

THE LIFE

OF

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Southern District of New York.

"I am still unwell—a chill and fever yesterday and much debility to-day—Twenty to one I have written as bad English, ay and Latin, scraps as that Irish gentleman who swore that no one could write grammar with such a pen. Pass over such foibles as those of an invalid.

"God bless you, and mend your manuscript :

"Good-night, J. C. S."

It is interesting to read what he composed at this critical period of his life, whether in one mode or the other; but the poetry has this charm, that these were in a manner farewell efforts. I give below two of the pieces contributed by him to the "Monthly Magazine." Though published later, they were both written about this time.

The first implies a probable acquaintance with the literature of the East and especially of Persia. The second shows a growing enthusiasm for that of the West. We shall soon be convinced on still better grounds than any that have yet been given, that Mr. Alexander was neither a tyro nor a pretender in these matters. Moore has written Oriental verses *ad nauseam* without ever seeing the Orient or reading any one of its numerous languages. Kinglake and Beckford have written on the same subjects and with the same success in prose. But none of these has written such a Diary as the one on which we are about to enter.

THE FALL OF ISPAHAN.*

(From the Persian.)

THE whispers of the morning breeze
Through nodding groves of spicy trees
Have roused the bulbul from his rest;
And springing from his fragrant nest
He skims in search of luscious food,
Thy crystal waves, fair Zenderoud! †
But save the flight of that lone bird,
No sound nor sign of life is heard;

* The City of Ispahan was sacked by the Afghans in the early part of the last century.—J. A. A.

† A stream running through the city.—J. A. A.

Nor voice of mirth nor busy hum
 Nor trumpet's blast, nor roll of drum,
 Nor horseman's march, nor camel's tread:
 But silence reigns, as deep and dead
 As when the march of time began,
 Through all thy dwellings, Ispahan!

Again 'tis morning; but no more
 The silence reigns that reigned before;
 The dying child's expiring cry,
 The dying mother's farewell sigh,
 The groans of famine and disease,
 Are now the burden of the breeze;
 The bulbul wheels his rapid flight
 Away, with wonder and affright—
 To see the dead by thousands strewed
 O'er the polluted Zenderoud!
 To feel the hot contagious breath
 Of the stern messenger of death,
 To hear the murmur of despair
 Which agitates the troubled air,
 As famished beast and starving man
 Throng through the streets of Ispahan.

Once more 'tis morning, and again
 The voice of nature and of men
 Is hushed in silence, such as reigns
 Through death's unvisited domains;
 But not that calm and holy rest
 Which soothes to peace the troubled breast,
 And guardian vigils loves to keep
 O'er the defenceless infant's sleep:
 The pause that now enchains the air,
 Is the dead stillness of despair:
 No more to greet the sun's first rays,
 The bulbul tunes his thousand lays;*
 His song no more shall be renewed
 Along thy waters, Zenderoud!
 For see! o'er citadel and moat,
 The Persian flag has ceased to float,
 And struggling with the adverse air
 A stranger's flag is floating there.

* One of the epithets applied to the bulbul by the Persian poets is that of *Hezer-avaz* or thousand voices, in allusion to the variety of its notes.—J. A. A.

The strife is o'er ; the deed is done :
 The Persian warrior's race is run ;
 His sword is broken, and he lies
 In death, still gazing on the skies ;
 While o'er the dying and the dead,
 In sullen mockery is spread,
 The banner of the fierce Afghan,—
 And thou art fallen, Ispahan !”

About the same time appeared the following :

A VISION OF GREECE.

CALM twilight o'er the Grecian isles
 Has thrown her veil of sombre gray ;
 The dying sunset's farewell smiles
 In golden pomp have passed away.

No sounds the solemn silence wake
 Save ocean's deep and distant roar,
 As his chafed billows dash and break
 In sullen murmurs on the shore.

But as that dull and dream-like song
 Subsides in momentary rest,
 A strain of music creeps along,
 As from the islands of the blest.

Whence flow the sounds ? It is a lyre—
 And swept by none but Grecian hand ;
 In mingled tones of vengeful ire
 And sorrow for his native land.

As he pursues a theme so dear,
 Hark ! how the ancient cliffs prolong,
 With all their echoes far and near,
 The burden of the minstrel's song.

“Is this the land,” he faintly sighs,
 “Where glory reared his crest of old,
 And freedom to the cloudless skies
 Her crimsoned flag in wrath unrolled ?”

“Is this the land,” he fiercely asks,
 As memory goads him with her sting,
 “This land where bondsmen ply their tasks
 And kneel before an alien king ?”