

sents lately ? was I married ? what was my husband's personal appearance ? did I love him ? how old was I ? where from ? and where going ? These and similar questions, which are considered perfectly polite and proper, they ask with the curiosity of children.

Then we were invited into a third room where we were served with violet sherbet, cake and Turkish paste. After partaking of these the ladies sent for their jewel-boxes and displayed their treasures, which consisted of pins, earrings, necklaces, head and belt ornaments—some very handsome, and all composed of precious stones of more or less value, for a Turkish woman does not value an ornament that is not set with precious stones. This was an agreeable change from the former conversation, and when we had admired their jewels breakfast was served. The servants brought a scarlet rug of soft shaggy stuff, which was spread on the floor : a low round brass table, two feet high and three feet in diameter, was placed in the centre of this rug, and we four ladies seated ourselves round the table *à la Turque*. A servant brought a brass basin, which was like an immense wash-bowl with a cullender in it turned upside down : we washed our hands over this, water being poured over them from a large coffee-pot (I should call it) with an unusually long nose, and wiped our hands on handsome towels embroidered at the ends with gold thread. A dish of fried fish was placed on the table for the first course : each helped herself to one, laying it on the table before her (we had no plates, knives or forks), picking it to pieces and eating it with her fingers. When this was ended, the débris was thrown on the platter and removed, the table wiped off, and a dish of rice and mutton brought ; for this we had spoons, but all ate from the dish. Then came an immense cauliflower covered thick with strange-tasting cheese, and the Turkish ladies used their thumbs and first two fingers in conveying it to their mouths. I am very fond of cauliflower, but this was not inviting. The next course was onions cooked in oil : I had to be excused from this also : the sight of their dripping fingers was enough. Then we washed our hands and ate oranges ; washed again, and, lighting fresh cigarettes (they had smoked nearly all day), retired to our divans ; sipped coffee and



HAREM SCENE.