

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Chambers's Journal for June.

THE SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN STREAM.

List to the song of the mountain stream,
From its old rocky chamber springing;
Hailing the earliest morning gleam,
With its frolicking—sparkling—singing!
'Oh, 'tis a glorious thing to bound
Through a world of such wondrous beauty;
The flowers are breathing sweet odours around,
And hark! the old old woods with gay music
resound:
Pleasure is glancing,
Sunbeams are dancing,
Life is a boon, and enjoyment a duty!

List to the song of the mountain stream,
As its murmurs are gently swelling,
Bouncing along with its noontide theme,
Of the glory of labour telling.
'I'll water the land, and cool the breeze,
And set the young grass blades growing;
I'll creep round the roots of the old oak-trees,
And call to the cattle their thirst to appease.
Lambs shall come skipping,
Birds shall stoop sipping;
All shall be glad for my pure limpid flowing.'

List to the song of the mountain stream,
As it rolls with its heaving motion,
Calmly reflecting the sun's last beam,
Ere it loses itself in the ocean.
'No more through the beautiful vale I'll wend;
I have finished life's changeful story;
Peacefully—thankfully seeking the end,
Where with the main, my small tribute shall
blend,
Mingling—not dying,
Smiling—not sighing,
Singing for ever His greatness and glory.'

From the Dublin University Magazine.

SULTAN AKBAR'S LOVE,
OR, THE SIEGE OF CHITTORE.

A Tale from Oriental History.

They gazed on the beautiful princess; they beheld her like one clad for the funeral pile; pity, admiration, and superstition, touched them, and they shouted aloud for battle. The troops were quickly set in array, and the command taken by Lall Singh, the brother of Padmani: the gate was opened, and with cries of rage and defiance, they rushed towards the camp of the Mogul; but the Mahomedans were prepared for the sortie. That night a deadly combat was waged; the midnight silence was broken by war-cries; the clear obscure of the heavens was darkened at times by arrow-flights and illuminated at times by flashes of fire-arms. Many a brave man fell from the brow of a Craig, or sank amid the trampled brushwood; and the clear crystal stream, as it gurgled downwards, was polluted with human blood. The Hindoos fought desperately; but the Mahomedans had a decided advantage in numbers, coolness, and discipline, and they drove back the Indians to their fortress with considerable loss. Padmani on the walls, like a white phantom amid dusky shadows, ordered the rude artillery to cover the retreat of her subjects, and directed several charges against the Mahomedans. That night sealed the fiery doom of many a new made Indian widow in Chittore.

On the following day a Hindoo, who had been taken prisoner in the night battle, was sent into the fortress by Sheik Soliman, with a letter to Padmani, which had been left by the Sultan.—Akbar wrote justifying his stratagem by the vehemence of his passion, assuring the princess that he would never release his rival till she purchased his freedom by renouncing him for Akbar; and hinting that not only the Ranah's liberty, but his life also, depended on her conduct to her Imperial suitor.

'Shame on the base Mogul!' said Padmani, in her reply. 'Is this he who engraved on his seal, "no man was ever lost on a straight road? Yet into what crooked path has he now entered! Shame on the foul traitor to hospitality! Rejected before, he is now despised and leathened. Akbar knows nothing of rajpoot honor, or he could never dream that the Ranah of Mewar would accept of liberty or life purchased by his wife's disgrace. The Rannee views her husband as already dead, since he has fallen into the hands of the treacherous and the cruel.—But she will pass through the purifying fire to rejoin him in the heaven of Indra, where no false mussulman can ever come to disturb their freed spirits.'

The siege of Chittore was now carried forward in earnest by the Mogul army, and the thunder and lightning's of war roared and flashed, with little intermission, from the ramparts of the besieged and the lines of the besiegers. Padmani was the life of the garrison, constantly appearing on the walls, visiting the posts, and animating the soldiers.

Meanwhile the unhappy Ranah was kept in vigorous confinement in a castle near Agra, about twelve days' journey from Chittore; and Akbar, influenced by jealousy, and eager to obtain Padmani at any cost of honor, treated his

royal captive with a severity foreign to the Sultan's usual magnanimity. The Ranah was rendered miserable by his absence from his beloved wife, and his ignorance of her fate and that of his capital. And his life was further embittered by the insults of his Mahomedan guards, who soon learned that they were free to gratify their bigotry against the unbeliever. At length when his spirit was deemed sufficiently broken, the Mogul came from Agra to visit him in his prison, and commanded him to write with his own hand to Padmani, declaring his willingness to surrender her to Akbar as the price of his life and liberty, and of the safety of his people; and entreating her to yield to the great Emperor, who had sworn otherwise, the destruction, not only of Chittore, but of the *Suryasvanta*.

At first the royal rajpoot glowed with rage, and felt that he would rather rush on Akbar's sword than degrade himself in the eyes of his noble and loving Padmani; but, on reflection, he thought it well to dissemble with the Sultan. Time would be gained; he might learn something of his wife and his fortress, and Padmani would know, by the absence of the token-mougree, that the letter had been forced from an unwilling hand, and was of no validity. The scroll, as dictated, was written, not without many a pause, many a blush of shame, and was handed to the Mogul. What was the Ranah's consternation, when he saw Akbar, with an evil an exulting smile, produced a mougree, and saying:

'I saw the Ranah send this flower once before with good effect; it seemed to possess some spell to ensure the obedience of the Rannee; with thy condescension, we will try its power yet again.'

He placed the flower in the folds of the letter, and the horror-stricken Prince sank back upon his cushions, overcome with anguish, surprise, and apprehension.

When the letter reached Padmani, she was sitting with the Ranah's mother, the Majee, in a circle of her royal kinswomen, lamenting the captive and distant prince. The sight of the characters traced by his hand threw her into an ecstasy.

'He lives! he still lives, my mother!'

As she opened the letter, she saw the mougree, gazed on it, read again, and grew deadly pale. After a short silence she said to the Majee:

'Lister, my mother, to the letter of thy son; and she calmly read it aloud.

'Ah, my poor son! my unhappy Zalim! cried the Majee; 'captivity has overthrown his reason. But thou my Padmani, wilt not forget that thou art a daughter of the sun.'

The Rannee made no answer, but sat silent, revolving many thoughts, with her eyes cast down, and her lips compressed. At length she rose, and moved to another end of the apartment, wrote a letter with much deliberation, then returned to her place, and read aloud what she had written, to the astonished and indignant Majee. The letter was addressed, not to her husband, but to Akbar, and its tenor ran that the Ranah of Mewar having renounced her as his wife, she had no longer the same grounds for rejecting the suite of the Mogul. But she had bound herself by a solemn vow, before her gods, never to separate from her husband without a formal release from her ties, spoken to her by his own lips, and accompanied by the mutual performance of the rites of their religion. Let Akbar grant her a last interview with the Ranah for the purpose of this release, and he might expect her at Agra immediately after the divorce had been solemnized.

The relatives of Padmani wept aloud and tore their hair at the perversion of one of their pure and lofty race.

'Shame to our blood!' cried the Majee; 'can thou indeed, be a daughter of *Surya*? thou who art basely allured by the pomp of a barbarian to forsake thy husband and sovereign in his days of darkness?'

'Mother!' replied Padmani, 'has he not forgotten that he is a rajpoot? and shalt thou blame me, a weak woman? Has he not commanded me to renounce him? and is it not my duty to obey my husband and my sovereign?'

'But that letter has been wrung from him we know not how; and he trusts in thy love to discern that, like a false mirror, it distorts the features of thy Ranah's soul.'

'Ah, my mother! would that I could discern thus! But he has sent me a token of earnestness, a private token, known only to himself and me. But let me send for the wise Brahmin Madeo; and for Lall Singh, my brother, thy brother's son; let them hear me, and speak judgment. And ye, my kindred and sisters, I pray you now retire, and leave me alone with the Majee, in this my hour of blackness!'

Long and secret was the conference between Padmani, her brother, the Brahmin, and the Majee; and when it broke up, traces of weeping were visible on their faces.

The Rannee now opened a communication with Sheik Soliman, as Akbar's representative. She demanded a free egress for herself and a suitable company, and an uninterrupted journey from Chittore to the Ranah's prison; and insisted that the Mogul should make no at-

tempt to see her while she continued the wife of the Prince of Mewar; and that immediately on her departure the Mogul's army should quit Chittore and return to their own country. The Sheik had received full powers to act for his master; he thought the Rannee's demands reasonable, and acceded to them.

And now Padmani proved to her people that she loved them. She placed the administration of all affairs in the ablest hands, took every precaution for the happiness of her subjects, and arranged all things provisionally, till the anticipated return of the Ranah.

On the morning of her departure, the fortress resounded with cries and lamentations, and the gate was thronged by all the inhabitants, to see the sad procession pass. There came peons, proclaiming the titles of the Rannee: standard-bearers; the royal kettle-drums of silver; chobars, with their silver sticks, the large and superb palanquin of the princess, its bamboo lattice, and silken curtains, closely drawn all round; and followed by three other capacious palanquins, appropriated to her women. There was an armed escort of an hundred and fifty chosen rajpoots; grooms, leading sixteen beautiful horses, intended for sacrifice; and the procession was closed by all the numerous and various servants and attendants of a Hindoo of high rank.

The train passed out amid loud cries and low salaams; and after it had descended the mountain, and reached the plain below, the Moslem troops, which had previously struck their tents, set forward on their return to Agra, and the city and fortress of Chittore were left in unwonted solitude.

The distance from Chittore to the Ranah's prison, was about twelve days' journey. The train never halted in town or village, but only in some solitary spots that afforded shade and water. The curtains of the palanquins were never drawn aside to afford the inmates even a transient view of the country; it seemed as though female curiosity had been wholly absorbed in sorrow. Those secluded travellers were never seen to leave their veiled litters: but the necessary orders were issued from the royal palanquin to a confidential officer, who usually rode beside it, and for whom a curtain was sometimes partially unclosed for a moment.

As the train came into the vicinity of Agra, it was met by couriers from Akbar with letters and magnificent gifts for Padmani; but when they approached her palanquin, a jewelled hand shrouded in a veil, held forth a poinard, and a mournful voice from within declared, that if the sad hours of her pilgrimage were thus disturbed, she would end her sorrows and her life with that weapon; and the courtiers were obliged to return to Agra with the unopened letters and the unaccepted presents.

At length the train arrived within a short distance of the Ranah's prison, and halted awhile near the verge of a forest where all the inferior attendants were ordered to remain till the escort should return to them, after leaving the princess in charge with the Mogul's guards; then the dismissed Indians would return all together to Chittore.

Then the palanquins, the rajpoot escort, and the victim horses, with their grooms, set forward, and soon arrived at the gate of the prison castle, where the royal vehicle was received with every demonstration of respect, and admitted inside the walls. But all the rest of the retinue were stopped on the outside by the Mussulman guard: while the bearers of the inferior palanquins set down their burdens just on the threshold of the gate. A tremulous voice, speaking from the interior of the princess's litter, demanded that the Rannee's interview with her husband should be private, without the restraint of the presence of any other person. In compliance with this reasonable request of the unhappy wife, her palanquin was carried into the Ranah's apartment, and set down, and the guards and bearers retired.

The miserable Prince stood in an agony of mingled feelings, eager to embrace his beloved Rannee, and entreat her not to forsake him, yet fearing to find her either indignant or estranged for ever. As he awaited her appearance with a throbbing heart, the curtains of the vehicle were torn aside, and out sprang—not Padmani—but the young and gallant Lall Singh and three others of the bravest rajpoots, all fully armed.

'Away, Ranah!' cried Lall Singh. 'Take this sword and shield, cut thy way to the gate, mount the white horse there, and gallop on to the forest, where friends and guides await thee.'

The astonished Ranah felt like one in a dream: but Lall Singh opening the door, and calling on him to follow, the Ranah and his friends rushed out, sword in hand, cut down the Mahomedan sentinels, and reached the gate, where a number of warlike young rajpoots, leaping from the palanquins in which they had been concealed, closed round their sovereign. One or two of the guards, amazed as they were, attempted to shut the gate, but were prevented by the palanquins that stood on the threshold. There was a momentary confusion and clashing of weapons; but the Ranah vaulted on his horse, his companions springing on the others that had been led as victims, and they galloped unhurt from the fortress, before the Mussulman soldiers were suffi-

ciently recovered from their surprise to offer any effectual opposition.

The Ranah and his subjects were soon too far in advance to be successfully pursued, though pursuit was for a while attempted. They reached the territories of a friendly Hindoo Prince whose troops, as previously arranged by Padmani, came forth to meet them, and conduct them to a walled and well-guarded city. The first hour that the liberated Ranah could rest in peace, he devoted to hearing from Lall Singh the details of his faithful wife's stratagem; during the execution of which she had resigned herself to a close imprisonment in a private chamber within the palace of the Majee, to whom and to her Brahmin Madeo, only, was the fact of Padmani's concealment in the fortress known—the most perfect secrecy being necessary to deceive the spies whom Akbar had left in the lower town of Chittore.

After days of fatigue and anxiety, but of comparative safety, the Ranah beheld once more the walls of his fortress, far up in dark relief against the sky. Eagerly he pressed his horse up the mountain; at the gate, on the spot where he had been made prisoner by treacherous hands, he was clasped to a faithful heart.

'My own!' he cried; 'my own! What do I not owe thee? Life—liberty—honor—love.'

Padmani had now attained the highest pinnacle of woman's happiness and pride—she had bestowed a benefit on her husband, and he had acknowledged it. Could life ever again offer to her lips the same delicious draught? She might, indeed, again and again toil, meditate, and endure for him; that is a common destiny and common happiness of woman; but would he ever again compromise man's dignity by the rare generosity of acknowledgment to a woman.

Once more in the Island Palace, alone together, in the heart-luxury of duel solitude.

'Ah! Padmani, I bless the penetration, the trustful affection, that guessed my real feelings, and confided in me, when I was forced to be false to thee and to myself.'

'When a man is false to himself, Zalim, then it is doubly needed that his friends be true to him.'

'And the messenger mougree!—how was it that thine own appointed token did not mislead thee?'

'My poor mougree was still faithful; it died on its reluctant errand, and was silent when it reached me. It had exhaled its last fragrant breath, ere bidding me be false to thee.'

Who shall tell the disappointment, the fury of Akbar, when he found himself mocked by a woman, and his own wiles repaid to him! The trembling messenger who brought to Agra the intelligence of the Ranah's escape, would have forfeited his life but for the interference of the Mogul's celebrated vizier, Abul Fazi; yet even his influence availed not to make Akbar relinquish his criminal pursuit. In vain Abul Fazi quoted him the precept of the Koran—'Ye are forbidden to take to wife free women who are married.'

'Except those whom your right hand shall possess as slaves,' interrupted Akbar, finishing the quotation. 'And Padmani (he added) shall be my captive, won by my sword if not by my love.'

And now, 'on to Chittore!' was the cry in the Mogul army. 'Honour and reward to him who first plants the Sultan's standard on its walls!'

The fortress was again closely invested; but now Akbar's trumpets, instead of gentle music, breathed vehement charges, and balls and bullets were aimed, instead of flowers and gems, and verses, against the abode of the Indian Princess; and the siege was pressed by the Sultan with all the vehemence of disappointed passion, and all the bitterness of revenge.—Yet his orders were strict to respect the Ranah's life, still fearing that Padmani, if her husband fell, would sacrifice herself upon his funeral pile.

One evening a group of rajpoots appeared on the ramparts above the gate, reconnoitering the dispositions of the enemy. It was a closely pressed group, and attracted the Sultan's attention.

'They seem to be some principal officers met together,' said he. 'If we could by one discharge, deprive the Rannee of some of his best chiefs—I do not perceive him among them—it is a fortunate conjuncture. Fire upon them! Sons of Islam, fire!'

He was obeyed. A shriek of dismay rent the air. The Hindoos threw down their arms and closed hastily together. There was as movement, a mingling crowd, an evident confusion and alarm. Akbar gazed intently. The dense mass divided; a lifeless form was raised on the shoulders of some of the Hindoos; it was the Ranah.

A dreadful apprehension thrilled Akbar; for a moment he was silent, then shouted to his omrahs:

'The fortress must be taken at once, no matter at what expenditure of life. It must be taken at once, or the heads of my chief officers shall fall. On, men of Islam! On, true believers! He who first effects an entrance shall henceforth be the brother of Akbar.'

All night the Mahomedans were prodigal of life, energy, and stratagem, in their attempts