

Choice Literature.

THE PERSIAN HOUND.

Leila was a little Persian girl. Her large, sparkling eyes were black as jet, and her soft round cheeks were red as pippins. They reminded one of the ripe pomegranates which hung on the trees of the courtyard where she lived. Her hair was braided in many plaits which hung loosely down her back. On her arms were bracelets of gold; and the embroidered mantle on her head was fastened by a large pin of dark turquoise. Her chubby little feet were encased in crimson slippers when she wore anything on them; but half the time she went barefooted, for the climate was warm and dry.

She was scarcely four years old, and was the daughter of a great man who had wealth and many servants and horses. She lived in the *anderoon* with her mother. Now the *anderoon* was the part of the house where the women were. No man ever entered there except Leila's father. It was built around a court in the centre of which a fountain tossed a jet of cool spray during the warm, drowsy afternoons.

Another part of the house was for the men, and that also was built around a courtyard, or garden, which had its fish pool beautiful with roses and pinks. Leila would come to this part of the house sometimes and visit her father, because she was still a very little girl. When she grew older this would be forbidden. The court of the men's quarters was entered from the street through a low gate and dark passage, over which was a room called the *balahaneh*. Leila would go up there sometimes and watch what was going on in the street. The only window in the whole house which looked out anywhere, except on the gardens, was in that upper room. A steam bath, called a *hamum*, stood between the courts, intended only for the family. It was paved with marble, and was lit by small round windows in the dome of the roof.

The stables were built around the third courtyard. A large number of horses were kept there. They had no separate stalls, but were tethered by the hoof to rings fastened to the ground; they ate out of mangers hollowed out of the mud walls. In the middle of the stable was a large stone platform, on which the hostlers slept. Fowls lived in the stable and picked up grain about the feet of the horses.

In one corner of the stable enclosure was a perch where the hawks were kept. These hawks, or falcons, were savage little birds. When taken on the hunt they wore hoods and were ranged on perches, four on each perch. The hoods were taken off when they were let fly at the game.

Leila had a nurse, or *dada*, named Esmeh, whose duty it was to take good care of the little girl. At night they slept in the same bed, which was unrolled on the floor rugs.

The little girl was permitted to eat all the cucumbers and *shiranees*, or sweets, that she wanted. But Leila's greatest delight was to steal away from the *anderoon* to the stables where she could see the animals. She was warned never to go there; but I am afraid was not as obedient as she should have been. Often one might hear the nurse calling: "Leila, oh Leila!" When the child could not be found elsewhere, Esmeh would draw the veil over her face and go in search of Leila, and would find her playing with a noble hunting hound that was kept with the falcons. He was a large, splendid fellow, with eyes that were almost human; he was the colour of a fawn, but his ears and tail were covered with a soft, white hair, like floss silk, and looked like tassels.

But although he was so beautiful and intelligent the poor dog was kept apart, and no one would ever touch him if he could possibly help it. In Persia dogs are considered to be unclean animals, and are only permitted as scavengers in the streets or for hunting; and whenever this handsome hound was taken out with two or three others to chase hares or antelopes, he was attached with the others to a pole, with which the gamekeeper held him at a distance until the time came to let him leap after the game. No one thought it necessary to give him a name, for he was nothing but an unclean dog. But little Leila had once seen a lion, and thought it so grand and beautiful that ever after she called this hound Arslan, the Turkish word for lion. She would stroke his silken ears and say: "My beautiful Arslan!" and he would wag his silky tail and lick her face gently whenever he saw the little girl; for no one else ever noticed him except to give him a cuff or a kick; for he was only an unclean dog.

This conduct of Leila's was, of course, very naughty; for every time Leila touched the hound it was considered that she had been defiled, and her hands were carefully washed, and then she was punished. But the whippings and the scoldings she received only seemed to make her more fond of Arslan.

He was too valuable a hunting dog to kill; there was not a finer hunting hound in all that part of the country. Mohammed Khan, Leila's father, decided that the best thing to do was to send him to a *yaleik*, or country place, he had, far away in the mountains. Leila had a good cry when she found that her dog had gone away. Every day she would ask: "When will my beautiful Arslan come home?"

"One of these days he'll come back," they answered, thinking she would forget him as she grew older.

One day, perhaps a month after that, Leila was standing at the garden gate, watching the children playing on the *meidan*, or square, and wishing she could play with them.

Suddenly she gave a little scream, and then danced up and down with glee, for there was Arslan, wagging his tail furiously and ambling around her with delight. The little girl patted him on the head and put her arm around his neck. But immediately one of the servants yelled "*Burro!*"—

"Get out!" and, in spite of Leila's pleading and tears, drove the poor dog to the stable, where he was chained fast. He had grown gaunt and haggard, and looked sad enough. The next day Leila's father ordered one of his servants, to whom some wages were due, to take a king-pheasant and Arslan, the hound, and offer them as a present to a gentleman of somewhat lower rank, who had lands at some distance from the city, where game was plenty and hunting dogs were needed. The gentleman felt obliged to receive the hound with the pheasant, although he had enough hunting dogs already. In return for the gift he gave the servant a present of a sum of money, proportioned to the rank of the servant's master. This was a sly dodge on the part of Mohammed Khan, for in this way he got rid of the dog, he conferred a favour on one of inferior rank, whom he wished to honour, and he paid the servant his wages. This is a way they have in Persia.

Leila was heart-broken on losing Arslan again. But her

mother consoled her by giving her a little charm set in precious stones, to keep off the *divs*, or bad spirits. She promised, too, to take her on a journey in a few days. This news was so delightful that Leila soon dried her eyes, and asked what new clothes she was to wear.

The journey was to be long. Mohammed Khan, having taken on a religious mood, decided to go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of a Mohammedan saint at Mesched. He proposed to take with him his favourite wife, Fathimeh Khanum, the mother of Leila; Leila and her little brother Alee would go with them. Esmeh would also go and many servants, together with armed attendants and many mules and horses. Every attendant was to be mounted; the baggage packed was in square wooden boxes bound with iron, or in huge saddle bags, called *hoorjeens*. The bedding was rolled up in rugs which were spread on the ground whenever they came to a halt; tents were also carried.

The train was very long, as you may easily imagine. At the head rode the *gildidar*, or equerry, and several *jerashes* to clear the way. Mohammed Khan rode next on a splendid Arab horse, with several attendants by his side. One of them was called the *fishketmel*. He carried his master's waterpipe, which he filled and lit for him and held it as they rode along, the master smoking through a long, snake-like stem.

The women-servants rode astride of donkeys; they wore great white or indigo-coloured mantles which covered their faces all but the eyes, and puffed out in the wind in such wise as to make the wearers look like animated balloons.

Fathimeh Khanum rode in a *tachtrawan*. This was a covered car, carried by two mules and closed with lattices. Leila and Alee followed next in *kadjevesh*. These were like little covered boxes open in front, and having sliding curtains and a bar across to keep the child from falling out. The two *kadjevesh* were slung one on each side of a stout mule and thus balanced each other.

Horsemen, called *gholams*, armed with long guns and prodigious dirks, brought up the rear of the train.

Many a swarthy, tangle-haired and wild-eyed dervish, or holy beggar, idling by the roadside, met them with a guttural "*Allah hu!*" and wished them a blessing as they passed on to the shrine of the saint. Mohammed Khan would then order his *moonchee*, or secretary, to fling the dervish some small coins, for good luck.

Usually the train started towards sunset and travelled all night. Strange enough were those long night marches under the stars. The air was dry; there was no rain nor dew; the great mountains loomed like a purple wall on the left, and highest of all the mighty peak of Demavend. The vast, mysterious plains, covered with sand and salt, stretched out before the travellers, and far away to the south. Now and then a caravan would come silently out of the gloom, like a funeral procession, and lose itself as silently in the shades of night. Sometimes they came to a village having cool groves and refreshing streams, or to a caravansary, or wayside inn, alone in the desert. Or they would climb up some wild mountain pass haunted by robbers, as it was said.

One day, soon after they had started for another night's journey, they passed near to a village having orchards and gardens. A crowd of large, snarling dogs flew out, and with fierce yelps dashed towards the horses as if to attack them. The *gholams* beat them back with their whips.

Suddenly one of the dogs, separating himself from his comrades, leaped, or rather flew, towards the *kadjevesh*. "Arslan, good Arslan!" cried little Leila, as her hound placed his forepaws on her *kadjevesh* and licked her hands with howls of delight.

But again she heard the fierce shout of "*Burro!*" as a horseman dashed down and gave the poor creature a cut with the lash that sent him to the rear yelping with pain, but not before Leila had tossed him the cake she held in her hand.

Leila was full of sorrow, to see her poor dog thus driven away from her caresses. Her mother only pacified her at last by promising that he might follow the caravan, and once a day she might talk to him.

It was about midnight. The train was moving along slowly with measured step. Half the riders were asleep, nodding as the patient horses steadily moved on. Suddenly Arslan's fierce bark was heard on the silent night. Then the cry rang over the desert, "The *lootees* are upon us!" followed by the sharp crack of muskets and the yells of men fighting, and the piercing shrieks of women. Like the rush of a tornado the robbers swooped down on the caravan.

Mohammed Khan was not a coward, and the thought of his family made him still more fierce. He rallied his frightened horsemen, swearing at some and beating others. Their courage returned when they saw that they outnumbered the brigands, and the latter were forced to retreat, leaving several of their number dead.

One of the robbers, whose horse was killed under him, was seen running across the plain carrying Leila under his arm. She was a prize worth a large ransom. Several horsemen dashed in pursuit. But he was fleet of foot, and before they could reach him had snatched the bride of a riderless steed rushing past. In a moment he would have mounted and escaped, for the pursuers dared not fire lest they hit the child.

At that instant, with the lightness of a ghost and the speed of an arrow, Arslan flew past as if on wings, his legs and body seeming to form a straight line. Darting on the robber, the hound opened his great jaws and buried his glistening fangs in his neck; for the dog stood nearly six feet high when rising on his hind legs. The robber dropped the child and made a lunge at the dog with a knife. A horseman now rode up and cut down the ruffian, and snatching up Leila, carried her back to her mother. "Oh, mother, it was Arslan who saved me! I want to see my good Arslan," sobbed the child on her mother's breast.

"Yes, yes, my darling, my lamb," said Fathimeh Khanum, covering her with kisses and forgetting her prejudice against dogs in her delight at having her child again, "you shall see Arslan!" Then, drawing the mantle over her face and turning to the servants, the lady ordered them to lead up the hound.

"Oh, Khanum, the dog is hurt; he is dying; he cannot come," replied one of them, bowing respectfully.

"Then I will go to him!" Leila exclaimed, springing from her mother's arms. She ran as fast as her feet could carry her to Arslan. He was lying gasping on the sand with a deep stab in his side. She stooped down and stroked his eyes, piteously talking to him. He tried to lift his head, licked the tiny hand of his little mistress, and died without a groan. It was better so for poor, brave Arslan.—Hon. S. G. W. Benjamin, in the *Independent*.

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF INDIA.

The annual blue-book on "The Moral and Material Progress of India" is of special interest this year because of its detailed tables of the results of the Indian Census of 1891.

The total population of India is now 287,000,000. Without any wish to exaggerate, only sympathizing with the many who find it difficult to remember figures, I think we may say that our Indian fellow-subjects number nearly 300,000,000 souls. And since even more people fail to realize what large numbers mean than fail to remember them, let me try to bring home that vast population and the great size of India this other way. For every soul in the British Isles there are more than seven in India; every square mile in the British Isles is multiplied by thirteen in our Indian Empire. Or, again, to put the figures another way, "India is a whole continent, not a country." Take away Russia from Europe, and then all the other countries in Europe together will not contain nearly so many people as are in India. The Britons ruling Indian provinces under the Viceroy rank with western kings, emperors, and presidents in the number of their subject-people.

But in our desire to bring India home to our mind by striking comparisons we must not fall into the boastful or merely imperial strain, though there is cause for pride when we contemplate the acquisition and the present organization of the Indian empire. We are responsible in a special degree for the spiritual welfare of these 300,000,000 who have come under our rule. In obedience to Christ's command to go to all nations we find that Christian men and women, American and German, French, Swiss, Danish, and others, have gone to India to give truth and life to its people, and these foreigners are earnestly at work in India to-day. But the responsibility lies mainly upon us British Christians and our Churches. And not only are we united to India, and thus responsible for our fellow-subjects, but India is a source of great pecuniary profit to Britain, although not a single penny is paid by India as tribute. One writer, inclined to exaggerate, it must be confessed, reckons our interest in India, if capitalized, as equal to an investment of £500,000,000 sterling. Even allowing for his exaggeration, common gratitude calls upon us to do something for India, if we do not feel the higher call and the great command.

It is confessedly difficult work to revive the withered life of India, more difficult than to take provinces, provide food for the millions, diffuse enlightenment among them, and keep the peace. For in the Indian mind we have hard-beaten impenetrable soil, thin rocky soil, and thorn-choked soil; we have at once Jewish pride and Greek subtlety of mind; but our duty is to persevere with the field that has been specially given us to cultivate.

We turn to the table in the Census Report entitled "The Population of India, classified according to Religion." Hindus and Mohammedans, of course, form the great bulk of the people as before, for a new nation is not yet born in a day. Hindus still reckon by millions, Christians in many provinces only by tens of thousands. Yet Christianity is distinctly one of the religions of India; Jews any reader require to have his mind awakened to that fact? In India proper—that is, India apart from Burma—we note that the Christian religion now ranks distinctly third in respect of numbers—that is, next to Hinduism and Mohammedanism. Whereas in 1881, Christians and Sikhs were almost equal in numbers, Christians now outnumber Sikhs by 253,000 souls. In India proper also—that is, in the land of Buddha himself—Christianity reckons many more followers than Buddhism; just as, alas! in Palestine Mahomet reckons more followers than Christ. The province of Burma, however, is almost wholly Buddhist; and consequently, taking the whole Indian Empire, including Burma, we find Christianity only fourth in point of numbers. The Hindus number 207,000,000, the Mohammedans 57,000,000, Buddhists 8,500,000, Christians 2,250,000, and the Sikhs nearly 2,000,000.

Scattered all over India, besides, are the isolated remnants of various religions, degraded, aboriginal, or primitive, having nothing in common unless that they are all at one low level of demonolatry, and that they are neither Hindus nor Mohammedans. The census slumps all these together as "aboriginal" in religion, and assigns to them a total of over 9,000,000 souls. These are the people to whom Sir W. Hunter, the authority on Indian statistics, has specially directed the attention of missionaries. Within the next fifty years, he prophesies, these aborigines, if not Christianized, will all be absorbed either by Hinduism or Mohammedanism. Not that in the latter event any religious change will have taken place; only, sooner or later—supposing the drift be to Hinduism—each isolated remnant, in the presence of Hindu castes, will regard itself also as a caste, will adopt caste intolerance, will at some crisis solicit the services of neighbouring Hindu priests, and in this way will eventually become a stone in the great Hindu fabric. They will retain their own old ideas, their own old customs, and even their own old gods, but they will be closed to progress and change. It is noteworthy that Sir W. W. Hunter estimated the aborigines who were entirely outside Hinduism, and therefore specially accessible to mission effort, at about half a million only, whereas the census makes the people of "aboriginal" religions number 9,000,000. In other words, it is certain there are 9,000,000 aborigines more or less accessible to our missionaries, for there are all these still not calling themselves Hindus or Mussulmans, although to some extent they may actually be Hinduized or Mohammedanized. The Lepchas at Darjeeling are among these aborigines, likewise the Chuhars among whom our Mission in the Panjab has worked with such success. While work of all kinds, zenana, educational, and preaching, must not be neglected among the harder Hindus who bulk so largely, we have a splendid opportunity of gathering a Christian nucleus in these peoples outside Hinduism or on its outskirts.

To return to the tables of membership: Out of a population of 287,000,000 over 2,250,000 profess Christianity. That is to say, there is one professing Christian for every 126 persons. One for every 126—those who know what is below the figures hardly know whether to be glad or sad. Glad that the Christian fraction is a tangible one, and because in some parts, notably in certain districts of the Madras Presidency, professing Christians are so numerous that one in every five persons is of the Christian faith, and weak or new-joined brethren have some countenance wherever they are. Sad, all the more sad, because over the greater portion of India they are so rare, that many a native Christian is almost solitary and unsupported among hundreds of people around him. Only those who know how European Christians will degenerate when taken out of Christian surroundings and a Christian atmosphere can sympathize with the isolated native Christians of India, unaccustomed to stand alone, and breathing daily the malaria of heathenism, which is still in their very system. Among the 74,000,000 of the Province of Bengal there is only one professing Christian among every 370 persons, and if we reckoned only Bengali Christians, excluding Europeans and Eurasians, soldiers, sailors, traders, civil servants, and others, what isolated specks would these Bengali Christians appear among the 74,000,000.

What about the increase of the various religions in India during the past decade? The overwhelming fact in these tables is that in the India of 1881—that is, exclusive of newly-annexed territory—the whole population of all religions has increased by 30,000,000 souls. Canon Isaac Taylor's painful fact that non-Christians are adding to their aggregate each year more units than Christians are adding is only too evident in India. We need all the consolation that the counter fact can give that since 1851 the number of Protestant native Christians has been doubling every decade; they have been advancing by geometrical progression, and geometrical progression will soon pass any mere arithmetical progression. Keep doubling a number and you will soon reach hundreds of millions. This fact also may be noted, that the census authorities themselves regard the tremendous increase as in part only apparent. The Native States appear to have