

"Do the Moslems oppose your school?"

"The heads of the religion endeavor to prevent Moslem children coming to it; we have had considerable trouble; but generally the mothers would like to have their girls taught here, they become better daughters and more useful at home."

"Can you see that you gain here?"

"Little by little. The mission has been a wonderful success. I have been in Egypt eighteen years; since the ten years that we have been at Assiout, we have planted, in various towns in Upper Egypt, ten churches."

"What do you think is your greatest difficulty?"

"Well, perhaps the Arabic language."

"The labor of mastering it?"

"Not that exactly, although it is an unending study. Arabic is an exceedingly rich language, as you know—a tongue that has often a hundred words for one simple object and almost infinite capabilities for expressing shades of meaning. To know Arabic grammatically is the work of a lifetime. A man says, when he has given a long life to it that he knows a little Arabic. My Moslem teacher here, who was as learned an Arab as I ever knew, never would hear me in a grammatical lesson upon any passage he had not carefully studied beforehand. He begged me to excuse him, one morning, from hearing me (I think we were reading from the Koran) because he had not had time to go over the portion to be read. Still, the difficulty of which I speak, is that Arabic and the Moslem religion are one and the same thing, in the minds of the faithful. To know Arabic is to learn the Koran, and that is the learning of a learned Arab. He never gets to the end of the deep religious meaning hidden in the grammatical intricacies. Religion and grammar thus become one."

"I suppose that is what our dragoman means, when he is reading me something out of the Koran, and comes to a passage that he calls too deep."

"Yes. There is room for endless differences of opinion in the rendering of almost any passage, and the disagreement is important, because it becomes a religious difference. I had an example of the unity of the language and the religion in the Moslem mind. When I came here the learned thought I must be a Moslem because I knew the grammatical Arabic; they could not conceive how else I should know it."

CONDITION OF WOMEN.

On our return to the river, we passed the new railway station building, which is to be a handsome edifice of white limestone. Men, women, and children are impressed to labor on it, and, an intelligent Copt told us, without pay. Very young girls were the mortar-carriers, and as they walked too and fro, with small boxes on their heads, they sang, the precocious children, an Arab love-song:—

"He passed by my door, he did not speak to me."

We have seen little girls, quite as small as these, forced to load coal upon the steamers,

and beaten and cuffed by the overseers. It is a hard country for women. They have only a year or two of time, in which all-powerful nature and the wooing sun sing within them the songs of love, then a few years of married slavery, and then ugliness, old age, and hard work.

I do not know a more melancholy subject of reflection than the condition, the lives of these women we have been seeing for three months. They have neither any social nor any religious life. If there were nothing else to condemn the system of Mohammed, this is sufficient. I know what splendors of art it has produced, what achievements in war, what benefits to literature and science in the dark ages of Europe. But all the culture of a race that in its men has borne accomplished scholars, warriors, and artists, has never touched the women. The condition of woman in the Orient is the conclusive verdict against the religion of the Prophet.

I will not contrast that condition with the highest; I will not compare a collection of Egyptian women assembled for any purpose, a funeral or a wedding, with a society of American ladies in consultation upon some work of charity, nor with an English drawing-room. I chanced once to be present at a representation of Verdi's *Grand Mass*, in Venice, when all the world of fashion, of beauty, of intelligence, assisted. The *coup d'art* was brilliant. Upon the stage, half a hundred of the chorus-singers were ladies. The leading solo-singers were ladies. I remember the freshness, the beauty even, the vivacity, the gay decency of the toilet, of that group of women who contributed their full share in a most intelligent and at times profoundly pathetic rendering of the *Mass*. I recall the sympathetic audience, largely composed of women, the quick response to a noble strain nobly sung, the cheers, the tears even which were not wanting in answer to the solemn appeal; in fine, the highly civilized sensitiveness to the best product of religious art. Think of some such scene as that, and of the women of an European civilization; and then behold the women who are the product of this,—the sad, dark fringe of water-drawers and baby-carriers, for eight hundred miles along the Nile.

HAREM RECEPTIONS.

Exaggerated notions are current about harems and harem-receptions, notions born partly of the seclusion of the female portion of the household in the East. Of course the majority of harems in Egypt are simply the apartment of the one wife and her children. The lady who enters one of them pays an ordinary call, and finds no mystery whatever. If there is more than one wife, a privileged visitor, able to converse with the inmates, might find some skeletons behind the screened windows. It is also true that a foreign lady may enter one of the royal harems and be received with scarcely more ceremony than would attend an ordinary call at home. The receptions at which there is great display, at which crowds of beautiful or ugly slaves line the apartments, at which there is music and dancing by almehs, an endless service of sweets and pipes and coffee,