

THE SOUTH SEA.

BY M. G. HOWITT.

Oh, the south! the balmy south,
How warm the breezes float!
How warm the amber waters stream
From off our basking boat.
Come down, come down, from the tall ship's side,
What a marvellous sight is here!
Look, purple rocks and crimson trees!
Down in the deep so clear!
See! where the shoals of dolphins go,
A glad and glorious band,
Sporting among the day-bright woods
Of a coral fairy land.
See! on the violet sands beneath
How the gorgeous shells do glide;
Oh, Sea, old Sea, who yet knows half
Thy wonders and thy pride.
Look how the sea-plants trembling float,
All like a mermaid's locks,
Waving in thread of ruby red,
Over these nether rocks;
Heaving and sinking soft and fair,
Here hyacinth—there green,
With many a stem of golden growth,
And starry flower between.

THE TURK UNBEARDED.

Sometime since, business brought a Turkish merchant to Leghorn; being a person of liberal disposition and possessing the means of displaying it, his acquaintance was much sought by the thrifty and calculating Lavernese. He was a robust good-looking man, of about thirty five, and gloried in a beard of most respectable longitude, as black as jet, which it was his particular care to keep duly trimmed and delicately perfumed. At one of the conversations of the place, he fell in with the wife of a certain Signor G——, a gentleman employed in the dogana, or custom-house, but who happened at this time to be in Florence, whither he had been called by a law suit. Though a Tuscan, Signor G—— was, an almost solitary instance of the kind, subject to occasional fits of jealousy, and when summoned by his affairs to Florence, left his better half with considerable reluctance; but being put to a choice of evils, he wisely preferred leaving his wife for a time, to the risk of losing his money for ever. The lady, as I have said, attracted the Mussulman's attention. Being somewhat of a coquette, the novelty of a Turkish adorer hit her fancy extremely; so that poor Achmet was ere long ensnared in the meshes of Cupid, without a prospect, or even a wish, to extricate himself. Never bearing the least hint at her being encumbered with a husband, he naturally enough concluded that she was either maid or widow, and consequently fair game to be wooed and to be won, for he did not set the difference of religion down as a great obstacle. One evening therefore, whilst engaged at the house of a friend, in a tender *tete-a-tete*, he offered in tolerable *lingua franca*, for real Italian he neither understood very well nor spoke very intelligibly, to take his Christian enslaver to Constantinople as his wife. Hearing this fair proposal, unwilling, no doubt, to risk the loss of her admirer by a candid explanation, she bantered him without giving a decisive answer to his question. In this manner she put him off from day to day, whilst the enamored Turk continued to press his suit with more fervor than ever. In the meantime Signor G——, having terminated his affairs was daily expected from Florence. His lady was not particularly anxious that he should become acquainted with the advantageous offer made in his absence. But how to get rid of her Turkish swain, who besieged her as closely as a beleaguered city? She at length hit on, what she conceived an infallible plan for this purpose. His predilection for his beard was no secret to her, on this point she based her operations. Accordingly when he next pressed her as usual,

'Really,' she said, 'I might be prevailed on but for that odious beard.'

'Odious beard!' reiterated the petrified Turk, 'the blessed prophet cannot boast a finer.'

'I don't care,' replied the fair one, 'you will never do for me, with that goat like appendage to your chin.'

In fine, to cut the matter short, the reader must know that the Turk comprehending but little Italian, understood the lady she would be his, provided he manifested his love for her by the sacrifice of his beard; and that this once done, she was fairly his own by contract implied and expressed between them. Though the loss cut him to the very soul, he resolved to give his mistress this extreme proof of the intensity of his adoration. Little did the simple follower of Mahomet imagine the wiles of which our fair Christians are capable, and still less did his deceiver conceive a Turk could ever reconcile himself to the loss of his beard.

Next morning a loud knock announced a visitor. The cameriera came running up to tell her mistress, as well as she could from laughing, that the Turk was come.

'Seccatura!' said the Signora.

'With a whole levy of Turks at his heels.'

'Male!' answer the lady.

'And without a hair on his chin.'

'Peggio,' cried her mistress, 'what shall we do now?'

Our Turk already, as he conceived, the husband of the lady, in force of the stipulation between them, was come with a dozen stout Turks of his crew, each bearing a nuptial present for the bride, in order to take possession of the lady and her residence, in which he proposed fixing his quarters during his stay in Leghorn. These affairs, by the way, are managed much more simply and with less ado in Constantinople than with us. Having directed his attendants to remain without in the anteroom, until summoned to attend, he hurried in on the wings of love to salute his fair bride. His twelve followers, with all the gravity of Turks, squatted themselves down in the middle of the room, and making themselves quite at home, produced their pipes, and began composedly to send up the odoriferous fumes in volumes to the ceiling. In the mean time the fair Lavernese within was sadly embarrassed. In vain she prayed, expostulated, remonstrated, explained. The enraptured Turk would listen neither to excuse or entreaty. Had he not sacrificed his beard? Was not his chin as smooth as her own? Was ever woman more fairly or dearly won? How the scene would have ended we cannot pretend to determine, had it not happened that at just this very critical moment Signor G—— himself walked in. When he entered the anteroom and beheld twelve Turks, smoking in a circle, like the signs of the zodiac in the days of Phœton, he almost began to think he had mistaken the house. Upon inquiry what all this meant, one of the grave dozen laconically gave him to understand that the residence now belonged to his master.

'Indeed!' said Signor G——, much edified by the intelligence, 'How has that happened?'

'He has married the lady!' puffed out the Mussulman.

'The devil he has!' roared the Signor G——. 'What? a new husband? and a Turk to boot, after six weeks absence?' And he rushed into the inner parment. There he found his lady resisting all we have described, the overtures of the smooth chinmed Turk.

'My husband?' cried the lady.

'My wife?' said the gentleman.

The disappointed Mussulman stood aghast as he heard; whilst the Signora began explaining to the Signor G——, the meaning of this strange scene, as well as she could, whether entirely to her husband's satisfaction is uncertain. Be that as it may, he very politely assured his intended successor that according to the law of the country, wives being only allotted one husband at a time in Italy, and his claim being the prior one, he trusted the other would at least have the goodness to wait for his demise; but this was what the Turk, who had parted with his beloved beard to obtain the lady, was by no means inclined to consent to. Words ensued; and words were on the point of being followed by blows, in which, as there was only one Christian against a round dozen of Turks; the former, though the first husband, would probably have come off second best, had not his servants, seeing how matters went called in the police whose presence put an end to the fracas.

Infuriated at the double loss of his beard and his bride, the Turk continued to threaten vengeance for having been thus victimized, until the police, apprehensive of the consequences, put him by force on board his own vessel, and sent him beardless and wifeless to Constantinople.—*Metropolitan*

RELIGION OF THE CIRCASSIANS.

BY CAPTAIN SPENCER.

The principal articles in the faith of the inhabitants of the Western Caucasus are,—a firm belief in one God, supreme and powerful, and in the immortality of the soul, which they feel convinced will be translated to another world, the abode of their fathers. Like the Mahometans, they do not represent Deity under any visible form, but define him as the Creator of all things, whose spirit is diffused over all space. Besides the one Eternal God, they believe in the existence of several inferior beings, or saints, to whom the Great Spirit, *Thka*, has delegated power over such sublunary things as he deems too trivial for his awful superintendence. These saints have each an anniversary, which is celebrated with public rejoicing and prayer, in the same manner as festivals are in Catholic countries. Some of them are represented under a peculiar symbol; but they do not worship them, except as intermediate agents. Upon this subject I made strict inquiry, and found that all my informants agreed as to this point, and which confirmed what I had previously heard from several Russian officers, who had been for many years in communication with the Circassians. Nevertheless, this worship must be regarded as a species of adoration by the strict Protestant and the equally rigid Mahometan. The most powerful among these saints is Seozeres, to whom the winds and the waters are in subjection. He is regarded with especial reverence by those who reside near the coast; and equally so by the shepherd, being also the protector of flocks and herds. His fete is celebrated by the inhabitants of each village or hamlet at the beginning of spring, when his symbol, a dried pear-tree, is adorned with garlands of flowers, and various other ornaments, not unlike a May-pole. A large curd, or cheese, is attached to the summit; and several lamps, according to the number of the guests invited (the feast being usually held at the house of the chief, or one of the elders), are kept

burning, here and there, over the tree. As cleanliness is considered a virtue among these people, the symbol of the saint, preparatory to being clothed in its finery, is most carefully washed in the purest spring water. Every thing being ready, it is solemnly carried into the house by one of the elders; and, as the saint is supposed to be a great navigator and traveller, his emblem is welcomed with acclamations by the whole company. An animal is sacrificed to his honour; a public banquet prepared; and feasting and rejoicing continued for three days, with an occasional supplication to the saint to protect them from the evils which he is supposed to have the power of averting. The feast concludes by the division of the cheese among the guests, which superstition invests with the property of curing numerous diseases. Each Circassian family preserves one of these sacred trees on his premises: the saint is, however, entirely neglected until his anniversary again occurs. One of the most remarkable features in this festival is, its resemblance to that of St. John, still celebrated by the peasants of the remote districts, in the Carpathian mountains; to which we may add, that the decking of a tree with flowers, ornaments, and lights, during the Christmas holidays, is practised, even to this day, by nearly the whole of the inhabitants of Germany, and other countries in the north of Europe; and one of the prettiest gifts you can present to a child in Germany; at Christmas, is an ornamented fir-tree, covered with fruit, flowers, confectionary, and wax lights. Another of the Circassian saints is Merissa, protector of bees; and no less important a personage than the mother of God. This is evidently a mixture of Paganism with the adoration paid to the Virgin Mary. In a country like Circassia, where honey forms so important a part of the husbandry of the people, and mingles so extensively with their food, we cannot wonder that they personified a deity of such powerful influence to guard the bee; and, from their traditions, it appears she performed the trust most faithfully; for, on one occasion, when an evil spirit most wilfully attempted to destroy the whole of these industrious insects, she preserved a couple by her miraculous power, and repopulated the woods and forests. This feast is celebrated for three days, about the middle of September, with feasting and rejoicing, like the others; the only difference being, that the dishes and drinks composing the banquet are made entirely from the produce of the bee. Besides these, there are several other saints, such as Yemikha, Skuskha, Naokhatkha, and Meate, protectors of agriculture, woods, and forests, etc. who are each honoured with a festival. To which we may add the powerful king, Tiebske, a mixture of Mars and Vulcan, protector of armourers. Thunder and lightning, as it emanates immediately from the great Spirit, *Thka*, is regarded by the Circassians with the greatest veneration; and happy is the man who is so distinguished as to fall a victim to its violence: his body is consigned to the earth with great solemnity, and his family rejoice at the great honour conferred upon them. When they hear the *chebli* (thunder,) rolling in the heavens, they believe it to be an angel of God, travelling in his fiery chariot through the air; and rush forth from their houses, *en masse*, to thank the celestial messenger who thus irrigates their fields, and refreshes and purifies the air, during the great heat of summer. The Circassians also reverence, with more than common devotion, three sisters, who preside over and encourage the happiness of domestic life, good fellowship, and harmony, with their neighbours. These divinities are also supposed to shield the warrior in battle with their protecting wings, and to guard the footsteps of the traveller; consequently, the natives never undertake an expedition, or even change their domicile, without making a propitiatory offering to their fair saints."

THE JEWS OF SMYRNA.

After dinner, under the escort of a merchant, a Jew from Trieste, residing in the same hotel, I visited the Jew's quarter. The Jews of Smyrna are the descendants of that unhappy people who were driven out from Spain by the bloody persecutions of Ferdinand and Isabella; they still talk Spanish in their families; and though comparatively secure, now, as ever, they live the victims of tyranny and oppression, ever toiling and accumulating, and ever fearing to exhibit the fruits of their industry, lest they should excite the cupidity of a rapacious master. Their quarter is by far the most miserable in Smyrna, and within its narrow limits are congregated more than ten thousand of the accursed people. It was with great difficulty that I avoided wounding the feelings of my companion by remarking its filthy and disgusting appearance; and wishing to remove my unfavourable impression by introducing me to some of the best families first, he was obliged to drag me through the whole range of its narrow and dirty streets. From the external appearance of the tottering houses, I did not expect any thing better within; and out of regard to his feelings, was really sorry that I had accepted his offer to visit his people; but with the first house I entered I was most agreeably disappointed. Ascending outside by a tottering staircase to the second story, within was not only neatness and comfort, but positive luxury. At one end of a spacious room was a raised platform opening upon a large latticed window, covered with rich rugs and divans along the wall. The master of the house was