

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

THE WRECK.

She left her port—that gallant ship—
The mistress of the seas,
Her canvass gleaming in the sun,
Her pennant on the breeze;
Gay, happy hearts upon her deck
Left happy hearts behind;
The prayers that speed the parting guest
Went with her on the wind,—
As like some strong and spirit thing,
The vessel touched it with her wing!

She left her port—the gallant barque
That reached it never more;
The spirits have not met again,
That parted on that shore!—
At night, she lay a riven thing,
The good ship and the free,—
The merry souls that sailed her, gone
Across a darker sea,—
And all her pride of spar and sail
Lost—like vain hopes—before the gale!

The wind that made, that summer morn,
The music of her deck,
Howls like a hungry demon now,
Above the lonely wreck!—
But, oh! how many another voice,
That mingled with the strain,
On loving hearts, in sigh or song,
Shall never fall again!—
Hark!—did the wild wave send a cry,
As of a soul in agony?

Beneath a sky without a star,
On a sea without a sail,
The desperate shout of drowning men,
And woman's wilder wail,
Heard, through the pauses of the storm,
In frequent moan or scream,
Like the wild nightmare, sounds that vex
The dreamer in a dream,
Tell where a faint and feeble few
Are left of all that gallant crew.

And ho! the fond and yearning thoughts
That mingle with despair,
As lips that never prayed before,
Send up the spirit's prayer!
The faces of the far away,
That smile across that sea,
And low, sweet tones that reach the heart,
Through all its agony!
The hopes for others poured like rain,
When for themselves hope seemeth vain!

MATED AND CHECKMATED.

AN ORIENTAL TALE.

BUT Nourjehan was no dreamer. This person was concealed by the trunk of a hugh olive, and his sight and hearing were strained to the uttermost to watch the event. The men reached the house at an angle slightly remote from the latticed and run; and placing one of their party as sentinel, the others entered at a small door, which opened to them as by magic. It was too dark to see very distinctly, but the new comers were evidently armed to the teeth.

'Foul treason is here,' thought Nourjehan, 'treason against the maiden and her sire; and if I alarm them at this moment, it may cost their lives. Wolves and sons of wolves, some of ye pay dearly for this outrage!' His heavy sword was drawn, and his cloak already swung from his shoulders, and bound buckler-like, about his left arm. The gallant soldier then drew his cap upon his brow, and stood prepared to dash into the open lattice. A strange feeling this of mine for the maid: well so it that I too was watching!

Sharp screams rent the air—shadows darkened the lower windows—a rush was made by heavy feet—the struggle was perceptible. The long drawn heart cry of Zelica yet wrung upon the night, when Nourjehan bounded lightly through the open lattice upon the scene within. It was time.

Two of the ruffians had seized Al-Suli, and were binding his limbs with leathern thongs.—The female slave was grasped by a powerful Arnaout, in readiness to be borne away. Nourjehan's headlong spring cast him upon the Arnaout, who fell at the same time a corpse, cloven through skull and turban. The coming of our hero was as the coming of Azazel, the angel of death, and his sword fell like the blinding lightning. He uttered no word, but threw himself bodily upon the ruffians, and his blade drank blood at every sweep. The lady Zelica was in the hands of men who were hurriedly twisting her veil around her head, as if to stop her cries. Two of these marauders raised their weapons in astonishment at the rescue; but the one was cut down by the next sword stroke of Nourjehan, while the other was sent staggering against the wall by a blow of our soldiers heavy left hand. The chief of the party dropped the fainted Zelica from his grasp, and turned like the tiger balked of his prey. All was the work of a moment. Nourjehan darted up on his foe in a state of now ungovernable excitement, shouting the Persian war cry of 'Slay slay!' His opponent recognised his voice and features; and throwing down his sword, advanced his neck, in the muteness of despair, abide

the coming blow. Nourjehan stayed the force of that blade which seldom struck twice.

'Ismael Khan by the holy of holies! say, before I smite, can it be thou, ruffian and plunderer? The shah's best soldier turned bandit! Oh shame! what meaneth this?'

At the sound of that voice every weapon suddenly dropped, and all was hushed as the silent grave. Every man present stood abashed and cowering. The light revealed the dress and the accoutrements of the royal troops.—Nourjehan glanced fiercely around. Twice he raised his falchion to plunge it into the khan's bosom, and twice he stayed the death stroke.

'The lion wars not with the hound!' cried Nourjehan, as turning contemptuously away, he flew to raise the insensible form Zelica. Ismael Khan remained motionless as a statue. His men unbounded Ali-Suli, and released the slave. Zelica recovered from her swoon to find herself in the arms of her preserver, who was hanging over her with an expression of fond and respectful devotion.

Quick as thought Nourjehan signed to Ali-Suli and the female domestic; and exchanging a few brief words, the lady was borne by them from the chamber of blood, which now resembled a battle-field than heaven of peace, it had so recently represented. Nourjehan addressed Ismael Khan.

'On your life, man, speak! said he and make this darkness light. Give me not many words but give me truth.

'I am your sacrifice,' faltered forth the khan; a tall majestic-looking soldier in splendid attire. 'On my eyes be obedience. The girl pleased thy servant, and he wished to have her. What need of words! The dark slave without, took gold and opened to us. I would have carried the women to the camp, and left the old man here. Thy servant has spoken. What harm?'

Nourjehan was anxious to put an end to the scene. 'Take thy life, Ismael Khan, thou hast twice saved mine in battle; but henceforth thy head answers for the safety of this dwelling. Carry the false Ethiop without, and strangle him in the garden. Two of these fellows are dead. Bear off the three bodies, and cast them forth on the sand of the camp for the jackall and the vulture. Let the waters of the fountain yonder remove the pollutions of this room and that on the instant; after which depart to your dwellings with the silence of ghouls returning to the tomb. And mark me men! you know my mood; if any one babble of this, he dies the death. On the blood of thee and of thine be this matter, Khan!'

Thy servant hears and obeys, was the khan's answer, with a profound inclination of the head. The orders of Nourjehan were responded to with the military promptitude. The unfaithful male slave was strangled—the floor was cleansed of its gore—the dead and dying were removed, and the midnight intruders vanished from the scene with the silent gladness of men delighted to escape with their heads on their shoulders. All was once more profoundly still. Nourjehan was alone. Al-Suli and Zelica again appeared, trembling and agitated as birds when the falcon swoops on the dove-cot. They doubted the reality even of life, and could hardly look on the events of the last half hour save as the wild incidents of a fearful vision. Nourjehan whispered the words of peace and safety, and their bewildered senses slowly recognized their salvation of life and honor at his hands. There are moments of feeling which the pen cannot trace. The chess master and his daughter asked no questions; they knew not, they recked not, who or what was their preserver; but their hearts yearned to him as to their maker. By a mighty effort Al-Suli spoke:

'Be to me,' said he, 'henceforth a son, as thou hast been to her—to my Zelica—as a brother. Visit us early and late, morning and evening. Come to look upon our gratitude. Remove thy veil, O my daughter, and bid God, on whom be glory, bless thy valiant saviour. Verily the young man hath shewn this night the force of Rustam, and the courage of Antar; and the mighty keeping of Allah be upon him forever!'

The trembling Zelica raised her veil, and seizing the hands of Nourjehan, pressed them eagerly to her lips and bosom. During the brief moment of this caress, it seemed to our hero that he had already crossed the bridge of death, and entered upon the abode of the celestial hour is, created by Mohammed for true believers.

'Oh, my father!—oh, my sister! murmured Nourjehan, with the timidity of a fawn; 'let thy son—thy brother—beg a boon, if he have in truth found favor. When I visit ye on the morrow, and if it may be granted on the next morrow also, give me indeed the privilege of a brother to look upon my sister face to face; and blessed be the God of Persia who hath made me now his humble instrument of succour and of health!'

Nourjehan left the house of Al-Suli, and sought his tent with the encampment of the army's advanced guard. The dew of sleep dwelt not that night upon his eyes; for body and soul were sundered, and his spirit rested with the lady chess-player.

Generations of man change, but the seasons change not. Nations and dynasties roll away,

but light and darkness endure in regular alternation. Nourjehan arose from his tented couch at morning, and felt almost surprised to see the sun shining with the same look he had borne yesterday. To him all things seemed altered, and the very atmosphere unlike that he had hitherto breathed. The Promethean spark had lighted up his heart, and he abandoned himself to his new feelings with the true enthusiasm of a son of Iran.

It need hardly be said that this day, and the next, and many more 'next' days saw Nourjehan worshipping at the shrine of his adoration. He represented himself to be an officer in the service of the shah, endowed with a mission of particular consequence, which had given him that marked ascendancy over Ismael Khan and his lawless troop. The grand army had entered Ispahan in triumph, and the emperor had offered up public thanksgivings, in the chief mosques, for the happy state of general peace in which Persia rested beneath his rule.

The ostensible reason of Nourjehan's daily visits at the dwelling of Al-Suli was, of course, chess—immortal chess; of which science he declared himself a perfect adorer, and prayed for the help of the great master to perfect him yet more in his philosophic mysteries. Al-Suli was delighted to prove his gratitude in the only way open to him, and found his new pupil as docile as intellectual. Nourjehan developed profound skill in chess; and, to the astonishment of the veteran, displayed combination nearly as skilful as his own. In truth never had Al-Suli met with so fine a player, and the greater was the old man's joy to receive his diurnal visitor. Innumerable were the battles of the contending champions together; while the form of the fair Zelica was not wanting to grace the scene, and hymn the victor's song of triumph on the lute. Thus sweetly enthralled, weeks fled like days, and Nourjehan more and more gave himself up the slave of love, as he found the charms of the maiden were the least of her perfections, compared with the mental qualities with which she was so surpassingly gifted. Nourjehan did not deny that he had practised chess for years, and had prided himself on his skill, now first proved not invincible. On the whole, Al-Suli mostly came off as victor; but was forced to confess he had never been so hardly pushed, and it seemed as if his affection for his gallant adversary increased in proportion to the stubborn tenacity with which he maintained the chess encounter. It must be owned, that had Zelica invariably kept her veil down, the chances of victory had been greater for Nourjehan. But who can look on 'bright eyes beaming,' and maintain that stoic imperturbability so essential to the gathering and wreathing of chess laurels?

A month had passed in this manner, and our party were one sunny morning employed as usual; Nourjehan, now domiciled almost as a son indeed, playing chess with Al-Suli, while the fair Zelica arranged her graceful buds and shining flowers, fed her birds, struck the chords of her lyre; and, looking at intervals over the chess array, exchanged a timid glance blushing-ly with her preserver, which spoke fully of congenial feelings to the youth's enraptured heart.

'Yes my friend,' broke forth Al-Suli, as if thinking aloud,—'yes, in chess alone man finds endless recreation and comfort in every condition of life. Chess teaches him how to shun the snare of the tempter—how to steel his heart against the wiles of the crafty in guile. Chess is the oil, and the balm, and the wine of human existence. Chess gladdens the heart of the lowly, for he feels there is one possession of which the tyrant cannot bereave him. Chess humbleth the mighty, and breaketh his pride like the brittle spear in the day of battle. Chess, like death, levels all before it, and reminds even the shah upon his gilded throne, that he moves upon the same board of action as the humble peasant or pawn.'

'Belli! Well spoken, O my father?' answered Nourjehan.

Al-Suli's chess enthusiasm was at its highest pitch. He poured forth a succession of poems and curious anecdotes in its favor, and then addressed Zelica:

'Narrate, O, my child, that story of the Arab and his son, which I bid thee embroider in stuffs for the new curtains of our audeum.'

The maiden blushed, and smilingly complied, in tones of musical intonation that found an undying echo in the heart of Nourjehan:

'An Arab chief had a favorite son, so passionately addicted to chess, that he forsook everything in its behalf. Food hardly passed his lips,—sleep but lightly pressed his eyelids,—time, thought, and speech,—all were for chess and chess alone. The youth's father regretfully saw life thus expended, and remonstrated upon such infatuated conduct in vain. 'Chess, O my father (was his reply to every remonstrance,) chess contains a remedy for every earthly ill save sickness and death; and holds out a counsel for every difficulty.' Such was his constantly repeated answer, and the father strove with his son in vain. Now at length a thought suggested itself. He charged the youth with a letter of importance, and a heavy bag of gold tomana; bidding him mount his steed and convey them to a neighbouring sheik. His son departed accordingly on the mission.—

The chief disguised a party of Arabs and sent them on his son's track; directing them to rob him, bind him to his horse and bring him to the encampment as a prisoner. Allah, the mighty and the merciful opened the lads' eyes; and looking over his shoulder, he saw his pursuers coming, mounted on mares fleet as the winds of the Zebra. The youth led them craftily into a rocky defile, difficult of access and of passage, and then adroitly leaping from his horse escaped on foot with safety, returning to his father's tent with the letter and the gold. The chief said, O my son, upon thy truth tell me, how did chess avail thee in this strait of peril in which thou speakest? 'Verily, O my father,' replied the youth, 'to chess alone do I owe my escape: for bearing ever in mind that important maxim of the game, to render up a piece to save the mate, I sacrificed promptly my horse (knight,) and thus redeemed both life and treasure!'

'Well spoken, my soul—light of my eyes!' said Al-Suli, fondly. 'So runs, indeed, the legend. Thy words bring back my early times, when I played chess daily with the caliph, the lord of Bagdad. In that capital was it I conquered that renowned player Al-Moawardi, or the Pearl; to whom the commander of the faithful thereupon remarked. 'Of a truth, man, Al-Suli had changed thy rose-water to vinegar.' And what news in the city of the shah, O our Nourjehan?'

'None of importance. Our Persians thou knowest are renowned chatterers. The chess players of Ispahan talk of thy beguiling daughter, and wonder thou has never yet married her;—but where indeed could be found the man worthy of her?'

'My child,' replied the old man, is no light trifle. She obeys her father's will in all things as bidden in the Koran, health to that abundance of blessings! Zelica shall marry a chess player, and so shall she have a man of understanding. I have spoken! The shah himself should not wed with my daughter, unless she could love him, and unless he played chess.'

'By the bread and salt,' responded the youth, 'a noble resolve, and most worthy of a chess player of thy renown. Has thou, O my father, ever stood in our shah's refreshing presence?'

'Not yet. I have awaited the return of Persia's prince, who at length comes with the army of conquest. Didst thou witness the triumphal entry of our valiant troops?'

'I was, of course, there with my regiment.'

'They say the prince is the best chess player of the age; and it may well be so, since he cares so little for lighter pursuits. Indeed, men call him the woman hater.'

'O my father, cried Zelica languidly, can there be a prince so hard of heart?'

'Even so, my treasure; or wherefore can it be that, in the heir of life, the prince has never married? Great offence is taken by our doctors of religion that the heir to the throne should thus break one of our prophets holy ordinances; while throughout Persia, every stripling, if he be of quality and wealth, must have, besides his wife, an established and well-filled harem.'

'Perhaps,' interrupted Nourjehan with a smile, the prince of Persia—on whom be peace—has never yet met with a partner worthy to share his heart and throne, and looketh not on woman as a mere toy. But this is idle talk. Rather shew me, O my father, how this check-mate may be averted.'

So the chess was resumed, and the conversation dropped. Nourjehan felt that his feelings were recognized, his affection shared, and awaited to put matters to the proof by an explicit avowal of his sentiments to both father and daughter. Happy then is Nourjehan now in the daily company of his beloved one, and happy is Zelica with the pride of her secret soul. Alas! why may not such felicity endure forever? But a dim vapor rises in Fate's horizon, and that little cloud, but now no bigger than the man's hand of the inspired scribe, may yet become a rolling and mighty tempest, pregnant with swift destruction to the hopes of love.

The moollah, Reza Hafed, a very dignified sort of personage in his own eyes, was reclining within his dwelling on a pile of hassocks, in an apparently devout state of abstraction from mundane matters, when a female slave presented herself abruptly before him, and throwing aside her veil, disclosed the features of Miriam, Zelica's attendant. The moollah started at the apparition with unaffected surprise. Visions of Zelica's by the dozens, dying of love for him and his nephew, floating rapidly and instantaneously across his fervid imagination.

'Miriam!—Mashallah! My face is white to-day at thy sight, O girl of the cypress waist and the almond eye. Does thy coming relate to thy mistress? Speak, sugar lips! Is my star at length in the ascendant?'

'How may I, O my lord, reveal my perplexity. Of a truth my soul is dried up, and my liver has become water.' And Miriam burst forth into passionate weeping, wringing her hands, and slapping her face violently.

'But girl,' said the moollah, be 'thyself—be calm! Is Al-Suli dead?—What is it?—How has the evil eye stricken thee?'

'They have slain my lover—my Douban, the light of my eyes. O moollah, give me revenge