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THE PAST—THE PRESENT—FOR THE FUTURE.

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THE SACRIFICE.

The events recorded in the following tale may be found in the annals of a reign, memorable for its splendor and oppression—the reign of Amurath, one of the most powerful Sultans of the East. The usurper and not the inheritor of another's throne, he ruled with iron despotism over the subjects to whose obedience he felt he had no legitimate claim. Yet while others crouched beneath the tyrant's frown, his own heart was a prey to secret disquietude and distrust.

There are no pangs more keen than those occasioned by a consciousness of crime, and a dread of its consequences. Amurath knew that he had been no common usurper, that the path which led to his present grandeur had been deluged with royal blood, and in the midst of all his magnificence a voice was ever sounding in his ear, that royal blood would one day dry aloud for vengeance, and be heard.

Superstition, which usually holds dark companionship with guilt, and which in that age and clime maintained a powerful sway over the purest minds, added to the depth and intensity of these emotions. One of those wild dwellers of the mountain, who believe themselves gifted with inspiration from heaven, or impose that belief on the credulity of others, had first kindled the fire of ambition in the cold breast of Amurath by clouded prophecies of his future greatness. The shade which dimmed the brilliant unveiling of his destiny was the asseveration of the prophet, that while the remotest branch of the royal family existed, his power was without base, and his life without security. He had exterminated, with remorseless cruelty, that ill-fated race, but the jewels with which he encircled his brow were as so many points of living fire to his brain. The fear that some scion from the ancient stock still flourished, protected from his power, flitted like a phantom in his path, and shadowed the possession of his glory.

He sat one evening in his magnificent divan, his countenance darkened with more than its wonted expression of care and apprehension. Selim, his favorite and prime minister, stood before him, holding in his hand an unfolded letter, whose contents he had just perused and upon which he still beat a stern and steadfast gaze. "Knowest thou, whose hand has traced these characters?" exclaimed the Sultan, breaking the ominous silence, in a voice which in vain endeavored to master its inquietude. Selim lifted his head, from the bending position which it had assumed, and met the keen searching glance of the Sultan, with one, irresolute and troubled. At length his eye steadied, while it kindled into an expression of moral sublimity, and though his lip quivered with undebatable emotion, he answered in unflinching accents, "I do." For a moment Amurath was silent, for there is a power in intellect, proudly resting on its own strength for support, unaided and alone, to whose sovereignty the haughtiest despot is compelled to bow. But the momentary awe was succeeded by a gust of stormy passion. "Ha! darest thou thus avow a league with treachery—thou whom I have taken into my bosom, whom I have drawn near my throne and exalted even to my right hand? Tell me the name of him, who has penned this seditious scrawl, or by the sword of the prophet, every drop of thy false heart's blood shall be spilled to expiate thy crime." "I have formed no league with treason," exclaimed the conspirator who had awakened his fears; Nevertheless—still true is my allegiance to my royal master; I boldly assert my right to that confidence which has never been persist in his present resolution, and wound by cause if scorned the cold restraints of the keeping. I have appealed to thee our most

world, is dead to human feeling. I dream from sense of heartless splendor but another was the companion of my wanderings. An angel spirit in woman's form, has ever followed my devious path, smoothed its roughness and gilded its gloom. Go with me to yon mountain cave, see the fair flower that hides its sweetest there, and then tell me, if thou canst, that I know nought of love and beauty." "Thou dost not read my meaning," replied Selim, with bitterness—*My dreams of bliss are vanished—The paradise of love will never cheer this isolated heart.* He related to Solyman, the history of his betrothed, his anticipated marriage, and the fatal denunciation which had blasted his hopes. He related to the magnanimity of his brother and appealed to him, by all that was holy and awful, to relinquish a design which was not only endangering his own life, but destroying the happiness of a brother.

Solyman listened in breathless silence, but Selim marked with indignant surprise, that his eye kindled in the moonlight with a fierce delight, which seemed to mock the calm radiance it reflected. He gazed on the majestic features, which shone with a corresponding illumination, and almost imagined that some malignant demon had animated them. That Solyman should exult over the misery he had caused—the thought was inexplicable. "Fear not," exclaimed Solyman, "she shall yet be thine. No fraternal blood, shall stain the hyminal altar—meet me to-morrow when the day first dawns, at the foot of yon mountain which stretches its dark outline on the right, and I will shew the credentials, which shall prove the truth of my words." They parted, to meet again at the appointed hour. They met in stealth, at the foot of the mountain, whose summit was just gilded by the breaking light.

Selim earnestly perused his brother's face that he might penetrate into the depths of his soul, and learn its latent emotions, but he could not fathom them. He saw only the bold, unquiet eye, the proud, curling lip, and haughty mien which distinguished him in early years, and gained him the appellation of Solyman the proud. The spot which had been selected was one which nature had guarded from intrusion with the most jealous care. On one side, a cluster of trees, clothed in the densest foliage presented a wall of living verdure, impenetrable to the eye; on the other a broad stream, darkened by the boughs which overshadowed its banks, poured its tributary waters into the ocean wave. Selim impudently demanded of his brother the credentials he had promised to deliver. Solyman drew the casket from his breast, and touching a secret spring, displayed its brilliant contents. It was filled with the richest gems, but there were papers concealed in the magnificent bed, which Selim gath'red regardless of the splendor which surrounded them. From these he discovered that Zerah, his betrothed bride, the supposed daughter of Ibrahim, was that orphan Princess, who had been rescued from the power of Amurath. The loyalist, whose attachment to his murdered sovereign had led him to protect this lone blossom, from the storm which blasted the royal tree, placed her in the arms of Ibrahim's gentle wife, then watching the cradle of her own slumbering babe. Ibrahim was absent, but she vowed to cherish with a mother's tenderness, the innocent being committed to her care. In the mean time her own child sickened and died, and when Ibrahim, who proud and ambitious, had attached himself to the new dynasty, returned, he recurred to his bosom the offspring of another unconscious of the deception which was imposed. The wife of Ibrahim justly deemed that her husband would be secured from danger and elicitude if he remained ignorant of the hazardous charge she had received; and the inexplicable resemblance of the two infants favoured her design. She feared too the lofty ambition of Ibrahim, and in silence cherished the child of her adoption. The protectress of Zerah was no more—and they who stood, side by side in the solitude we have described, were the soul possessors of this interesting secret.

Selim grasped the casket as if it contained his salvation. "Mine be th' bosom to guard these sacred reliques—I dare hazard them even in thy hands.—Should Amurath but dream of her identity with the subject of his vengeance, her life would be the instantaneous sacrifice. Even now, his emissaries are on the watch, sent to every part of his kingdom to discover the victim on whom he now unseasonably smiles." "Not let them be a pledge between thee and me," cried Solyman. "Thou hast sworn not to betray me—but thou art human. My life and that of my brave band are in thy keeping. I have appealed to thee our most