The French forces passed by way of Transylvania and Wallachia; and the other auxiliaries took different routes, the general point of meeting being beneath the walls of Nicopolis, a city upon the Danube belonging to the Ottomans.

Sigismund, King of Hungary, passed through Servia, and commenced the passage of the Balkan. The Balkan is an assemblage of chains of mountains, which almost entirely protect Bulgaria on one side, that province being only accessible, throughout its whole length, from the seven defiles of the Balkan, with which the Danube runs parallel. Each defile is closed on the northern side, upon the banks of that river, by a stronghold well-fortified.

The fifth defile, which is called Demurkapou by the Ottomans, leads by way of Timova to Nikobi, and thence to Sistov. It was by this defile that Sigismund, with his Hungarian warriors, passed the chains of the Balkan. He captured Widdin, Orsova, and Roco, and thence proceeded to the vicinity of Nicopolis, where he was joined by the other divisions of the confederate Christian army.

The allied forces now amounted to sixty thousand men. The French auxiliaries, consisting of about seven thousand men, were commanded by the valiant Count de Nevers, the son of the Duke of Burgundy, and only twenty-two years of age. Under his orders were James of Bourbon, the Count de la Marche, and Henry and Philip de Bar. Philip d'Artois, the Count d'Eu, the Admiral John of Vienna, and the Marshal Bourcicault were amongst the chieftains of the Christian army. Myrtesa, Hospodar of Wallachia, commanded his own troops in person. It was a fine army, and every heart beat high, with the hope of crushing the power of the Ottomans forever.

The siege of Nicopolis commenced. Toghanbeg, who commanded the garrison, felt so convinced that the Sultan Bajazet-Ilderim would repair to his succour that he valiantly sustained the attacks of the Christian forces. The chieftains of the allied army gave themselves up to all sorts of debaucheries and pleasures, instead of prosecuting the siege with vigour; and thus the Mussulman commandant was enabled to gain time. The Christians spoke of Bajazet with the

utmost contempt, declaring that he would never dare to leave his dominions in Asia Minor, and Brusa, his capital, to meet the invaders.

So great was the security into which the allied forces had lulled themselves by their arrogance and vain glory that when scouts gave notice that the whole Ottoman army, under the command of the Sultan in person, was only seven or eight miles distant, the Marshal Bourcicault threatened to punish them for having propagated false reports.

‘Our army is so numerous,’ said the arrogant Christian chiefs, ‘that if the sky should fall, it would remain supported, like a canopy, upon the points of our lances.’

‘Within a very short time,’ exclaimed Bajazet, on his side, ‘I will convert the principal altar piece of St. Peter’s at Rome into a hay-rack for my horse.’

The warning voices of the scouts had been neglected; and already had the Ottoman light troops begun to form themselves upon the plain behind Nicopolis, when the warriors of Christendom called to arms. They now believed that the sultan had ventured to cross the Bosphorus; but they hoped to drag him in chains, ere sunset, to the pavilion of Sigismund, the generalissimo of the confederate army. The French knights abandoned the gaming tables to buckle on their armour; and the Count de Nevers demanded the post of honour for his cavalry during the combat. In vain did Sigismund, who was well-acquainted with the mode of Ottoman warfare, implore the count to restrain his impatience, and reserve his force to meet the Janizaries and the Sipahis, who were the flower of the Moslem army; — the Constable Philip d’Artois, and the Marshal Bourcicault, supported the count’s demand; and Sigismund was compelled to accede to the arrangement proposed.

The foolish pride of the French chivalry now degenerated into barbarity, for several stragglers, who had been made prisoners, were massacred by order of Bourcicault before the fight commenced. And then – after this sanguinary prelude, which was duly reported to the sultan, who swore he would take a deadly vengeance upon the Christians – the battle of Nicopolis began.

Nothing could exceed the fury with which the French chivalry attacked the advanced guard of the Moslem forces. The Christians carried everything before them; – the Arabs were dispersed or cut to pieces, and even the terrible Janizaries themselves were compelled to retreat. Ten thousand Turks already covered the field of battle; and cries of victory resounded throughout the ranks of the chivalry of Gaul. On – on rushed the French warriors, bearing down all who opposed their progress, and covering their path with the bodies of their slaughtered foes. They reached the bottom of a hill, on the slope of which the Sipahis were posted. Without waiting to breathe his horse, the Count de Nevers dashed on, followed by his dauntless warriors. The Sipahis were routed, and compelled to disperse in all directions. A warrior was now dispatched by the count to

the King of Hungary, to assure him that the victory was already won, and that in another hour the entire Ottoman army would be annihilated by the French forces alone.

The French knights pursued their victorious career: they thundered up the slope of the hill, they reached the summit – and they reined in their steeds by a sudden and simultaneous motion. Beneath them – like a forest of trees, were forty thousand lances – the reserve of the Ottoman army, under the command of the sultan himself. A panic seized upon the French troops, who found themselves thus suddenly arrested in their victorious career; and the Sipahis, who had now rallied, cut off all hope of retreat. To conquer or to die were now the alternatives between which the gallant French knights were placed; and they precipitated themselves with desperate fury upon Bajazet's reserve.

Of that valorous Christian band, only the Count de Nevers, with twenty-four of his companions-in-arms, survived; they were made prisoners, and passed to the rear of the Ottoman army. The moment the news of the total defeat of the French troops reached the main body of the Christian forces, the right and left wings took to flight precipitately. The Wallachian forces also fled; and the Styrians and Bavarians alone remained faithful to their cause. At the head of twelve thousand troops only, Sigismund advanced upon the Ottomans; but the crescent triumphed over the cross on this fatal day; Sigismund with difficulty escaped from the field of his defeat; the greater portion of the Bavarian and Styrian forces perished gloriously in the defence of their banners; and thus was the Christian army defeated by the votaries of the Prophet Mohammed.

Amongst the prisoners captured in this memorable combat were John Greif and Sisman Schildberger. Immediately after the battle, the Sultan Bajazet established his camp beneath the walls of Nicopolis. When he surveyed the field of strife, and beheld upwards of thirty thousand Mussulmans stretched lifeless upon the plains, his rage knew no bounds. He muttered threats of deadly vengeance; and on the following morning, he commanded the prisoners to be brought into his presence. Then commenced terrible massacre, the horrors of which no human pen nor tongue can narrate.

The Count de Nevers was compelled to be a spectator of the fearful sight, —John Greif was amongst the first of those whose heads rolled at the feet of the tyrant; but Sisman was spared, in consequence of a law which enjoined the Moslems to sacrifice no one under the age of twenty who was captured in warfare. The carnage lasted from the dawn of day to the evening; and then, when the blood of ten thousand Christians had somewhat appeased the vindictive thirst of the tyrant, the grandees of the Ottoman empire fell at his feet, and implored his mercy for the survivors. The appeal was granted; and the two thousand Christians, who still remained, were distributed as slaves amongst the Moslem chieftains.

The Count de Nevers and his noble companions were shortly afterwards ransomed and released. Schildberger was ordered to prepare for enrolment amongst the Janizaries; and, as a preparatory step, was sent to a college, or medrese, at Scutari, where he was instructed in the elementary

doctrines of the Mussulman creed, which he was under the necessity of professing, if not of absolutely embracing.

It was in the reign of Urkhan, the son of Osman and Malkhatoun, and second Sultan of the Ottomans, that the corps of Janizaries was established. The infernal policy of Kara-Khalil-Tachendereli, the brother-in-law of the Shiek Edebali, originated the institution of that terrible militia, which was composed entirely of the Christian prisoners taken in war, and who were forced to abjure their native faith.

It was argued by the inventor of this system that the Christian armies would show no mercy to those who renounced their country and their religion; and the certainty of being put to death, as deserters and renegades, in case of being made prisoners, would compel the soldiers thus organized to die with their scimitars in their hands, sooner than fall into the power of those who were once their fellow-countrymen and co-religionists. Thus their valour would be ensured by guarantees which they dared not forfeit, and their ranks were to be recruited by the new Christian prisoners who might be taken in battle or predatory incursion.

Thus were the most sacred obligations of humanity forfeited and annihilated to suit an inhuman policy; thus was the father compelled to wield the scimitar against the cross-handled sword of his son; sons were leagued against fathers – brethren against each other – and relative against relative. In this manner had the corps of Janizaries been instituted in the year 1328, sixty-eight years before the time when Sisman Schildberger was compelled to abjure his father's creed, and renounce his fatherland for ever. The young man entered upon his new lot with resignation; and, although his spirit was broken by his misfortunes, he nevertheless comported himself in a manner calculated to gain for him the approval of his officers.

Two years passed away, during which Sisman found no opportunity of acquainting his father, either by message or letter, of his miserable fate. At the expiration of that period, the corps of Janizaries to which Sisman belonged was ordered to join the forces of the Beglerbeg Timourtasch, one of the Sultan's generals, who meditated an irruption into Europe.

In the meantime, the dread tidings of the defeat of the allied army of the Christians, under Sigismund of Hungary, were bruited all over Europe, and Sisman's brother and father were amongst those who heard the fearful news. The rumour of the murder of the Baron Greif also reached their ears; and, although they could obtain no certain intelligence with respect to the fate of Sisman, they argued the worst. Karl had been blest with a son, on whom he conferred the name of the dear brother that was thus supposed to be no more, and his happiness would have been the society of his father and Marietta, had not the loss of Sisman thrown a damp upon his felicity.

The domestic tranquility of the family at the humble farm was now doomed to be disturbed by the brazen notes of war. The affrighted inhabitants, from the territories on the eastern frontiers of

Bavaria, came flying before the invading Moslems. Fifteen thousand Ottomans, under the command of the Beglerbeg Timourtasch, had invaded Christendom, and put everything to fire and sword in their way. The most horrible barbarities were committed – neither sex nor age was spared – and an immense booty fell into the hands of the barbarians.

The son and successor of John Greif issued a proclamation, enjoining all his vassals, and all those who held the interest of their country at heart, to assemble beneath his banner, and march against the invaders. A spirit of enthusiasm seized upon all the male inhabitants of the fief. Marietta's father Herman was no more, but the aged Schildberger grasped his weapon, obedient to the imperative necessity which compelled him to leave his peaceful fireside for the field of battle. Karl was amongst the foremost to obey his chieftain's call, and Marietta was left behind to pray for the success of those who had gone forth to combat for their country's freedom.

At the expiration of a few days' march, the Bavarians encountered the Ottomans, and compelled them to retreat to an adjacent height, where they entrenched themselves. Timourtasch was so enraged by this check, that he determined to avenge it on the following day; and he issued orders that no quarter was to be shown towards the Christians, on pain of death.

A second engagement took place; the Moslems were completely victorious, and the Bavarian troops were either slain or taken prisoners. The two Schildbergers, father and son, were captured by a party of Janizaries; and when, after the battle, lots were drawn, to decide into whose hands the various prisoners should fall, the old man and Karl were assigned to the tent of Hassan, the captain, or Baschi, of the company.

Timourtasch had issued orders that all those into whose hands Christian captives should thus fall should put them to death with their own hands at the hour of sunset. This mode of retaliation, and of allowing everyone throughout the army a chance of gratifying his own peculiar thirst for vengeance, was by no means uncommon in the early history of the Ottomans.

When Schildberger and Karl were ushered into the tent of the Baschi of the Janizaries who had captured them, to their unmingled joy and alarm they found themselves in the presence of the long lost Sisman. Karl threw himself into his brother's arms, and embraced him fondly; but the old man sat down in a corner of the tent, and wept bitterly, saying 'Sisman, my son – now bearing the name of Hassan – wearing a scimitar by his side, and a felt cap upon his brow – adorned with a golden chain round his neck, and a ring upon his finger. Alas ! Alas! that I should have lived to see this day.'

'Judge him not harshly, my dear father' cried Karl; 'perhaps he is not so guilty as you seem inclined to imagine.'

'Guilty !' ejaculated Sisman, folding his arms, and leaning against the pillar which supported his pavilion: 'Yes, brother, I am guilty – I am guilty – for I have foresworn my country and abjured

my God ! – I have become a Janizary, one of that terrible corps whose blows are irresistible, and whose ranks are never known to show mercy to the conquered !’

‘Enough’ cried the afflicted father: ‘blaspheme not – shock not mine ears with a narrative of your infamy – avaunt: thou art no longer my son !’

‘Hear me, father – for so I shall still call thee’, continued the young renegade, calmly but firmly, ‘hear me, and thou wilt find that all my misfortunes have originated in a noble sacrifice of feelings, consummated for the sake of my brother.’

‘For my sake !’ repeated Karl, surveying the Janizary with the deepest interest.

‘Yes ! – for your sake,’ rejoined Sisman. ‘Know that I loved Marietta as well, as sincerely, as fervently as thou – that she was my everlasting thought by day, and my dream by night – the morning star and the evening planet which appeared to govern my actions and my ideas, Our father selected you to be her husband, and all my fond visions were dispelled in a moment. But I loved thee, Karl, too – as I still love thee – as seldom a brother loves even a brother – and I anxiously sought the first opportunity to tear myself from a home where my jealousy, my envy, and my disappointment would have in time embittered thy felicity. Dost thou imagine that I left a peaceful and happy home – first to follow a stranger lord, and then to dare the perils of war, – dost thou suppose that I did this for mine own pleasure ? And, then, when captured by the Moslems – without a wish to return to my native country, and without a hope of enjoying happiness again in this life – was I not justified in acceding to the first proposal which my change of fortune presented to me, even though that change were the dread alternative of becoming a renegade and a Janizary ?’

‘My noble – my generous-hearted boy !’ exclaimed the aged father, rising from the corner of the tent, where he had been seated, and rushing forward to embrace his long-lost son, with all the transport of parental affection. A long pause ensued, during which the old man and his sons poured forth their mingled grief and joy in each other’s arms. At length Karl suddenly started back in horror from his brother’s embrace, exclaiming, ‘Sisman, this evening must we die by your hand, or you yourself will fall a victim to the anger of your despotic leader Timourtasch.’

‘The latter is my alternative,’ said Sisman, in a determined tone. ‘But there is still a chance of escape for us all. I am so far my own master, that no one can enter my tent without my permission, save with an order from the Beglerbeg himself. Here can you abide for some days, during which we are to remain encamped upon this spot. In the interval, I shall be enabled to ensure your safe departure from the power of the Ottomans, and thereby release myself from the danger which will hang over my head in consequence of violating the commands of the general.’

‘And thou – thou wilt return with us – thou wilt retrace thy steps to thy fatherland, the creed of which shall again become thine own,’ exclaimed the venerable father.

‘No !’ said Sisman, shaking his head mournfully. ‘I have now entered upon a career from which retreat is impossible; and I dare not think of relinquishing a path into which the force of circumstances has so strangely impelled me. No, my dear father, you and Karl will pray for me at a distance; and when my bones shall lie whitening upon some battlefield, unblest and neglected, your holy appeals to heaven will soothe the troubled spirit that will

haunt the place where my death-wound shall have been received.’

Having uttered these words, Sisman abruptly left the tent, a prey to the most acute anguish. He wandered about until it was dark, and then proceeded to the field where the battle had been fought in the morning. The plain was strewed with grisly corpses, upon the faces of which the pale beams of the moon shone with placid light, as if they were illuminating a happy scene. Sisman drew his scimitar, and severed the heads from two of the bodies that lay amidst a heap of slaughtered Christians. He concealed the heads about his person, in the ample folds of his vesture, and then retraced his steps to the encampment. When he reached his tent, he took two lances, fixed the heads upon their points, and then planted them at the entrance of the pavilion.

Early on the ensuing morning, an officer, appointed for the purpose, traversed the camp, bearing with him the list of those to whom prisoners had been assigned by lot; and perceiving two heads opposite the tent of Sisman, he passed on with the impression that he had executed the sanguinary order of Timourtasch.

Three or four days passed away, during which Karl and his father remained undiscovered in Sisman's tent; but no opportunity had presented itself of enabling the two prisoners to leave the encampment. Sisman grew uneasy, for the time was approaching when the Ottoman army was to resume its march; and then it would be impossible any longer to conceal them from the superior officers of the corps in which the Janizary served. But, as if fortune were determined to favour the safety of the two Christians, Timourtasch fell ill, and the break-up of the encampment was delayed. The indisposition of the Beglerbeg speedily assumed a serious aspect; and the nature of the malady baffled the skill of the surgeons. Timourtasch lay at the point of death; and, such was the savage nature of his disposition during his illness, that his medical attendants, finding they could do nothing to relieve him, and dreading the consequences of his passion, fled from the camp in dismay.

The occurrences of the encampment were duly reported by Sisman, from time to time, to his father and brother; and when he communicated this last incident, a gleam of joy animated the countenance of old Schildberger.

‘My son,’ said the venerable parent, ‘thou knowest that I am well skilled in the nature and uses of herbs, and their appliances, either externally as poultices, or internally in the shape of decoctions, to the various maladies of human nature. Haply if I were conducted into the presence of your commander, I might save his life; his gratitude would ensure the safety of us three.’

Sisman was overjoyed at the idea; and he forthwith repaired to the pavilion of Beglerbeg, who was tossing, in the most acute bodily pains, upon his couch. His cries and imprecations were heard at a considerable distance from his tent, round which the guards stood petrified with horror and alarm. During the last few days of his illness he had issued orders of a most sanguinary nature, which the humanity of the next officer in command had alone prevented from being put into execution. Everyone dreaded to approach him; and even his own sons fled from his presence as if his very breath were pestilential.

Sisman, demanded permission to speak in private with Timourtasch. The request was accorded, and two mutes conducted the young Janizary into the presence of the Beglerbeg. Sisman fell upon his knees, and addressed the formidable commandant as follows:

‘Mighty conqueror, deign to listen to the voice of your slave, who is not worthy to rub his forehead upon the threshold of your tent. The sad news of your malady has reached mine ear, and I am come to propose a means of remedy. Your slave knows an old man, a Christian, who dwells at a short distance, in a cavern in a secluded spot, and who is well-acquainted with the use of herbs and simples. I will answer for his fidelity and his skill with my head.’

‘Let the Giaour be brought hither,’ cried the Beglerbeg; ‘and, by the Prophet I swear, that if he cure me, I will heap rewards upon him and thee; but, if he play me false, I will be revenged even from my tomb.’

Sisman bowed and retired. He allowed four hours to elapse ere he returned, accompanied by his father, to the pavilion of the sick chieftain: and, in the meantime, the impatience of Timourtasch had arisen to the height of frenzy.

When the young Janizary and the old Christian stole gently into the spacious tent where Timourtasch lay writhing in the most acute bodily agonies, a lovely girl, whose veil was thrown aside, was bending over the invalid, and calling him by those endearing appellations which a daughter's lips would alone utter. She did not hear the footsteps of those who were entering the pavilion; and Sisman, who was struck by her transcendent loveliness, had an opportunity of gazing for some moments upon the sacred beauties that were thus revealed to him. Her black eyes, which were half-concealed by the lids and their long fringes, as she glanced down upon her sire, – the parting roses of the lip, which revealed teeth white as the pearls of her own native land, – the symmetrical form whose full and voluptuous proportions no artificial means enhanced, and no unnatural devices of female attire coerced, – the delicate foot and ankle, appearing beneath the ample trouser, over which fell the costly dualma, – and the halo of innocence which prevailed around her, – these were the charms which riveted the eyes of the youthful Janizary upon the person of that beauteous girl.

Suddenly, this charming creature – who resembled rather a fair vision from the land of Jinnees, than an inhabitant of earth – suddenly she raised her eyes, and her glance encountered that of

Sisman Schildberger. A deep flush suffused her countenance, and she hastily resumed her veil. Sisman then advanced towards the Beglerbeg's couch, and informed him that, after considerable toil and trouble, he had succeeded in finding the aged Giaour of whom he had spoken in the morning.

‘Let him advance,’ cried the chieftain; ‘and do you, Balkis,’ he added, addressing himself to his daughter, ‘remain with me. Thy presence soothes and consoles me !’

The elder Schildberger proceeded to the couch of the invalid, and entered upon his Aesculapian duties. He demanded certain herbs and roots, which were easily found in the neighbouring fields; and, when they were brought to him, he applied and administered them in different manners.

While the father was thus occupied, the younger Schildberger was absorbed in meditating upon the charms which he had ere now beheld, and the possessor of which, although veiled, was still near him. His passion for Marietta had been a pure, a chaste, and a holy love; but the flame which now burnt in his breast, and which had been so suddenly kindled, was thrilling, electric, and delirious. New ideas and new sentiments filled his mind; and he had entirely forgotten the illness of the Beglerbeg, and the object of his visit thither, when the sweet tone of the young maiden's voice suddenly fell upon his ears.

‘Who is that Giaour ? and can you answer for his fidelity? Remember whose life is at stake !’ said Balkis. Sisman satisfied her upon these points.

‘And what is thy name ?’ demanded the maiden, after a moment’s hesitation.

‘Hassan the Faithful, I am called in my corps,’ was the respectful answer. ‘And thou hast deserved the name by introducing that venerable Christian leech into the presence of my father,’ added Balkis; then, drawing a beautiful ring from her finger, she said, in a low whisper, ‘Hassan the Faithful, wear this for my father's sake.’

‘No, lady—thy father hath promised a reward, should he be cured by that Giaour, who, as you may perceive, has already eased his acute pains,’ returned the Janizary. ‘But I will wear the ring for thy sake’, and he pressed her hand tenderly as he received the jewel from her delicate fingers.

Sisman’s father now stepped forward, and announced, in a whisper, that Timourtasch had fallen into a deep sleep, and that he must not be disturbed. This slumber was produced by some of the herbs which Schildberger had administered, and was as profound as the soporific effects of the medicine could render it. He, however, intimated his intention of remaining with the invalid. Balkis declared that she would not quit her sire; and Sisman easily invented an excuse to avoid leaving the pavilion.

Balkis retired for a few moments into an adjacent tent, with which that of her father communicated by a covered passage; and when she returned, she was followed by mutes bearing

silver dishes upon their heads. They quickly spread a table in one corner of the pavilion; and Balkis no longer hesitated to lay aside her veil, to honour the guests through whose agency her father's restoration to health was to be accomplished.

The more Sisman saw of the beautiful Balkis, the more he was enamoured of her. Some excellent wine was produced – in spite of the rigid decrees of the Prophet – and, when he and the young lady had each drunk a cup of the generous liquid, while the old Giaour returned to watch by the bed-side of his patient, they began to exchange tender glances.

Sisman drank deep draughts at the fountain of love; and he only separated from his fair companion with the assurance that they should meet again on the morrow.

For several days did Sisman enjoy these delicious interviews with Balkis in the pavilion of her father, until the old chieftain was declared by his Christian physician, who had never once left him from the moment of his first attendance, to be so far recovered as to be enabled to enjoy the fresh air at the entrance of his tent. From that hour the health of Timourtasch rapidly improved, and at the expiration of twenty days, the services of the Giaour became no longer necessary.

On the morning when Schildberger informed his patient that his attendance would no more be required, Timourtasch desired Sisman to conduct the old man to his own tent, and entertain him in the best possible manner until the expiration of a few days, when a meet recompense should be awarded him. The object of Timourtasch, who invariably suspected the designs of Christians, was to ascertain whether his physician in this instance had in reality cured him, or only restored him to health for a time, in order that some insidious poison which might have been administered should be allowed to work its slow but certain way without engendering an immediate suspicion of the treachery.

Ten days passed away, and Timourtasch recovered his former strength and vigour. He now felt convinced that the Giaour had performed the part of a conscientious and honourable man; and he determined to reward both him and the Janizary, without delay. Having made certain inquiries relative to Hassan the Faithful, and finding that they were satisfactory in the highest degree, Timourtasch summoned Balkis into his presence. The maiden stood with folded arms and downcast eyes before her sire.

‘Daughter,’ said the chief, ‘Hassan the Faithful is the cause of thy father's recovery. God is great, and made Hassan his instrument to place the means of cure within the reach of his poor slave: there is no God save God ! Hassan is a promising youth, a gallant warrior, and a staunch Mussulman. My daughter Balkis shall become his wife; and this is the reward which I confer upon him.’

The maiden, whose heart leapt with joy at this announcement, which conveyed tidings so dear to her soul, and which she so little expected to hear, expressed her readiness to comply with her

father's command. She then withdrew. Timourtasch clapped his hands thrice, and the Aga, or chief of his slaves, entered the pavilion. 'Abdallah,' said the Beglerbeg, 'take with thee twelve slaves, all bearing choice and worthy gifts, and repair to the tent of Hassan the Faithful, who is a Baschi in the third division of the Janizaries. There thou wilt find a Christian also. Put a robe of honour upon each, gold chains round their necks, and rings upon their fingers, and bring them hither without delay.'

Abdallah did as he was commanded, and proceeded to the tent of our young hero. He entered that dwelling so abruptly, that its inmates had no time to conceal Karl from his view.

'Here are two Christians,' said Abdallah, glancing around him, 'and I was assured that I should find but one. I will, however, clothe neither in the garment of honour, but conduct both into the presence of the Prince of Princes.'

At these words Sisman trembled, but he dared not make any reply, nor even interpret them to his father and brother. A garment of honour was thrown over his shoulders, a massive gold chain was twined round his neck, and a ring was placed upon his finger. A sign was then made to the old man and Karl to follow, and the procession returned to the pavilion of Timourtasch.

When those who formed the procession entered his presence, as he was surrounded by all the great officers of his army, Abdallah fell upon his knees, exclaiming, 'Most powerful lord, thou didst tell thy slave that he would find one Christian in the tent of Hassan the Faithful; and, behold ! there were two. Being ignorant of the one whom you were anxious to honour, I have brought them both hither.' 'Two Christians in Hassan the Faithful's tent !' exclaimed one of the officers who stood on the right and left of Timourtasch's sofa. 'By the Prophet I swear that those are the self-same slaves who were taken prisoners in the late battle, and who were assigned, by lot, to the Baschi !'

'By Allah if this were true,' exclaimed Timourtasch, glancing fiercely around him, 'and if that greybeard dog of a Giaour be not a mystic seer, dwelling in a secluded cavern, but one of those pitiful shepherds who marched against us some thirty days since, I will hang him and his accomplices at the door of my pavilion.' 'Hassan the Faithful, speak !' cried the officer who had superintended the assignment of the prisoners; 'are those the Giaours whom the drawing of lots assigned to you, and whom you should have slain at sunset on the same evening ?'

Sisman threw himself upon his knees in the presence of the terrible Beglerbeg, and confessed the whole truth. 'Treachery – vile, unpardonable treachery !' exclaimed Timourtasch, who was a most rigid disciplinarian. 'I swore a deadly oath that all the prisoners captured in the late action should be put to death, and that he who spared the captive that was assigned to him should himself fall by the hand of the executioner. I cannot retreat from my word, nor pardon even the man who saved my own life !'

The venerable father of the two young men threw himself at the feet of Timourtasch, and, being unable to speak his language, conveyed to him the appeals and the entreaties of a parent by the most pitiable and heart-rending signs. Everyone around was moved to tears, when the eye beheld the silent but expressive anguish of that old man; and Timourtasch himself surveyed his supplicant with emotion. At length the Beglerbeg yielded to the whispering of gratitude and the representations of the warriors by whom he was surrounded: and he said to Sisman – ‘Traitor, I will spare thy father's life, because he has saved mine, and I will award him the life of one of his sons. Let him choose between ye: – one victim must be offered up on this occasion, for my oath's sake !’

The young Janizary communicated the resolve of the Beglerbeg to his father, who thus found himself compelled to rescue one of his children from the jaws of death, with the certainty of consigning the other to that dread fate. He turned a look of fondness upon Karl; and then glanced towards Sisman. Karl was married, and had a wife and child dependent upon him; and Sisman was single; but then Sisman was his younger son – the one who took after his mother ! Karl was such a fine, manly, daring youth – the pride of his aged father; Sisman was a renegade, and must not be allowed to perish in his unbelief; and yet, with every wish to convert his miserable son to the Christian faith once more, before he died, the old father knew that he could not, for he had not the nerve, and he had not an hour ! He could not part with Karl – he could not part with Sisman: he must take Karl home to Marietta – he could not leave Sisman behind. He ran from one to the other – embracing them by turns-shedding burning drops upon them – admiring first the one, and then the other – comparing them together in his mind – unable to part with either – unwilling to irritate the tyrant by delaying to avail himself of the partial mercy awarded him.

‘Father,’ said Sisman, after a long pause, during which he had viewed his parent's anguish with indescribable grief, ‘hesitate no longer. Karl has a wife and a child – if you consign him to death, you kill three persons at once; – if you give me up to the executioner, my fate will redound so terribly on no one !’

‘No,’ said Karl; ‘it shall not be whispered abroad that my brother sacrificed himself twice for me. My life has been comparatively a happy one, briefly though it will have lasted; whereas Sisman has known nothing but hardship, and now deserves tranquillity and rest.’ ‘Those very reasons prove that I should now die,’ exclaimed Sisman. ‘You are enamoured of life – I am wearied of it; – father, let me die !’ ‘No – not as a renegade, father,’ cried Karl.

‘Let me die.’

‘I will meet my fate as a Christian, father,’ urged Sisman. ‘Let me die !’ ‘Yes – let Sisman sacrifice himself for his brother !’ ejaculated the old man, wildly. ‘But no – no, Karl must die for him, for he has the blue eyes of his mother ! And then Marietta – what will Marietta do – and her poor child ? No – Karl must not die ! Alas! Sisman will perish without repentance, without absolution – cut off in a moment – unprepared, without a priest. No – Sisman cannot die !’

The old man fainted in the arms of Karl, who hastened to convey him into the open air, forgetful at the moment that they were all prisoners. But no one impeded the movement; for Sisman took advantage of the occurrence to exclaim, hastily, 'My father has made his choice; I am to be the victim. Let me die at once – I am prepared to suffer, and to suffer now !'

The officers present interceded with the Beglerbeg for the life of Sisman; but the chieftain was inexorable: and the executioner was commanded to prepare the bowstring. Sisman knelt upon the ground, crossed his arms upon his breast, and inclined his head towards the ground. The Djellah, or executioner, fixed the bowstring around his neck – Timourtasch waved his hand as a signal that the deed was to be done with despatch: and in another moment the young Janizary would have been a corpse, had not a sudden interruption to the solemn silence of the scene compelled the executioner to relax the bowstring. A young lady, closely-veiled, rushed into the tent, threw herself at the feet of the Beglerbeg, and exclaimed, 'Spare him – spare him, my father spare him – or kill me also !' 'What means this intrusion ?' cried Timourtasch, angrily. 'Thou canst not say that thou really lovest yon traitor, Balkis ?'

'Slay him, and you slay me at the same time !' answered Balkis. 'Thou didst promise me a certain thing – and now thou fliest from thy word: and thou forgettest the service which that young man has rendered thee !' A murmur of applause, on the part of the officers assembled, received this unusually bold address of a daughter to her father; and Timourtasch, who was deeply attached to the beautiful girl, was compelled to relent. 'Balkis,' he said, 'I spare him for thy sake. Of all my children thou alone wast constantly at my bed of sickness; it is but meet that thou shouldst reap the reward of thine affectionate solicitude. Hassan, continue to deserve thy name of the Faithful; and now receive thy bride !'

The happy news was speedily communicated to Sisman's father and brother; and joy now animated those countenances adown which tears of indescribable anguish were so lately trickling. That same evening the nuptials of the beautiful Balkis and Hassan the Faithful were celebrated – in spite of the prayers and entreaties of the old man and Karl to induce their well-beloved Sisman to return with them into Bavaria. A few days after the above happy event Timourtasch dismissed Schildberger and his elder son, laden with presents; and Sisman took a most tender and affecting leave of his father and brother.

For thirty-three years did Hassan the Faithful and the charming Balkis dwell together in uninterrupted joy and domestic peace. They had no children; and thus their affections were not divided from each other. At the expiration of time, Balkis died; and Sisman Schildberger felt a powerful yearning to revisit his native land. He returned, laden with gifts, to Bavaria, and spent the remainder of his days in his native village, in the society of his brother and that brother's family. He has left behind him an affecting and unpretending narrative of the battle of Nicopolis, the massacre which followed, and his own captivity; and at the time when that narrative was first introduced to the notice of the Christian public of Europe, it created an extraordinary sensation.

