

## Select Tale.

## THE RIVAL MINISTERS.

[Concluded.]

Everybody must have made the discovery that, in states of great mental anxiety, nature, with all her majesty and beauty, produces but very slight effect upon the feelings. The storm then raging within, prevents all communication between the inner and the outer world. A vast creation of evil appears to develop itself before the soul, which, excited into preternatural activity, puts forth all its strength in the conflict with invisible, and too often irresistible, power. By degrees, however, the very violence of the struggle, by leading to exhaustion, produces a calm. The soft sweet breeze blowing in at the open window, the streaming moonlight, the gentle rustling of the leaves, and above all, the song of the nightingale—always loudest at the dark hush of midnight—awakened Abou Meidau to something like consciousness. He began to reflect like a man upon the situation of his affairs. It was obviously not a time for procrastination, or delay, or indecision, but for the most resolute action. In a few hours, those mighty hosts of stars would vanish before the rising sun, and it would be his duty to repair to the dewan, where, the moment he entered, he might be required to produce the great seal, and by acknowledging the loss of it, encounter death. Was there no one whom he could consult in this torturing exigency? He ran over the names of his acquaintances, and friends, and neighbours, but felt no inclination to lay his case before any one of them. Unaccustomed to be placed in great dangers, they would almost necessarily be ignorant of the course proper to be pursued by a man in a position so perilous as his. Besides, could he place full reliance upon their secrecy? Might they not fly to his great enemy, and, through the hope of reward or promotion, be tempted to betray him.

At length his thoughts, after much wandering, collected themselves, as it were, in one mass, and moved in the direction of his youthful secretary. Wise above his years, he knew him to be; but had he not of late had good reasons to doubt his fidelity? What reasons? He examined them all, one after another; and as he did so, they appeared to vanish, while the love and affection he had long felt for him revived in all their force. His mind was made up. This was his only chance; and he determined, therefore, to proceed at once to Hussein's chamber, and open his heart to him, whether the result of the proceeding should be life or death.

Abou Meidau had to traverse nearly the whole extent of his palace in order to reach the chamber of his secretary, which branched off from the library, and overlooked the eastern wing of the garden. As he passed from chamber to chamber, and beheld the riches he had collected—the magnificent furniture, the costly hangings, the mirrors, the fretted ceilings—he seemed for the first time to appreciate all their beauty. Then he glanced at the door leading into the harem, and an infinitely keener pang shook his frame. But there was now no time to indulge in affection or regret; the last moments of his life might, for aught he knew, be speeding by, and it behoved him to take counsel of his only friend before it should be too late.

He found the door of Hussein's chamber half open, and the young man himself plunged in deep repose on a divan. He shook him gently, and he awoke and sat upright, and inquired of his master what evil thing had befallen him, for he saw clearly by the expression of his face that he had been overtaken by some great calamity. Abou Meidau then explained what had happened, upon which Hussein turned pale, and remained for a considerable time silent. At length he said: "I have labored diligently to prevent this. I have pursued the agent of Ibn Tarak, whom I have detected several times in your garden, and on this very night almost encountered him as he slipped like a shadow among the trees; had I done so, the poniard I held in my hand—and he brandished one before his master—would have cut short his machinations. But God is great! My plans have been disconcerted, and it only now remains for you, my master, to perform a very terrible thing that you may establish your innocence with the sultan, and preserve your life, and heap dust upon the head of Ibn Tarak. That man has misunderstood both your character and mine. In your cabinet are many letters, written, I cannot doubt, by his orders, describing you to me as Eblis himself in disguise, and affirming that you have been plotting perseveringly against my life. But I comprehend his design, and repose confidently on your virtue and affection. But we may talk of

this hereafter. Now, do this: hasten to your harem, awaken the ladies, and bid them be ready to fly at the first signal; then set fire to your house, snatch the casket in your hand, and rush with it to the house of Ibn Tarak. There knock furiously, and demand instant admittance; then rush into the evil one's presence, you will implore him before me—for I will accompany you as a witness—to preserve that precious deposit, not for your sake, but for that of the sultan. In the hurry and distraction of the moment, he will accept it, and you will then rush immediately away to superintend the extinguishing of the flames."

Abou Meidau in a moment understood the drift of his secretary's counsel; and having placed the casket under his kaftan, he gave the necessary instructions to the inmates of the harem, and then set fire to his dwelling in several places. When the flames had begun to rage, the ladies with screams and terror betook themselves to the kiosks in the garden; the awakened slaves rushed forth in search of water and buckets to extinguish the conflagration; and in the midst of the confusion and noise and shouting, Abou Meidau and his secretary burst forth into the front court, exclaiming: "Let us save the sultan's seal, let what will happen to my dwelling and my property."

Like persons affected with madness, they ran along the streets, crying aloud: "Let us save the sultan's great seal."

The flames now shot up in the air, and alarmed all the inhabitants of the quarter. Ibn Tarak himself, who happened just then to be closeted with his agent, divining the course of proceedings for the ensuing day, beheld the blaze of the fire, which reddened the whole sky, and threw a startling glare into every window of his chamber—While his thoughts were in a state of confusion produced by this unusual sight, a loud knocking was heard at the door, which having been opened by the porter, Abou Meidau and Hussein came rushing into the apartment, exclaiming: "Preserve the sultan's property, O Ibn Tarak! for my house is in flames, and there is no longer any safety for it there."

So saying he threw the casket at Ibn Tarak's feet, and then, with equal precipitation escaped out of the house, shouting, as he went along, "that he must now see to the preservation of his wife and children." Nor was this by any means an unnecessary duty, for the conflagration proved far more vast than either he or Hussein had anticipated. The great quantity of furniture, the curtains, the hangings, and the wooden galleries, supplied so much combustible matter to the flames that they raged with incredible violence, spread along the outhouses, and even set on fire several of the kiosks. The trembling ladies therefore, almost wild with terror, fled into the copses and thickets, among which they stood, almost bewildered, to watch the course of conflagration. The slaves, assisted by the neighbors, who loved Abou Meidau, and were sorry for his misfortune, exerted themselves with the greatest vigour to preserve some portion of his furniture and dwelling; but to no purpose. Before the sun had yet risen, the whole structure, with everything it contained, except the papers connected with his office which Hussein had saved at the peril of his life, were reduced to ashes.

At the usual hour, Abou Meidau, attended by his secretary, proceeded to the dewan, where he found that the news of his disaster had preceded him. The sultan was already sitting on his throne and Ibn Tarak, with several other ministers, had entered and taken their places. The keeper of the seal, now in the humblest posture, approached the king, and said: "May your majesty live forever. But the face of your servant has been blackened. It has happened, according to the decrees of God, that my dwelling should be consumed by fire; but mindful of the trust which your majesty has so long reposed in me, I have taken care to preserve your royal seal, which, with the golden casket containing it, I have placed in the hands of your trusty vizer, who will doubtless, at your majesty's command, produce it."

The prince replied: "We have heard of your calamity, Abou Meidau, but be not cast down. We have ordered you fifty thousand dinars of gold to rebuild your house, and we appoint you one of our palaces in which to reside till it shall be completed. But we have various documents to which we must this morning affix our seal, therefore, O Ibn Tarak, send immediately for the casket which our well-beloved keeper has placed in your hands that we may expedite public business, and give contentment to our subjects, and foreign ambassadors and ministers, and all others who have any concern with us."

Ibn Tarak answered, that he would trust no inferior messenger to convey to the palace so precious a deposit, but would hasten for it himself. He then

mounted his mule, and rode impatiently to his house, where he is supposed to have spent some time in consultation with his secretary. This period appeared an age to Abou Meidau, who knew not what artifice or stratagem his enemy would next put in practice. His heart beat so violently, that it was with the greatest difficulty he could reply to the kind inquires of his prince respecting his household. His perturbation did not pass unnoticed.

"Be of good cheer, Abou Meidau," observed the sultan; "all shall go well with thee. Thy loss is a trifle; but if it were ten times as great, I would exhaust the revenues of my kingdom ere harm should overtake thee or thine."

"That is," thought Abou Meidau, "provided the great seal be safe."

Presently the vizer returned, bringing in the casket, which he laid at the feet of the prince.—The worthy keeper was then ordered to unlock it, which he did with mingled feelings of triumph and alarm. When the spring flew open, there glittered the great seal with its incrustation of jewels, making the hearts of Abou Meidau and Hussein leap for joy!

"*Hamd ul Allah!*"—(Praise be to God!) exclaimed Abou Meidau; "your majesty's seal is safe; but while restoring it to your royal hands, let me, should it cost me my head, explain the risks it has encountered, and the daring stratagems by which it has been preserved. He then without the slightest concealment, related the whole history of the enmity of Ibn Tarak—the stealing of the seal—his own perplexity—the counsel of Hussein—and the burning of his own house. Ibn Tarak, during this narrative, almost burst with rage and indignation; but the facts were so undeniable, that he stood confounded and aghast.

"Wretch!" exclaimed the prince, rising and drawing his scimitar; "bow down thy head, that I may at once inflict the punishment thy crimes have merited."

But Abou Meidau, bending to the earth, exclaimed: "My lord—my lord—if I have now found favour in your eyes, do not take away the life of this wicked man. Let him rather live to be a witness of your clemency and your justice, your magnanimity and your generosity. Here in your majesty's presence, I freely forgive him all the evil he has wrought me, and shall henceforward confide, as hitherto, in the protection of the compassionate and the merciful."

The sultan complied with the wishes of Abou Meidau, whom he at once raised to the rank of vizer, while he made Hussein the keeper of the great seal. Through the intercession of his former rival Ibn Tarak was allowed to retain his property, but being incurable envious, he could not endure to behold Abou Meidau's exaltation, and soon after quitted the capital under pretence of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He took his evil secretary along with him, and it is reported that they both perished by the hands of the Bedouins. As to Abou Meidau, he lived in prosperity and honour; gave his daughter, as he had purposed, in marriage to Hussein; and served the sultan faithfully to the latest days of his life. These facts—for facts they are—are related at large in the Chronicles of the Dekkan, which, besides, add more particulars which we omit, being no way necessary to the illustration of the principal subject; but we may be allowed to state, that Hussein, after his marriage, produced many exquisite poems in the Persian language, some of which have been attributed to Hafiz. It would greatly, however, contribute to his fame in the West, if those poems, which have been collected and published in Calcutta, were translated into English. The delicacy of his thoughts, and the splendour of his invention, would then be found equal to the excellency of his moral character; and more than this it would be difficult to say.

## OPERATIONS IN THE CRIMEA.

From the Times.

The full accounts of the memorable engagement of the 7th of June before Sebastopol, which have now been received, confirm in every particular the sketch we have attempted to draw of these operations from the imperfect telegraphic messages first received, and we find even in these reports but little to add and nothing to correct in former statements. As long as General Canrobert retained the chief command of the French army, and General Bizot the direction of the French engineering works, these officers persevered in a system of attack mainly directed against the Flagstaff Battery, which they considered the most important point to be silenced by the besiegers. Sir John Burgoyne had from the first expressed a different opinion. He always maintained that the Malakoff Tower and the works fronting and flanking that elevated position were the true key of the fortress

and it is highly creditable to the judgement and sagacity of that officer since that General Pelissier and General Niel have assumed the command of the French forces they have already concentrated their main strength against the position originally pointed out by the British engineer. We may add, further, that we believe this latter point has all along been regarded by the Emperor Napoleon as that from which it was most practicable to reduce the place. The attack on the Mamelon devolved in a peculiar manner on the French army, because they had previously attempted with great gallantry, but without success, to carry that important work, and the extreme right of attack has for some time past been in the hands of our Allies. Owing to this disposition the British troops formed themselves on the left, and the French on the right, in this engagement; the former having the Redan and its outworks, the latter the Malakoff tower and the Mamelon, in their front. Lord Raglan informs us that the fire opened by the allied batteries on the 6th was found to be extremely effective; shells continued to be thrown during the night, and the heavy guns re-opened the next day. Our fire, and especially that of the Naval Brigade, was mainly directed against the Redan, and, as a breeze sprang up to bear away the smoke which had hung in lurid clouds over the hostile armies, it was seen that most of the embrasures of this work and of the Malakoff Tower had been shattered by the precision of the fire directed against them. As the head of the French attacking column was seen making its way about 6 o'clock in the evening of the 7th towards the Mamelon a rocket gave the signal for the advance of our forces to the parallel attack, and the brigade commanded by Colonel Shirely, of the 88th, consisting of detachments from the Light and Second Divisions of the army, rushed upon the Quarries. The 7th Fusiliers were, as usual, again in the front of the battle, and had to lament five officers wounded; the 8th and 47th Regiments also displayed the utmost gallantry, and they were well supported during the fierce struggle of the ensuing night by the 62d. Both the French on the Mamelon and our troops in the Quarries drove in the Russians rapidly and decisively, though the positions were hotly contested, and repeated attempts were made by the enemy to regain his lost ground.—The Russians had a large body of troops in service behind the Mamelon, under cover of the guns of the Round Tower. These, however, were also driven back, and it seemed at one moment as if the Zouaves would force the Malakoff intrenchments behind the works they had just carried.—Here, however, the resistance was furious, and, while our Allies found themselves in the hottest part of the battle, the British batteries on the left kept flinging their shells into Round Tower with a precision which severely annoyed its defenders.—The advance in front of the Redan was not less impetuous and successful, and more than one of our men, overshooting the immediate object of the attack, fell within the abatts of the Redan itself. Lord Raglan states that it had not been in contemplation to assail the Malakoff Tower, and that the troops which had advanced against it were brought back and established in the works they had already captured. The consequence was that a tremendous fire of musketry and cannon was brought to bear on them both on the Mamelon and in the Quarries, the latter position having been attacked no less than six times in the course of the night by superior forces of the enemy. We shall not presume to offer an opinion upon a military operation which took place under circumstances with which we are imperfectly acquainted; but we are not surprised that a feeling should have prevailed in the army that, when the outworks were carried, a comparatively small additional effort would have completed our successes. The Russians were beaten, their fire had slackened, their defences were injured, and even their fatigue parties had lost their accustomed energy in repairing the damage of the bombardment. One would have thought that it might be far easier to drive the assaults home at such a moment than to defer the second half of the operation to a future opportunity.

An Irish Sergeant on a march being attacked by a dog, pierced the animal with his halbert. On the complaint of the owner, the superior officer said to the offender—"Murphy you were wrong in this. You should have struck the dog with the butt end of your halbert, and not with the blade."—"Plase yer honor," says Murphy, "and I would ha' been for to save myself the trouble of claiming my iron, if he had been so kind as to bite me." With his tail instead of his teeth.

The life that answers the great ends of life is long. Years do not make the sum of existence.