

SOME THINGS ABOUT TURKISH WOMEN.

Prof. Felton, in his "familiar letters from Europe," gives the following picture of Turkish life and manners:

It is a common notion that the women lead a very retired life, in the seclusion of the harem. Nothing can be more erroneous. In passing up and down the Bosphorus, nearly half the passengers were Turkish women. Three times a whole harem, consisting of fifteen or twenty women—partly wives, partly slaves—came on board, from the palace of some rich old Turk, under the care of a black guard, with a terrific sword by his side, to go down to Constantinople on a frolic; or, perhaps, to go shopping in the bazaars.

They were dressed in various colors—green, blue, mouse-colored, pink. The veil, or *yashmah*, was drawn over the forehead, and the lower part of the face, up to the middle of the nose, leaving only a space for a pair of very black eyes to flash out. I never could help laughing at the figure the negresses made under this disguise. I took some pains to watch these people, and twice I happened to be in the same part of the boat where they sat. They laughed and chatted with one another, and sometimes with the men standing around them, as merrily as so many Christians. Now, and then, if the face was pretty—and there were many pretty faces—the *yashmah* would be gradually withdrawn, and I had the opportunity of observing quite at my leisure.

In each harem there were two or three Circassian ladies of the most exquisite beauty. These were probably the thirty thousand piaster wives. But there was no variety in their expression. Some of the women are immensely fat, and they roll along, bundled up in their robes, in the most ludicrous manner. One of the most laughable sights I ever saw was an old Turkish lady, with a pair of spectacles on her nose, and exactly filling the aperture of the *yashmah*, while she was eagerly chattering a piece of silk. The common women run about, looking like bundles of dirty linen going to the wash of their own accord; others, a little higher up the social scale, look like bundles of linen coming home from the wash. It is very amusing to see the little girls of ten or twelve years. How any of them keep their cloths on I cannot imagine.

When the sultan went to the mosque, the windows of the houses along the streets, though protected by *jalousies*, were filled with black eyes peeping curiously out and a very fat Turkish lady, with about a thousand yards of Brou a silk wound around her, stopped her carriage just where we were standing, and waited to see his highness pass. Nearly opposite the palace is a low, broad wall, the top of which was covered with green, pink, yellow, and mouse-colored bundles containing women, with negresses in attendance.

In the afternoon of the same day (Friday, the Turkish Sabbath,) we took a caique, and rowed to the "Sweet Waters" on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. This is a favorite resort, being a little valley, with a stream, and trees overshadowing it. Here we found a large number of Turkish ladies, with their attendants, reclining on carpets, bolstered up with luxurious cushions, and sipping their coffee or sherbet, while their lords were amusing themselves in another part of the ground. Some of these again were beautiful, but of the same order with those I have already mentioned, and scarcely to be distinguished from one another. We met there a company of Gypsies—very merry and very saucy.

Do you know what an *araba* is? I will explain. An *araba* is the highest of fashion and luxury, and employed in the very best of society. It is a clumsy carriage, like a very old-fashioned family coach, drawn by a yoke of the white oxen of Asia. The inside is covered with a thick bed, and the sides lined with cushions. Here lies buried the Turkish beauty, on her way to sip her coffee at the "Sweet Waters." Certainly nothing is more redolent of lazy enjoyment than a Circassian dame rolling about in the *araba* as her oxen, driven by a couple of turbaned Turks, or an Ethiopian slave, slowly drag the ancient machine along the road.

WIVES AND THEIR COST.

Polygamy is approved by the Koran, and is universal among the rich classes. The best men in Turkey—the men who have European reputation, like Reschid Pacha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs—have harems of wives and slaves, no one can tell how many. The Sultan has innumerable wives and increases their number every year. It is a common practise of the great Pachas to send

him on every occasion of the great festivals, a present of a handsome young woman, whom they have bought of their parents for this purpose; and there is nothing disreputable to them, or to the girl in this; on the contrary it is a high and enviable honor to her.

And the Sultan can pay no greater compliment to the proudest dignitary of his empire than to make him a present of one of his wives. I was assured by a Greek physician, who had a large practise among all the nationalities of Constantinople, that infanticide is fearfully prevalent. Female children are articles of commerce. They are purchased by dealers, when young, and carefully brought up, for sale. These, however, are not slaves, but wives. They are taught to dance, and play on some musical instrument, but nothing more, and their health is carefully attended to. The price of a wife—say from eighteen to twenty-two years of age—varies from fifteen to twenty thousand piastres, that is, from a thousand to twenty-five hundred dollars, according to her personal attractions and the supply of the market.

Miscellaneous.

GUN COTTON.—Trials are still going on with gun cotton, and if its deterioration can be prevented there can be but little doubt that it will prove a most valuable addition to, if not a substitute for, gunpowder. We have already recorded its power in the destruction of an Armstrong 110-pounder, when used in a shell, and we may hence judge that the armor plates, which are little affected by the explosion of powder shells, will be cut in two by shells filled with gun cotton. It is true gunpowder deteriorates both from damp and motion, but not in so great a degree from exposure to the atmosphere as gun cotton. On the other hand, gun cotton may be carried wet in tanks with perfect security, and possesses, both in power and extreme lightness and cost, and in not fouling the guns, very great advantages over powder. —[Army and Navy Gazette (England).]

CONGRESSIONAL TASTE.—A striking and lamentable proof of the intellectual and moral status of the members of the present Congress is to be found in the choice they make of places of amusement, in which to spend their winter evenings. Vandenhoff, the elocutionist, has been here for more than a week, giving nightly entertainments, which, in every other city, have been regarded, by refined and cultivated people, as a great attraction, and have always drawn crowded houses. He came here impressed with the belief that the honorable gentlemen, assembled for legislative purposes, would patronize his readings from Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello, and engaged one of the finest halls in the city, thinking it would overflow nightly. But, unfortunately for him, he has a rival for fame and patronage, in the amusement line, in the person of Vestvali, the Magnificent, the reigning star in the theatrical firmament of the national metropolis at the present time. And while Vandenhoff recites the dagger scenes on empty benches, and gives "To be, or not to be" to unremunerative audiences, Vestvali, the Magnificent, does the "sensational," under thin muslin gauze, to both Houses of Congress, distributed throughout the boxes, pit and parquette of Grover's. Those who don't go to see Vestvali are to be found, as a general thing, at cork operas, and places where the performers are young ladies, with extraordinary brevity of dress. *Chaven arengore*, as the Frenchman says, and I am very far from attempting to divert the vitiated Congressional taste into a purer and better channel. I can not help regretting, however, that it exists, and I state it as one of demoralization, which must be deplored by all good citizens. —[Correspondent of Cincinnati Commercial.]

—A scene lately took place at the house of Col. and Lady —, in the North. The daughter, a very lovely girl, fell in love with the tutor, a Presbyterian clergyman, and so far forgot herself as to make known to him her attachment. In honor bound, and to the credit of the Scotch clergy be it spoken, he reasoned with her, and then finding the argument of no avail, went to her father and begged for his immediate dismissal. The Colonel was astounded, but when upon inquiry the truth transpired, he was so struck with the young man's deep sense of honor, that he told him he would give him an opportunity of going to Oxford, and taking orders, and that upon entering the English Church he would not only give him a living but his daughter also.

We understand both parties are very happy under so kind and sensible an arrangement. —[Court Journal.]

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CURED OF MATRIMONY.

And Mr. Elijah Pellet took the express train for the station whence a daily stage crawled over the hills to Steele's Mills, with this rather uncomplimentary note lurking in one of the toes of Uncle Amaziah Corney's new slippers.

A splendid old farmhouse, with its sloping eaves all hidden in snowy clouds of cherry blossoms, and odorous branches of southern-wood on each side of the garden gate—velvet fields stretching away to a blue, tranquil stream, and gnarled apple orchard whose knotty boughs were just beginning to blush with pink clustering buds—Mr. Pellet came suddenly upon its rural beauty as he turned the sweep in the road, and he almost envied the quiet life of Amaziah Corney.

"Walk in, Squire; walk in," said Uncle Amaziah, beaming all over with hearty hospitality. "My wife'll be powerful glad t' see ye. Dolly! here's a gentleman that knows your brother Hiram's folks in York, and he's brought me a pair o' slippers that our little Violet worked for her old uncle,—Dolly I say—Dolly!"

And Mrs. Corney came tripping in,—a rosy matron of about forty-five, with sunny brown hair under the neatest of lace caps, and a complexion like her own apple-blossoms. She held out her plump palm with a welcome no whit less cordial than her husband's.

"Well!" ejaculated Uncle Amaziah, lost in admiration of the slippers he was turning round and round on his ponderous hand, "if these ere lalocks and pinks aint jest as nateral as life, I aint no—Hullo!"

The little purple note dropped to the floor. Uncle Amaziah stared as if a full grown fairy had fluttered out of his slippers.

"It's for you, Dolly," he said to his wife, carefully picking it up. "A letter from Violet, I calculate. Sit down, Squire, sit down—tea'll be ready presently, and you must be clean beat out, travellin' all the way from York."

Meanwhile Aunt Dolly, leaning against the kitchen dresser, read Violet's note twice over! Slowly and thoughtfully the second time. Then she set her lips close together and winked her hazel eyes very hard.

"I have it," said Aunt Dolly.

Aunt Dolly knew what she was about too, when she uttered those three magic monosyllables. She was a woman, from the crown of her head to the soles of her trim feet—a real, genuine, contriving, manoeuvring, warm-hearted woman—and Aunt Dolly was mistress of her situation.

"So you're thinking of matrimony, Mr. Pellet?" said Aunt Dolly, as she extended a fragrant cup of tea to the smiling bachelor.

"Dear me! How did you become aware of it?" simpered Mr. Pellet.

"My dear sir!" smiled Aunt Dolly, "we womenkind know such things by intuition. Well, Violet is a charming girl—we all know that—and she'll make the sweetest little wife in the world."

Mr. Pellet blushed to the bald spot on the top of his head.

"Of course—of course—that is," he stammered, "if she will have me."

"Oh, she'll have you, certainly," said Mrs. Corney graciously; there's no sort of doubt on that subject."

Mr. Pellet illuminated all of a sudden into a radiant, self-complacent smile.

"I have always thought, Mrs. Corney," he said, buttering his toast, "that housekeeping was infinitely preferable to boarding."

"To be sure," said Aunt Dolly, "Violet is a splendid housekeeper. I have trained her myself, Mr. Pellet; she is my double in all respects. Whatever I do, Violet does, to a degree of still greater perfection."

"By the way," said Aunt Dolly, lowering her voice to a mysterious whisper, as she urged on his acceptance a plate of limpid peach preserves, "have you spoken the momentous question yet?"

"Not yet," said Mr. Pellet, sheepishly; "but I shall certainly ask it immediately on my return to town."

"You'll find her a very superior housekeeper," said aunt Dolly. "Her notions of domestic cleanliness are formed after my own model. How often I have heard the dear child declare her unalterable resolution to clean houses six times a year when she was a housekeeper. Ah me—the enterprising little thing!"

"Cleanliness is next to godliness," said Mr. Pellet, trying to look wise, while uncle Amaziah stared and drank

his tea, and stared again in a silent species of amazement.

"The next morning it 'rained pitch-forks." Aunt Dolly was up with the dawn; and by the time Mr. Pellet made his appearance, with a keen appetite for breakfast, she had a grand "house-cleaning" under way. There was no comfort anywhere about the house; there was no breakfast—only a "cold snack;" and finally the men folks had to take refuge in the barn, the rain continuing to pour down so violently that there was no living without a shelter of some kind.

"This is housekeeping is it?" exclaimed Mr. Pellet, as he sat down on a patent hay-cutter beside the philosophical Amaziah.

"Wal, my wife's allowed to be a first-rate housekeeper," remarked the latter, chewing vigorously at a bit of shining yellow straw.

"And Violet has been trained by her!" thought Mr. Pellet with a sudden pang of irresolution.

Dinner time came—but no roast lamb and dainty vegetables.

"We mostly put up with cold snacks, cleanin'-house times," said Amaziah, as he presented a plate of indescribably fossilized viands to his visitor. "My wife don't like to be bothered cookin' hot things."

"How long does house-cleaning last?" asked Mr. Pellet, grating his teeth against a bony sandwich.

"Oh, two or three weeks."

"Six times three," mentally computed Mr. Pellet. "Eighteen weeks out of the fifty-two, spent in this dreary ceremonial! I'm glad I'm not a married man!"

Cold and dim, through falling rain and driving wind, the night gathered over the old farmhouse.

"Good!" thought Mr. Pellet. "I can at least go to bed!"

"I haven't done things as thoroughly as I expected," said Mrs. Corney, as she smilingly handed Mr. Pellet a bedroom candle. "When Violet is here, we have what I call a real house-cleaning, Violet is so fond of cleanliness."

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Pellet.

As he opened his door the sepulchral dampness of the floor struck him with a shuddering chill.

"I shall catch my death of cold," he thought. Well! it serves me right for ever thinking of getting married!"

The next day he took the cars for New York, having previously "taken" a heavy cold in his head, in a rain that penetrated to his very skin. What did he care for rain? The deluge itself wouldn't have kept him a day longer in Amaziah Corney's house!

"I'm glad I went there, however," he mused, as he sat sneezing and coughing in front of the bright sea-coal fire in the warm parlor of his hotel. I'm glad I got a peep behind the domestic curtain before I was irrevocably committed. Suppose—just for an instant, suppose that I was married to a woman who cleaned house six times a year!"

The cold drops oozed out upon his forehead, and he drew a sigh of blessed relief, such as a man experiences who wakes from a frightful dream and says to himself:

"After all, it is only a dream!"

He had intended to devote the first evening of his return to Miss Violet Power's society. Instead of this, however, he went to the club and put his name down on the lists of an uncompromising society known as the "Alliance of Perpetual Bachelors!"

And Mr. and Mrs. Power vainly marvelled why the little parlor with the rose geraniums knew Elijah Pellet's presence no more. Marvelled, and then resented it, and finally came to the conclusion that it was just as well as it was, and that they wouldn't have Elijah Pellet for a son-in-law under any circumstances whatever.

When the wild grapes were touched with the purple glow of Indian summer sunshine, and the hazy mists drooped softly over the valleys around Amaziah Corney's house, Violet came there to introduce a tall, straight young Lieutenant of Artillery whom she called her "husband," with blushes and shy pride.

"I thought Mr. Pellet wouldn't propose," said Aunt Dolly, looking very wise at her pretty niece.

"Darling aunt!" exclaimed Violet throwing her arms round the elder matron's neck, "Tell me how you managed it!"

"My dear," whispered Mrs. Corney, while unutterable things sparkled out of her hazel eyes, "my dear, I had a house-cleaning while he was here!"

Aunt Dolly looked at Violet, Violet looked at Aunt Dolly, and both the ladies burst into the merriest peals of laughter in the world.

The Lieutenant of Artillery couldn't understand what amused them so much. But then he was an unphisticated man.