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THE TURKISH MAIDEN:

AN INCIDENT OF THE NEAPOLITAN CARNIVAL.

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[WITH AN ENGRAVING.]

"Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like the aerial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth."

BYRON.

"She's beautiful; and therefore to be woo'd—
She is a woman; therefore to be won."

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the Carnival of the year 1841, I made an engagement with a friend—a namesake of my own, by the way—Edmond R—, to meet him at one of the Masked Balls which were given, twice a week, at the Theatre of San Carlo. Next to the Theatre of La Scala at Milan, this is the largest building ever erected for dramatic performances, and, on the evening in question, presented a most magnificent display.

A substantial flooring over the pit, formed a continuation to the large and extensive stage, and the whole was crowded with the most motley groups of Queens, Nuns, Flower Girls, Knights, Fishermen, Lazzaroni, and Brigands, interspersed with the dominoes of every colour, in which those, who had not assumed any particular character, sought concealment. Conspicuous amongst these representatives of every country and nation, was one undoubtedly indigenous—Polichinello, the prototype of the illustrious Mr. Punch; though very different, in his loose white trowsers and jacket, light conical cap, and black mask, from the gaudy tinsel figure which had so often in youth afforded us a good hour's amusement. Some score of representatives of this character cut their jokes and their capers among the crowd, and sometimes two of these doughty champions would assail each other amid the laughter of the group that soon congregated

round, to listen to the sly jest and keen repartee of the wordy warfare. On three sides of the house, large and capacious boxes rose, tier above tier, to the number of six, brilliantly illuminated, and occupied, with but few exceptions, by parties of ladies and gentlemen, masked or unmasked.

I soon recognised my friend R—, by the appointed signal, a purple ribbon tied round the sleeve of his domino, while a white silver-edged plume in my Spanish hat as speedily pointed me out to his notice, and we resumed in concert the tour of observation which each had hitherto carried on singly. The inmates of one box particularly drew my attention, and I pointed them out to my companion. In front, at each corner of the box, sat two young ladies, whose clear complexion, bright rosy cheeks, and Auburn hair, at once attested their English descent. On a couch in the centre reclined a third, in a splendid Turkish costume, a dress with which her dark locks and the oriental style of her beautiful features well harmonised, while it set off to great advantage her faultless figure. A Spanish Cavalier, who was leaning over the couch, and alone of all the party wore a mask, completed the group.

"Who is that lovely creature, R—?" I exclaimed, "you know every one in Naples?"

"You mean the Sultana, I suppose?"

"The same—who is she?"