

From the Athenaeum.

PERSIAN MARRIAGE PRELIMINARIES.

When the parents of a youth consider themselves in a condition to maintain a daughter-in-law, they resolve accordingly; the youth is seldom consulted. The next step is to fix on a family with whom, from parity of rank and circumstances, a connexion might, with propriety, be formed; and, having obtained the consent of the parents to give their daughter in marriage, the nearest female relations of the intended bridegroom call at the house and have some conferences with the female guardians of the young lady. By the manner and the form of the call, the object of the visit is always understood, and the black-eyed catelope herself invariably steals away, and never appears before the Dallalas (mediators) until the whole affair, so far as the family arrangements are concerned, is nearly concluded. This was formerly (and is still, to some extent) the point, on arriving at which, the two families forthwith decide on the marriage of the young couple; but the new fashion is, to allow the intended bride and bridegroom to have some interviews, and to encourage them to declare their own inclinations on the subject after they have become known to each other, and the fair one is first consulted. A day is then appointed for this purpose, and the meeting generally takes place in some public gardens, in a mosque, in the Rokah (the sanctuary) of some saint, or in some similar place. A party of ladies, consisting of the members of both families, accompany the young Hoory (veiled of course, but so veiled that she can see very clearly) to the appointed spot, where they meet the young man, who is also in company with one or more of his intimate friends. The youth is pointed out to the lady at some convenient distance, and she then declares her opinion of him: if this be unfavourable, she is generally candid and resolute; if otherwise, she usually blushes, looks down, and remains silent. The young man's chance comes next, and he is first introduced to the fair one at her house, and, on the first occasion, among her female relations. The lady still appears in a veil, but she generally contrives to drop something—her handkerchief, her bracelet, a ring, or some such trifle—which she pretends to look for. Her veil, which is loosely pinned for the occasion, then falls off, and the anxious gallant is blessed with the auspicious sight of her. Then comes the day of Sheereeny Khoran, or sweetmeat-eating, which is a day of joviality, followed by the Angushtar-Baran, or the ring-wearing day, which precedes the marriage day from one to six months or more, during which period Namuzad-Bazy, or courtship, is occasionally allowed.

A SITUATION OF EXTREME HORROR.—'I once,' says a celebrated writer, 'read a most horrible story of some French travellers, who attempted to explore the vaults of the Egyptian pyramids, which revives some of those terrifying obstructions we sometimes meet with in disturbed dreams. These persons had already traversed an extensive labyrinth of chambers and passages. They were on their return; and had arrived at the most difficult part of it, a very long and winding passage, forming a communication between two chambers—its opening narrow and low. The ruggedness of the floor, sides and roof rendered their progress slow and laborious, and these difficulties increased rapidly as they advanced. The torch with which they had entered became useless, from the impossibility of holding it upright, as the passage diminished its height. Both its height and width at length, however, became so much contracted, that the party was compelled to crawl on their bellies. Their wanderings in these infernal passages—for such, in their fatigue of body and mind, they deemed them—seemed to be endless. Their alarm was already great, and their patience already exhausted, when the headmost of the party cried out that he could discern the light at the exit of the passage, at a considerable distance ahead, but that he could not advance any farther, and that in his efforts to press on, in hopes to surmount the obstacle without complaining, he had squeezed himself so far into the reduced opening, that he had no longer strength to recede. The situation of the whole party may be supposed, their faces beyond the power of

direction or advice; while the wretched leader, whether from terror or the natural effect of his situation, swelled so that, if it was before difficult, it was now impossible for him to stir from the spot thus miserably occupied. One of the party at this dreadful and critical moment proposed, in the intense selfishness to which the feeling of vital danger reduces all, as the only means of escape from this horrible confinement, this living grave, to cut in pieces the wretched being who formed the obstruction, and clear it by dragging the dismembered carcase piecemeal past them. He heard this dreadful proposal, and contracting himself with agony at the idea of this death, was reduced by a strong muscular spasm to his usual dimensions, and was dragged out, affording room for the party to squeeze themselves past over his prostrated body. The unhappy creature was suffocated in the effort, and was left behind a corpse.'

DAYS SHOULD SPEAK.*

By the Rev. J. H. Clinch.

Days should speak in trumpet tone,
Telling of advantage gone,
Talents hid or basely used,
Blessings wrested or abused.

Days should speak with warning voice—
Speak of mortals' senseless choice,
Still by airy trifles caught,
Leaving solid joys unbought—

Speak of present blisses prized,
Speak of future joys despised,
Until Earth a home we deem—
Heaven a visionary dream.

Days should speak with words of fear,
Till the cold and careless hear
How light-winged the moments are,
Linked to Time's swift, silent car.

Days should speak and bid us mark
How between the Future dark
And the Present, brief and few
Are the hours we hurry through.

If the loud-voiced, passing days
Thus their warning tones would raise,
Man at length would learn to see
Time is not eternity.

* Job.

VEGETABLE CURIOSITY.—There is not, among the numerous examples that occur of the provident economy of nature, in the vegetable part of the creation, a more remarkable instance of contrivance adapted to circumstances, and of means suited to the end, than what is evidently displayed in a plant which is commonly met with in Ceylon and other islands of the east, which has obtained the appropriate name of the pitcher plant. Being the inhabitant of a tropical climate and found on the most dry and stony situations, Nature has furnished it with the means of an ample supply of moisture, without which it would have withered and perished. To the footstalk of each leaf, near the base, is attached a kind of bag shaped like a pitcher, of the same color as the leaf in the early stage of its growth, but changing with age to a redish purple. It is girt round with an oblique band or hoop, and covered with a lid neatly fitted and inmoveable on a kind of hinge or strong fibre, which passing over the handle, connects the vessel with the leaf. By the shrinking or contracting of this fibre, the lid is drawn open when the weather is showery, or dew falls, which would appear to be just contrary to what usually happens in nature, though the contraction is probably occasioned by the hot and dry atmosphere, and the expansion does not take place till the moisture has fallen and saturated the pitcher. When this is the case, the cover falls down, and it closes so firmly as to prevent any evaporation from taking place. The water having gradually absorbed through the handle into the footstalk of the leaf and sustenance to the plant, as soon as the pitchers are exhausted, the lids open to admit whatever moisture may fall; and when the plant has produced its seed, and the dry season fairly sets in, it withdraws all the covers, the pitcher standing open.

A barrister, blind of one eye, pleading with his spectacles on, said, "Gentlemen, in my argument I shall use nothing but what is necessary." "Then," replied a wag, "take out one of the glasses of your spectacles."

THE RETORT COURTOUS.—When D' Aubigou appeared at the court of Catherine of Medici, three the Queen's maids of honor, whose united ages amounted at least to 145 years, perceiving him new to the place, desirous of diverting themselves with his embarrassment, one of them attacked him by asking, "What are you contemplating so seriously, Sir?"—"The antiquities of Court, Madams," replied D' Aubigou.

THE PEARL.

A SELECT LITERARY, SCIENTIFIC, RELIGIOUS, AND MISCELLANEOUS JOURNAL.

Although Nova Scotia is not behind her sister province in the variety and general excellence of her periodical publications, yet to this hour she does not possess a single respectable journal, devoted chiefly to the diffusion of literary and scientific information. To supply the urgent want exists, and which has long been felt by the advocates of general education, it is intended shortly to commence a weekly publication, the leading object of which will be to promote the interests of literature and popular science in connexion with the exalted truths of our holy religion.

1. It will be entitled THE PEARL, a Select Literary, Scientific, Religious, and Miscellaneous Journal.

2. Its columns will be enriched with essays and notices on the wonders of nature, the works of art, the sciences, and on every branch of philosophy and literature more immediately adapted for dissemination in this and rising province. In this department, in addition to original articles, which it is expected, will be supplied by several literary gentlemen who have kindly promised their aid, the Pearl will embody a vast fund of useful knowledge collected from the best and latest British and American works.

3. The sacred verities of our common christianity will occupy a portion of the pages of the Pearl. Belonging, however, to no religious, much less any political party, it will know nothing of the minor differences which divide and distract the christian world: Not tied down to advocate the cause of any particular community, it will embrace as wide as the interests of humanity, and anxiously endeavoring to narrow the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those catholic and fundamental principles in which all evangelical christians concur, the Pearl it is confidently hoped, will be a powerful means cementing the friendship of the good, and of promoting harmony and love amongst all the professors of the christian religion.

4. A brief summary of domestic news and all interesting items of general intelligence, together with the usual ping list, notice of marriages, deaths, &c. will be regularly given. A place will be assigned for advertisements of moderate length, which will be thankfully received, and carefully inserted.

5. While the Pearl will rigidly abstain from the expression of any opinion on political subjects, it will sometimes devote part of its columns to such extracts from the different newspapers on great political questions as will present the reasoning on EACH SIDE of any point that may be debated. While the Assembly is in session a correct report of proceedings will be given, and occasionally, on the occasion of any question of more than usual importance, an extra number will be furnished.

6. The proprietor has engaged a gentleman to edit the paper who is pledged to avoid every thing like the narrowness of a sectarian spirit. Nothing in the shape of theological controversy will be admitted into the pages of the Pearl.

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Few publications of the age are more popular and useful than those which are entitled, periodical and miscellaneous. They form a new and important era, not in literature and science only, but also in the most momentous human affairs—religion. In employing so mighty a paratus as the periodical press, the proprietor of the Pearl will be sincerely anxious to combine utility with amusement, and to minister to the instruction and improvement of that portion of the public which may be considered a responsible undertaking. In short no expense will be spared to render the Pearl a useful and interesting publication—a publication which, while some of its pieces may afford materials of present gratification to all, will, nevertheless, steadily keep in view the fact, that general knowledge is of real and lasting value, when found in subserviency to the great interests of our common christianity.

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