

with those light and fine paintings that bear witness of themselves to a long heredity of art. She arranges with original taste the altar of her humble ancestors. Finally, she knows how to arrange in her own vases, with the least spray of verdure, slender bouquets that the most artistic among our women would hardly be capable of composing.

She may possibly be more honest than her sister of the cities, and her life may be more regular—from our European point of view, of course; she is also more reserved with strangers, more timid, with a sort of mistrust and dislike of the intruders, notwithstanding her amiable welcome and her smiles.

In the villages of the interior, far from the recent railroads and from all modern importations, in places where the millenary immobility of the land has not been disturbed, the peasant woman has probably changed but little from what must have been, several centuries ago, her most remote ancestor, whose soul, vanished in time, has even ceased to hover over the family altar. At the barbaric periods of our Western history when our mothers still preserved something of the grand and wild rudeness of primitive times, there lived doubtless yonder, in those isles at the east of the ancient world, these same little peasant women, so polite and so mincing, and also these same little ladies of the cities, so civilized, with their adorable courtesies.—*December Harper.*

CONFLAGRATION IN LONDON.

LONDON, Dec. 30.—A terrific conflagration is now (at 2 p. m.) raging in this city. The scene of the fire is Queen Victoria and Thames Streets, near Black Friars' Bridge. Numerous ware houses are blazing. London seems destined to suffer one of the largest and most destructive fires in its history of recent years.

As the fire progressed it spread to the headquarters of the Salvation Army. The Salvationists were working like beavers in their efforts to place their records and other property of the Army in a place of safety. At 4 p. m. the fire was rapidly spreading in all directions. All the buildings from the corner of Bennett's Hill to No. 135 Queen Victoria Street are either blazing fiercely or else are smouldering ruins.

Fourteen fire engines were soon upon the spot, and the firemen did their utmost, but with little success, to check the course of the flames. The high wind blowing materially added to the fury of the flames, while hindering the firemen in their efforts to save property. Terrible sheets of flame and clouds of hot smoke frequently whirled dangerously near them. The large wholesale fur manufactory, Revillon Freeres, 127 to 141, Queen Victoria Street, was soon doomed. Shortly after, the fire gained strong headway, and following this large copper warehouse, a number of fancy goods stores and Gulcher Electric

Light and Power Company's building were also completely the prey to the flames. The flames spread rapidly on all sides as if there were no firemen or fire engines present. Immense crowds of people gathered on the bridges over the Thames and in the streets running down to the river where a good view of the conflagration could be had. Many expressed the hope that this disaster would at last bring about a reform in the London fire brigade.

The fire originated in the building of C. Davidson and Son's, paper manufacturers and bag makers, at 119 Queen Victoria Street. This building was a large structure and is completely gutted, as also that of Adolph Frankan and Co., manufacturers of pipes and importers of tobacco. The old Bennett church on the upper Thames Street, the famous Welch church, also caught fire. At 4:30 p. m., four large buildings were in flames and burning steadily.

At 5 this afternoon S. T. Bennett's church was completely destroyed. The firemen managed to save the headquarters of the Salvation Army and it was then announced that the fire was under control. Two million dollars, it is estimated, will cover the loss.

A PERSIAN PARABLE.

Khawajah was the stupidest man in all Ezroom. He had no enemies, so it was left to his friends to say of him: "A stupider head never carried a turban." Moreover, his wife said so, and who should know better than Kadijah? Now, Kadijah was as ambitious as woman ever was, and as sharp-tongued as she was ambitious. The one hope of her life was that her husband should become a priest, in order that she might be called "priestess." "But," he would say, "how can I become a priest? I don't know enough."

"Now, Allah protect your stupid pate," she would cry out, "you can learn, can't you?" So he set himself diligently at his books, but it was hard work, and when the time for his ordination had come all he had learned was, "I had a chicken, my chicken flew up and then it flew down. Glory be to God."

"You see how stupid I am," said he to his wife in despair. But Kadijah encouraged him, saying, "But once become a priest and no one will mind what you say." So he was ordained and became a priest, and would stand up in his long robe, and holding up his arms would cry in a loud voice, over and over again, "I had a chicken, my chicken flew up and then it flew down again," and then he would say louder than before, "Glory be to God!" While all the people declared they had never had a priest who talked so truly and so wisely before.

Then Kadijah said to her husband in triumph, "What did I tell you?"

By and by the news came to Ezroom that the bishop was about to pay them a visit; then Khawajah was in despair, and said to Kadijah: "What shall I do?"

"Have no fear," answered his wife, "do as you have always done. Your people will protect you."

So the bishop came and sat in the congregation, while Khawajah held up his arms before the people and cried in a loud voice: "I had a chicken, my chicken flew up and then it flew down. Glory be to God."

Hearing these impious words, the Bishop rose and would have struck the priest for his impiety, but Khawajah appealed to his people, saying:

"Am I not your own priest? Have I not baptised your living and buried your dead?"

Then all the people rose up and said he was their own priest, and that he had baptised their living and buried their dead, and had spoken to them more truly than any other man, and, laying their hands on the Bishop, they put him out of the church, and would have slain him had not Khawajah interfered.

But the Bishop went back to the Council and told what severe things had happened to him in Ezroom, and the Council wondered how they should remove this wicked priest. Finally one Bishop rose and said: "I will undertake not only to punish him and put him out of his church, but also to bring you a hair plucked from his beard."

So the new Bishop, going to Ezroom, walked into the congregation, and when he heard Khawajah recite over and over again, "I had a chicken, my chicken flew up and then it flew down, Glory be to God," he rose and said:

"Truly, never did Priest speak so wisely as this Priest," and, putting forth his hand as he said these words, he plucked a hair from the Priest's beard. Now, this is the greatest indignity that can happen to one of this order, and so Khawajah, turning fiercely on the new Bishop, said: "How dare you touch my beard?"

"Because," answered the other calmly, putting the hair into a little box as he spoke, "the hair from the face of so good and so wise a man will surely carry blessings with it wherever it goes. I shall take this to other churches, that it may bring a blessing to them also."

Then all the people rose up and begged a hair from the beard of their priest, that it might bring them a blessing, and each one reverently plucked a hair from his face and departed. But when the last man had left, behold the face of Khawajah was as smooth as the face of a little child!

"Dog of an unbeliever," cried the Bishop, turning upon him as soon as they were alone, "how dare you thus profane this holy calling? Do you not know that a beardless man may not enter the priesthood?"

And laying violent hands upon him, he tore the robe from his figure. Khawajah called loudly upon his people, but they had all departed, and secure in their blessing, willingly chose another man in his place.

Then Kadijah said to him: "Now see what you have brought me to."—*Evening Sun.*