

ting in the bright colors and looking occasionally at the bright pattern. An inch a day along the line is, perhaps, all she accomplishes, but it is the one artistic pleasure of her life. At noon is milking-time, and the village herd comes in from the fields. For each owner to select his own among this bloating crowd seems well-nigh impossible, but when we asked how it was done, one man said: "If a man has ten children, don't he know them all?" The women sit on the ground to milk, while the children, like Homer's flies that "buzz about at milking time," hover near to stick in their dirty little fingers and get a taste of the warm foam. The next is the most filthy and degrading work the women have to do; making round cakes of manure which they slap on every wall to dry, for fuel. It is an invention born of necessity, there are no forests, and coal is still hidden in the mountains. Is not such work debasing? I could not but think: "Can they have pure hearts with such unclean hands?"

With all their poverty there is one luxury in this little valley: some hot springs over which a bath-house has been built, and at all seasons it is free to everybody. In a Mussulman country where bathing is a religious rite, this is indeed a "God-send," as the simple people themselves call it.

In nearly every village there is a little mosque and a mollah or teacher; but though the boys go there to read, we found very few who read easily or understandingly. Selling books is not a thriving business under such circumstances, and our little stock did not diminish much, but we found an open door and every opportunity to speak with men and women alike.

There are no inns, so on entering a village we apply for whatever accommodation there is to be had. Some men offer us a room which is the guest-chamber reserved for feasts and weddings, and boasts windows covered with oiled paper and, perhaps, even whitened walls. Here we make ourselves at home, and live picnic-fashion on whatever our bags and the resources of the village supply.

But our work is awaiting us at once. In this room or in the streets, Mr. Wilson soon has an audience of men, while I ask to be taken to the women's room. though I am a stranger their simple hospitality gives me a welcome, and to my salutation, "Peace to you," they answer: "To you

peace," and I spread a carpet or bring cushions for my seat. The news of the arrival of some "Frangees" has spread quickly, and soon the room is filled with curious women come to see the show. We must first get acquainted, so I answer a volley of question on all sides, and wish I had an advertisement to precede my arrival and give all necessary information. Giggling girls and crying babies increase the confusion, and every new comer is greeted with all the news they have already learned, and lends her voice to ask more questions. I pull out my Testament, and, as none in the crowd can read, they are surprised that I can read their language, and settle down a little to listen to this new wonder. Perhaps I say: "You and I are very different in dress, language and customs, but there is one thing we all have—a soul, and that is more important than all these other things." "That's so," they assent; and when I speak of the necessity of preparing our souls for the other world they assent again. I ask them how they will do it, and they answer glibly: "Keep the fast," "Say prayers," "Say the creed," "Make a pilgrimage."

Any of these answers affords me a good starting-point; for example, pilgrimage. "Do you believe Mecca or Kerbela is the gate of heaven?" I ask.

"Certainly we do." One woman adds: "My husband died on the way home," as if he met a most blessed fate.

"But I have heard that pilgrims lie and steal and revile as much after as before the pilgrimage?"

"You speak the truth," they acknowledge.

"Well, do you think people that lie and steal will go to heaven?" A few verses strengthen this argument, for they respect a statement backed by "It is written."

Or, perhaps fasting is the subject. The month of fasting soon begins, so it is in their minds specially, and they tell me how hard it is to neither taste food nor drink water till dark, for thirty days. I ask: "While you are fasting, is there more quarrelling and fighting and reviling than at other times?"

"Always."

"Do you think fasting will fit you for heaven when it really makes you sin more?" Their faces express doubt.

Then, perhaps, we talk about salvation,