

# A Night By the Dead Sea

By Henry Iliowizi

Othman Ibn Saad was for many years a name for which that of *Eblis* was substituted because of his dare-devil exploits in highway robbery, which prompted the Ottoman Government to set a price on his head. The chief of Kerak was especially interested in Othman's capture, offering to double the reward, but no claimant appeared on the scene; while every week added new outrages to the long list of the brigand's incredible perpetrations. Again and again had the armed men been on the track of the dreaded *Eblis* only to discover too late, after a hot but fruitless chase, that the object of their hunt had posed the while as their informer, guide, or delightful boon-companion, filling their ears with tales of the blood-curdling atrocities of the robber.

Othman had the means of personating Greek, Turk, Jew, Armenian,—any officer, dervish, saint, beggar, foreign gentleman—yes, or woman; and even resorted to the guise of the devil, wherefore his sobriquet of *Eblis*. It was the study of his life, and he plied his trade with surprising dexterity and hardihood. Tall, wiry, of tawny complexion, flashing eye, an iron grip, black hair, short beard, easy manner, and ostentatiously scrupulous in matters appertaining to the mosque, it never occurred to those who had met him in friendly intercourse, that his hands reeked with the blood of murder committed with the least possible compunction.

What puzzled the authorities was the contradictory descriptions given of the bandit by such as had the good fortune, having met with him, to escape his murderous rapacity; and as well the unaccountable coincidence of his having shed blood at two distant spots at the same hour. This was a point in favor of the popular conclusion that the terrible highway-man was an incarnation of the devil, who held court in some dismal recess on the shores of the Dead Sea, a fit abode for the dark designs of Satan. The inference was further strengthened by the fact that Othman's crimes were invariably associated with the gloomiest nights in the valley of the Jordan, that he dealt with Moslem and infidel alike without a shade of partiality, and treated his victims with fiendish malice.

The pseudo *Eblis*, however, in reality rejoiced in the comforts of a snug home in the Plain of Engedi, where a small hamlet finds sustenance in the scanty vegetation of the cheerless oasis, hemmed in by the bleakest of wildernesses made up of mountains which look as though they have passed through fire,—of pestiferous marshes, rugged cliffs, deep gorges, a rocky beach, or little vales covered with saline incrustations, all forming the frame to the most depressed and deadest of seas on the face of the earth. The region is sufficiently bleak, miasmatic and impregnated with sulphur to have suggested to Milton his infernal "sights of woe, regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace and rest can never dwell, hope never comes that comes to all."

Othman's plain habitation was kept neat by a devoted wife, and enlivened by an affectionate son, Yezed, a boy in the early twenties, who fed on the Koran's revelations imparted to him, with traditional embellishments, by the *muezzin* of the small mosque, the only public building of the settlement. With an eye to business, Othman had established his headquarters here, but extended his operations as far as his fleet horse could carry him during the darker hours, on pathways known to him alone.

A cultivated patch of grain and vegetables, a cow, a few sheep and a couple of asses, were supposed to supply the necessaries of Othman's household. There was little about the robber's life to stir the envy of his neighbors, except this fiery steed *El Barak*, so named in allusion to the lightning speed of the Prophet's horse that carried him from heaven to heaven, up to the throne of Allah. *El Barak* was a lamb in the hands of his master or Yezed, but a terror to strangers whose approaches the brute resented with a ferocious fury. That the horse had been taught to dash against people and trample them down nobody suspected.

Othman was the most pleasant of neighbors, bothered himself about nobody's business, and was counted among the most harmless of the villagers, deriving a small revenue from his ability to act as guide to such as were curious to explore the mysteries of the desolation around the Dead Sea. This was the plausible reason for the keeping of *El Barak*.

But the time had arrived where the secret could no longer be withheld from Yezed. The son had to be familiarized with his father's business, and the mettle of the lad had to undergo a test. Was he worthy of his sire? Yezed knew whole surahs of the Koran by heart, and delighted his mother's ear with their recitation. The youth was a dreamer, the muezzin having stocked his memory with the most fabulous of Islam's traditions. Othman did not like his son's visionary spirit, but there was hope in Yezed's great fondness for horses and his expressed wish to own one of *El Barak*'s temper. His wish was gratified. A powerful courser was Yezed's pleasant surprise on his twenty-first birthday, and the Arabs of Engedi began to suspect that Othman was a much richer man than he appeared. In a few weeks Yezed bestrode his horse like the experienced horseman he in fact already was, and was asked by his father to accompany him to a place he intended to visit the coming evening. A dervish had passed through the village during the day and had casually told the people that a party of foreigners would pass some miles south of Engedi, their object being to see *Jebel Usdum*, a towering ridge of rock-salt extending many miles, its crystalline crest sparkling like diamonds in the beam of tropical sunshine, and looking fantastically weird in the face of the moon. Othman was alert to the opportunity, and the departing sun threw its mellow ray on two riders, who had just issued from Engedi. They soon left the fertile stretch behind them and advanced between the lifeless tide of the melancholy sea on one side and the barren, dreary range of cliffs on the other.

The ebbing daylight gave the sterile outlook an air of inexpressible gloom, a leaden haze having gathered on the sea which looked more like a vast basin of stagnant oil than water with not a stir of life to break the deadly silence except the hoof-beat of the horses. Othman, who thus far had not uttered a word, suddenly stopped his horse, threw a side glance at Yezed who likewise drew in his reins, so that the horsemen faced each other. Yezed's imagination had been enkindled by the sight of the sinking orb; he thought of the unfading glories of *Jannat al Naim*, the Prophet's Garden of Delight.

"Yezed, I am thinking that thou hast passed thy twenty-first year and art as helpless as a child; thou hast no ambition, not a wish to fire thee to a manly deed. If I died this coming night what would become of thee and thy mother?" began Othman, eying the unsophisticated youth sharply.

"Yezed wished to own a horse, his father made him happy,—what else shall Yezed wish? If one is happy he has no wish. Thou die to-night? Why should it come to pass? But even while thou art alive Yezed is willing to work for his mother and his father, who should live for pleasure and for prayer," answered the son contentedly.

"Ah, Yezed knows too little of this world, has no desire to be rich and strong, that is why he has no other wish. What joy is it to spend one's days in such a waste as this?" cried Othman,

disappointed at his son's indifference to things for which he had no use. "Does not this region look like a place good for the dead?"

"Yes, good to remind the wicked of their doom and the just of their reward. What of that? Are we not happy even in this unfriendly valley? Not where we live but *how*—is not this the sum of Islam? The joys of mortal flesh what are they when put in contrast with felicities not to be expressed in words?" asked Yezed.

"If Allah meant us not to enjoy this world, why are there so many good things which the weak and the poor cannot have?" was Othman's question.

"Let Allah in his wisdom answer that; we must be content and resigned wherever we be, whatever our lot, lest we forfeit eternal bliss," replied Yezed piously.

"Thou art soaring above the gate of *Jannat al Naim*," said Othman ironically. "Who has been there to assure us that it is more than a fable?"

"God has revealed the truth to Mohammed, and he to his followers, and we have it from them; and as the sun is bright, the moon is blessed, and the stars are the work of Allah, so is the Koran His word, and the Prophet His messenger, and *Jannat al Naim* the paradise of the faithful, and *Jehennam* one of the seven divisions of hell wherein the wicked curse the day of their birth," affirmed Yezed emphatically, and stormed Othman's ear by a rhapsody on the blessedness of the prophet's paradise.

"Those who shall pass the bridge *al Sirat*,— a span thrown over the midst of hell, finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a razor, beset on each side with briars and hooked thorns,— will, refreshed from the cistern of Mohammed, enter the abode of bliss never to leave it again. *Jannat al Naim* is under the throne of God; its earth is as fine as wheat flour, as odoriferous as musk, and shines like saffron; its stones are pearls and jacinths; the walls of its dwellings are of gold, as also are the trees,—all of gold, one of which, called *Tuba*, blooms in the palace of Mohammed, with a branch reaching to the habitation of every true believer. *Tuba* is full to repletion with dates, grapes, and a great variety of other fruits of enormous size, having the taste of anything the blessed who eat may wish to enjoy. Silken garments, magnificent horses ready bridled and caparisoned to ride upon, are there, bursting from the fruits of that pregnant tree, which is so prodigious that the fleetest racer could not pass the entire length of its shade in a hundred years. From the roots of *Tuba* spring all the rivers and springs of paradise,—water, wine, milk and honey affording variety. Seventy-two immortal virgins of ravishing loveliness and free from mortal impurities will receive each faithful in a tent of pearls, jacinths, and emeralds; eighty thousand servants will await his orders; each meal will be served in dishes of gold by three hundred attendants, each one offering a different dish, and the last morsel being as palatable as the first. Robed in garments of silk and brocade, and crowned with diadems of priceless jewels, the Elect will rejoice in the company of those black-eyed paradisial maidens called houris, on couches interwoven with golden threads standing on silken rugs and set with precious stones. Israfil, the greatest musician of the universe, will lead a chorus of those houris for the en-ravishment of the faithful, and the trees will make their heavenly bells, of which they are full, ring in response to a sweet breeze wafted from Allah's throne. What, then, do all joys here below amount to?"<sup>1</sup>

Othman's eyes were riveted on the countenance of the enthusiastic youth, but his mien betrayed not the displeasure of his faithless heart. What could he expect of a lad who raved of fables meant for fools? How divulge to him the secret, which would in an instant shatter all his air castles? And how will it impress him?

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Koran (Surahs 13, 47 and 55).

“Answer me, son, art thou a coward?” asked the brigand, in a changed voice. “By my troth, thou speakest like a woman, yet art thou sired by a man who defies Eblis.”

“What Mohammed taught me and his *imams* that I speak of, father; Yezed is a woman’s child, but no woman; nor am I a coward. Set me a task, however hazardous, it shall be done,” returned the youth, in a tone of challenge.

“That is my son’s true self,” resumed Othman, pleased with Yezed’s outburst of manly temper. “There is a task for thee to do this coming night, and it is not one for a craven to meddle with. Son, this world is made up of masters and of slaves; the few command, the multitudes obey. That Yezed take rank among the masters is his father’s wish; wilt thou be guided by his advice?”

“Whatever Othman Ibn Saad tells his Yezed to do, that he will do,” replied Yezed.

“Will he face danger without shrinking?” was the searching question of the father.

“If the deed is in accord with Moslem duty,” returned the son.

“Is there any wrong in slaying those who hate us,—those we hate,—those Mohammed hated?” continued Othman, insinuatingly.

“No; whomever the Prophet hated no Mussulman can love. Yes, it was his will that infidels be converted by the sword, if it must be. To shed blood is fearful, however, except it be he whose flesh ought to be torn by the fiends and bitten by the serpents of *al Hawiyat*, there being no deeper place in hell. Yes, him I would this moment stab to the heart, and cast his carcass to the dogs,” cried Yezed, in a voice which boded no good for the object of his detestation.

“And who is *he* thou art speaking of,” inquired the father, delighted with the anger of his righteous offspring. “He must be indeed wicked whom Yezed hates.”

“I am speaking of him whose black deeds are matched by his black name, Eblis, the highway murderer of men and women, ripe for Monkir’s club, and eternal perdition,” asseverated Yezed, with flashing eyes and clenched fists.

In speechless consternation the eyes of the older rested on the younger man. He, who had ruthlessly driven cold steel through the heart of many a victim, felt a chill of horror run through his veins at the deathful hatred he had thus engendered in the unsuspecting soul of his own child. Othman twisted the head of El Barak toward the last glow of the western heaven, looked thither for a moment, as though lost in wonder, then, turning round all composed, said in an undertone: “Why, Yezed, that is the very man we are to intercept this night. A great price has been set on his head, and my information makes it certain that we will be in a position to waylay him, if we use our time and arms well. This is the task I referred to. Is Yezed prepared to share his father’s daring exploit?”

“Yezed will follow whithersoever his father leads him, and face death in the name of Allah; there is no craven blood in Othman’s faithful son,” answered the youth.

“Thou art the lion’s whelp,” closed Othman, and spurred his horse to ascend a gorge which in the rainy season gives passage to a mountain torrent down to the dead water, but

which was perfectly dry now. The path followed by El Barak with ease was narrow, steep and neck-breaking, a yawning gulf suggesting dreadful possibilities to the right, while to the left rose masses of blackened rock, overshadowing the horsemen by hanging projections which threatened to fall with terrific effect.

After a ride of about an hour through deepening twilight, Othman turned into a narrow break of the mountain, shot out of his saddle, bade his horse wait, and told Yezed to do as he did. The youth obeyed without a word, and followed his father who, nimble as a cat, began to climb up an almost perpendicular wall to a considerable height, and slipped into a hole scarcely big enough for an average human body to pass through without difficulty. Once within, Othman put his head

out to encourage Yezed who, unfamiliar with the footholds so well known to his guide, despaired of performing a feat perilous even for an acrobat to attempt. Down came the end of a rope for Yezed to take hold of. It was dense night when the form of the lad disappeared in the interior of the rocky nest.

There was already a light, and Yezed was struck with wonder at the spacious hollow before him. High and dry and clean, it was irregular in shape, sloping down toward a narrowing deep which startled the imagination of the youth. Who could tell the mystery of that black pit which seemed to breathe like the mouth of a sleeping giant? Yes, a gentle breeze proceeded from the mountain's heart, saturated with a something that made Yezed feel uneasy.

Other surprises diverted Yezed's attention. What looked like a niche a few feet above their heads, was soon reached by stepping on a loose boulder, and the young man's wonderment was not small to see in the light of a lantern in his father's hand, a wardrobe of various costumes, masks, bearded and unbearded, jack-boots, many uniforms, and a regular armory of weapons and ammunition. That was not all. Several leather bags were brought to light from under a tiger skin, and Yezed's eyes dilated at the precious contents of each and all, as Othman opened them as a surprise for his true-hearted offspring. Costly watches, costlier jewels, rings, bracelets, necklaces, strings of pearls, taken from murdered women; breastpins of every description, gold and silver money, made up a treasure to feed the avarice of a nabob. "If Yezed asks whose is all this? I will answer it is all Yezed's," said huskily the brigand.

He scarcely breathed the few words when a puff from the black hole put out the light, followed by a moan, a deep sigh and a light rumbling. Othman held his breath. Yezed heard nothing more, but his pulse throbbed nervously. What could he say? He had portentous feelings but no thoughts; it all seemed like a dream.

The light was again burning. "It is all right," said Othman, reassured, and nothing further happened to confirm his suspicion that something had been astir in the unexplored deep. "The one who shall attempt to get the fruit of my life must have the nerve to perish in the attempt. Now, to business, Yezed. Here are this suit and mask for thee, and this thy armor. My panoply is here; don't be disturbed; the devil must match the devil. Hurry, the minutes count; the game will not wait for us." Saying this, Othman amazed his son by transforming himself into the blackest demon the youth had ever dreamt of in fancy. The veritable Eblis could not look more deterring than the desperado in his black mask with red eyes, red mouth, long, hooked nose, a pointed beard, pointed shoes and tight leg coverings in one garment, a coat ending in a cow's tail, black gloves which doubled the length of his fingers, and a red spear with many points completed the equipment.

"Thou art too slow, son, for an expedition which requires haste not less than courage," said the robber, and actually pushed the youth into a strange garb, adjusted his mask, and threw a belt with pistols around his waist. "Ready!" was the signal, and Othman burst forth from the wall like a bomb from the mouth of a gun fired from the embrasure of a fort. Yezed would not stay behind and found it much easier to get down than up the steep.

Othman was now the real Eblis and his impetuosity seemed to wing El Barak. Fear and pride spurred Yezed to keep pace with his father. It was one of those nights when the moon is late in rising, and the outlines of the robber as a devil astride of a fiery courser filled his child with horror. Through night and desolation they sped onward, the father leading, the son close behind, with not a sound to vary the awful monotony. They had covered several miles when Othman's experienced ear informed him that his game was near at hand. He discerned the petrified figure

of Lot's wife, a pillar of salt forty feet high, and distinctly heard the tramp of the approaching travellers.

"Thy first chance, Yezed, to show thyself a hero or a dastard. Here we leave our horses; thou wilt plant thyself in the way of the beasts; I will strike like thunder; if it prove too much for me, stab and fire; if I hold to, fight; if I give it up, run. I fall on them with the cry of Eblis! Having finished them, our horses will carry us home before the moon is out," whispered the bandit, thrilling with excitement.

For the first time in his experience did Yezed feel the fighting lust of his sire who was burning for the deadly encounter. If they succeeded in capturing or slaying the scourge of the Jordan's plain, their names would be on everybody's lips, including the Caliph of Estamboul. A lantern in the hand of a horseman afforded a clear view of the travelling company, made up of an armed escort of two civilians, having between them a foreigner on horseback, accompanied by an armed servant. With a yell that made the air shudder, Othman fell on the group, unhorsing one and striking the other with the ferocity of a savage brute. But the brigand was caught in a snare laid for his ruin. It was the Chief of Kerak who had conceived the idea of entrapping "Eblis" by spreading the rumor of the impending arrival of a travelling company in the quarter where they had good reasons to expect his attack. Three athletic Arabs stood by their Chief, but Othman was not a bird to be caught and carried off. His red spear held them at bay, but it was not possible for him to escape. He fired, was fired at, bled from many wounds, but fought like a wounded bear, the Arabs closing around him. "Give it to them," he cried in desperation. In answer several shots struck the struggling group from a distance. Three of the five fell never to rise; Othman was one of the three, stretched lifeless by a bullet from the weapon of his Yezed. The son had killed his father, and realizing the nature of the tragedy and the peril of his situation, he made a rush for his horse, and vanished in the darkness of night, with none to give him chase.

Whither flee? In his present apparel he durst not seek his home, even if he had better news to bring than the slaughter of his father by his own hand. To get his clothing he must retrace his way to that frightful hole in the rock which he had gladly left in the earlier hour of the night. He dreaded the thought of it, but it had to be; the problem being how to find the way thither?

It was fortunate for Yezed that, in his precipitous flight, he had mounted El Barak in mistake for his own horse, and the sagacious animal carried him instinctively to the right spot, halting beneath the entrance of the hollow to which his dead master had ascended so often, especially after successful robberies. "Allah akbar," sighed poor Yezed, as he got out of his saddle and prepared to reach the black nest. There was the rope inviting him to ascend. It was a horrible nightmare. So much had happened in a few short hours! Could anything worse befall him? Come what might, that hollow must be entered. He drew himself up, entered the cave, struck a light, threw off his disguise, put on his plain garments, fell on his face and wept bitterly. The pelf and the jewels will they revive his father who had fallen by his hand?—The pelf and the jewels—horrid thought! It flashed upon his mind like an inspiration.—Great Allah! Eblis—his father was himself that terrible impersonation,—a murderer! How could he doubt it? Did not everything point to the reality of that fact? "Allah akbar. Yezed is the most miserable of sons," murmured the unhappy youth.

But hark! Yes, there was a sigh,—and another,—and a groan, and now a hoot,—and then a howl ascending from that unfathomed black mouth of the hollow, which stared at him like the vicious eye of a Cyclops. The blood froze in his veins. Once more a puff of wind, as of a whiff from a monstrous gullet, left him in rayless darkness. But more appalling than the dense obscurity was the faint glimmer of a hazy shimmer which stole up from the deep, a

phosphorescent illumining of the sepulchral gloom, just bright enough to make the shades visible. Terror drove Yezed to the verge of madness. Might not at any moment some apparition break out upon him through that animated gap? Seizing a loaded gun near by, Yezed emptied its contents into the outlet. The instantaneous response was a terrific burst of the mountain, which sent Yezed wheeling through the air with fragments of rock as great as pyramids. That he was not crushed was not so much a wonder as that he landed on top of a mountainous pile unhurt. New events threw previous happenings into the shade.

By this time it took a great deal to astonish Yezed, but his position of vantage placed under his survey a somewhat dim panorama, more beautiful than anything he had ever hoped to see this side of *Jannat al Na'im*. Through the shifting mists of an uncertain gloom the eye swept over a plain of tropic luxuriance on the shore of a lake as placid and limpid as the purest azure. As though ignited by a flash of lightning, sprang a blaze from lamps without number, giving distinctness to rich and noble forms of vegetation, studded here and there by fruit-bearing trees thick with blossom, or loaded with those Hesperian apples which rival sunshine in glow. From the shades of a majestic grove flowed the ineffable notes of the bulbul. Fragrant bowers stood decked with the vine's exuberant foliage and cumbered with the clusters that produce the golden juice. Sparkling fountains played in the light of the mystic illumination. A lofty arcade, mocking the rainbow by a myriad multicolored lights, glowed like a curved horizon, covering a great stretch of green meadow, and making day for the fish, which swarmed in the transparent water. Underneath the arcaded bow was room enough for armies to pass each other, or to parade in military array.

Indeed the cymbal, fife and timbrel were heard, and a vast multitude of a strange race overflowed the entire plain, moving toward the arcade as the centre of attraction, it was a half-naked mass of brutified humanity, wild and salacious,, the sexes intermingling with revolting indecency. At their head strode a ferocious biped, his hair long, straight and matted, his eyes bloodshot, his visage tattooed, his lips dyed,—chin, teeth and cheekbones of the gorilla, and limbs sinewy like the buffalo's. In his grasp swayed a huge club; his breast was covered by a shield, his shins by plates of bronze, and he remained no secret to Yezed the moment his beastly cry was heard.

“Hear Nimrod the Huntsman speak, children of Sodom! The mighty sons of Anak and those of the Rephaim, the sky-born, are coming to help us build the tower yonder in defiance of Him who has drowned our sires because of their having lived as we do, and because of their refusing to worship Him as thralls. We shall build higher than His mountains, and then scorn His rage. Yes, we shall climb above His clouds, laugh at His floods, and storm His heaven. Who is He to be feared? He seized the power, the winds and the thunderbolt, and treats beings like Himself with cruel outrage.”

The dehumanized masses yelled, leaped, made horrid faces, distorted their bodies, swore blasphemously, and supplemented their blasphemies by such abominable excesses as caused Yezed to turn away his eyes in disgust. Bestial females rivaled with one another in winning their male brutes by intoxicating drinks, which they made them swallow in great quantities, drinking themselves until they reeled with inebriation. Wild dancing and lewd gesticulations were the prelude to the indulgence of nameless vices, and this was the opening of a Saturnalia of lust and riot.

“The Anakim, the Rephaim, make room for the heroes!” thundered Nimrod the Huntsman. Hereupon the Sodomites divided into two parallel lines, leaving a road free to the triumphal arcade, which burned like a vault of fire. Issuing from a shaded avenue, an army of hideous

giants, swollen with vanity and bristling with arms of every description, advanced in two separate columns toward the blazing arcade where they were to be received and regaled. Their powerful chests were shielded by plates of bronze; so were their knees and down the shins. They wore hides of beasts, the chief one a lion's skin. As they came in sight of the immense vault their chief caused them to break up and pass through a series of evolutions to the vociferous acclaim of the drunken multitude. Nimrod was at hand to extend Sodom's welcome to the warriors.

"Thou mighty leader of the invincible sons of giants, who durst storm heaven to dethrone Him who revels in outrage, we welcome thee and thine, we, the Sodomites, who welcome none, except it be to mutilate or slay the fools who trust our honor. For know, O chief, that in our midst the stranger gets stones to feed his hunger, mud to quench his thirst, and a bed to sleep on, which must fit his length; if he be too long we cut his limbs; if he be too short we stretch them to suit our measure. Force is our law, valor our God, plunder our business, and license our pleasure. What He above loves we hate, and what He hates we love. We injure the innocent, respect no woman's virtue, roast the brute alive that He may fume and fret, who is our common foe, our tyrant. That you might join us in the work of raising that tower to a height far above His clouds we called you hither. Let Him send another deluge to drown us,—we shall defy His hereafter as we did hitherto, and make His clouds break against the top of that pile. But whatever work be ours to do, let this hour be given to feasting and pleasure, drinking, dancing and loving."

What Yezed heard next was a myriad shriek of terror. As if the lake had been a caldron of oil, its volume rose in a tremendous flame, heaving toward the clouds, and in its conflagration the shores were soon involved. A general upheaval of rock, brought about by an impelling force from below, in its recoil dropped the bed of the lake deep under its shores, creating a gulf buried in fire. Streams of the consuming element shot up from a hundred cracks, crevices and chasms opened by the disturbance, wiping out whatever had life and breath. Swallowed by the fiery billows were the licentious revellers, no vestige remaining to tell of the illumined Eden, which but a few minutes before had been a scene of unspeakable depravity. The whole dissolved itself into a black smoke, pregnant with deathful odors, like the fetid exhalation that hung over the catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yezed alone escaped, and his trembling heart recognized Allah's justice and mercy. On every side sulphurous damps, thick night and the silence of death enclosed him.

Where was he? How shall he ever get down from the towering pile upon which he had been dropped by some mysterious power? What will there be around him when day shall rise on the devastation? Ah,—if it all were but a nightmare, including his father's death in the guise of the devil? But the night seemed endless, as though day would never come again, and the position was one of horrid suspense and miserable discomfort. To cap the climax of Yezed's unparalleled mishaps, there soared before him the bleeding figure of his father in the attire of Eblis, just as he had seen him hurry to his doom. "Thy hands are clean, O, my son! but I am doomed to swim forever in a pool of blood, the life-stream of the hearts I pierced!" came wailing to his ears upon the passing breeze as the apparition faded from his vision, chilling the boy to the centre of his being.

Yezed attempted to speak, but found his tongue paralyzed; he tried to express himself by signs, but his arms and fingers were lame. Gathering all his strength, he threw his frame in the direction in which he had seen Othman depart, and he struck his head against a stone. How did the stone come here? There had been nothing there before. Yezed rose to his feet; there was no smoke to be seen. He thrust out his arms sideways and struck against a wall. There was no wall before. "Allah, great Allah, is not this the hollow where I changed my clothing!" So it was. Why not

make a light? It was made, and, lo! there was the sequestered nest, there the armory and the singular wardrobe, there the treasure of the dead brigand, and there the fearful black hole which graciously hid those mysteries he had witnessed. Yezed shook with chill. He felt that it was the dead of night, and had overwhelming feelings to control. What remained of the nightmare as an unescapable reality was horrible to dwell upon. Shall he ever return to the infernal hollow again? No, never! never! Why stay one second longer than necessary in the mouth of hell? Trembling and shivering, Yezed crawled out of the accursed cave, lowered himself to the ground, found the noble El Barak awaiting him patiently, threw his arms around the neck of the faithful brute and lamented bitterly. The horse neighed gently, as though he, too, understood his new master's great sorrow.

Seated in the saddle, Yezed allowed the intelligent animal to take its own course, and was shortly before daybreak landed before his mother's habitation. There was weeping and wailing in the widowed house. Yezed decided to divulge the whole truth to his friendly master, the muezzin. The holy man shuddered as he listened to his pupil's tale, but advised secrecy, lest widow and orphan be thrown into prison as accessories to the numerous crimes of the guilty Othman. He took great care, however, to inform himself about the location of the interesting cave, and was ere long in a position to turn his back upon the humble villagers of Engedi, not without inducing the widow and her son to follow him to a happier place.