

## Chapter XXXVII. The Princess Hears News of Pekuah

### CHAP. XXXVII.

The adventures of the lady Pekuah.

"At what time, and in what manner,  
I was forced away, laid Pekuah,  
your servants have told you. The  
suddenness of the event struck me with  
surprise, and I was at first rather stupified  
than agitated with any passion of either  
fear or sorrow. My confusion was  
increased by the speed and tumult of our  
fight while we were followed by the  
Turks, who, as it seemed, soon despaired  
to overtake us, or were afraid of those  
whom they made a shew of menacing. [81]

"When the Arabs saw themselves out  
of danger they slackened their course,  
and as I was less harassed by external  
violence, I began to feel more uneasiness  
in my mind. After some time we stopped  
near a spring shaded with trees in a  
pleasant meadow, where we were set upon  
the ground, and offered such refreshments  
as our masters were partaking. I  
was suffered to sit with my maids apart  
from the rest, and none attempted to  
comfort or insult us. Here I first began  
to feel the full weight of my misery.  
The girls sat weeping in silence, and  
from time to time looked on me for  
succour. I knew not to what condition  
we were doomed, nor could conjecture  
where would be the place of our captivity,  
or whence to draw any hope of deliverance.  
I was in the hands, of [82]

robbers and savages, and had no reason to  
suppose that their pity was more than  
their justice, or that they would forbear  
the gratification of any ardour of desire,  
or caprice of cruelty. I, however, kissed  
my maids, and endeavoured to pacify  
them by remarking, that we were yet  
treated with decency, and that, since we  
were now carried beyond persuit, there  
was no danger of violence to our lives.

"When we were to be set again on horseback, my maids clung round me, and refused to be parted, but I commanded them not to irritate those who had us in their power. We travelled the remaining part of the day through an unfrequented and pathless country, and came by moonlight to the side of a hill, where the rest of the troop was stationed. [83]

Their tents were pitched, and their fires kindled, and our chief was welcomed as a man much beloved by his dependants.

"We were received into a large tent, where we found women who had attended their husbands in the expedition. They set before us the supper which they had provided, and I eat it rather to encourage my maids than to comply with any appetite of my own. When the meat was taken away they spread the carpets for repose. I was weary, and hoped to find in sleep that remission of distress which nature seldom denies. Ordering myself therefore to be undrest, I observed that the women looked very earnestly upon me, not expecting, I suppose, to see me so submissively attended. [84]

When my upper vest was taken off, they were apparently struck with the splendour of my cloaths, and one of them timorously laid her hand upon the embroidery. She then went out, and, in a short time, came back with another woman, who seemed to be of higher rank, and greater authority. She did, at her entrance, the usual act of reverence, and, taking me by the hand, placed me in a smaller tent, spread with finer carpets, where I spent the night quietly with my maids.

"In the morning, as I was sitting on the grass, the chief of the troop came towards me. I rose up to receive him, and he bowed with great respect. "Illustrious lady, said he, my fortune is better than I had presumed to hope; I am told by my women, that I have a princess [85]

in my camp."Sir, answered I,  
your women have deceived themselves  
and you; I am not a princess, but an  
unhappy stranger who intended soon to  
have left this country, in which I am  
now to be imprisoned for ever. "Whoever,  
or whencesoever, you are, returned  
the Arab, your dress, and that of  
your servants, show your rank to be high,  
and your wealth to be great. Why  
should you, who can so easily procure  
your ransome, think yourself in danger  
of perpetual captivity? The purpose  
of my incursions is to encrease my riches,  
or more properly to gather tribute.  
The sons of Ishmael are the natural and  
hereditary lords of this part of the continent,  
which is usurped by late invaders,  
and low-born tyrants, from whom we  
are compelled to take by the sword what [86]

is denied to justice. The violence of war  
admits no distinction; the lance that is  
lifted at guilt and power will sometimes  
fall on innocence and gentleness."  
"How little, said I, did I expect that  
yesterday it should have fallen upon me."  
"Misfortunes, answered the Arab,  
should always be expected. If the eye  
of hostility could learn reverence or pity,  
excellence like yours had been exempt  
from injury. But the angels of affliction  
spread their toils alike for the virtuous  
and the wicked, for the mighty and  
the mean."Do not be disconsolate; I am  
not one of the lawless and cruel rovers  
of the desart; I know the rules of civil  
life: I will fix your ransome, give a pasport [87]

to your messenger, and perform my  
stipulation with nice punctuality."  
"You will easily believe that I was  
pleased with his courtesy; and finding  
that his predominant passion was desire  
of money, I began now to think my  
danger less, for I knew that no sum  
would be thought too great for, the release  
of Pekuah. I told him that he  
should have no reason to charge me with

ingratitude, if I was used with kindness,  
and that any ransome, which could be  
expected for a maid of common rank,  
would be paid, but that he must not persist  
to rate me as a princess. He said,  
he would consider what he should demand,  
and then, smiling, bowed and retired. [88]

"Soon after the women came about  
me, each contending to be more officious  
than the other, and my maids themselves  
were served with reverence. We travelled,  
onward by short journeys. On the  
fourth day the chief told me, that my  
ransome must be two hundred ounces  
of gold, which I not only promised him,  
but told him, that I would add fifty  
more, if I and my maids were honourably treated.

"I never knew the power of gold before.  
From that time I was the leader  
of the troop. The march of every day  
was longer or shorter as I commanded,  
and the tents were pitched where I chose  
to rest. We now had camels and other  
conveniencies for travel, my own women  
were always at my side, and I amused [89]

myself with observing the manners of  
the vagrant nations, and with viewing  
remains of ancient edifices with which  
these deserted countries appear to have  
been, in some distant age, lavishly embellished.

"The chief of the band was a man  
far from illiterate: he was able to travel  
by the stars or the compass, and  
had marked in his erratick expeditions  
such places as are most worthy the notice  
of a passenger. He observed to me,  
that buildings are always best preserved in  
places little frequented, and difficult of  
access: for, when once a country declines  
from its primitive splendour, the  
more inhabitants are left, the quicker  
ruin will be made. Walls supply stones  
more easily than quarries, and palaces [90]

and temples will be demolished to make  
stables of granate, and cottages of porphyry. [91]