

# HALIFAZ PEARL,

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Published every Friday evening, at Fifteen Shillings per Annum, in advance.

VOLUME TWO.

FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1898.

TWENTY-THREE.

From The City of the Sultan, and Domestic Manners of the Turks, in 1836.

BY MISS PARDOE.

The Sultan occasionally recompenses the faithful services of the slaves of the Imperial Serai by giving them their liberty, accompanied by a donation sufficiently liberal to enable them to establish themselves in an eligible manner. On a late occasion, he emancipated an elderly woman, who had secured his favor by her unremitting attentions to one of his wives during a protracted illness; and being light of heart at the moment, and perhaps curious to learn how she would act on such an emergency, he desired her to put on her yashmac, and take a boat to Stamboul, where she was to hire an araba, and drive slowly about the city, until she saw an individual whom she desired for a husband; when if he could be indentified, she should be his wife within the week.

His Imperial Highness was obeyed on the instant. One of the Palace caiques rowed to the door of the harem; and the freed slave accompanied by an aged companion, stepped in, and was rapidly conveyed to Stamboul. On landing at 'the Gate of the Garden,' she walked into the house of Hussein the watch-maker, with whose wife she was acquainted; and while the stripling son of the worthy Musselman was despatched for the araba, she took her place upon the sofa, and partook of the grape-jelly and coffee which were handed her by her officious hostess. These were succeeded by the *kaduen-chibouk*, or woman's pipes; and she had not flung out half a dozen volumes of smoke from her nostrils ere all the harem of Hussein the watchmaker knew that she was free, and about to choose a helpmeet from among the tradesmen of the city.

At every 'Mashallah!' uttered by her auditors, the self-gratulation of the visitor increased; and she who, a day previously had not wasted a thought on matrimony, smoked on in silence, absorbed in dreams of tenderness and ambition.

The araba was of course a full hour ere it appeared, for the arabajhe had to smoke his *narghile*, or waterpipe; and the arabajhe's assistant had to repair the damages which the last day's journey had done to the harness, and to wash away the mud that yet clung about the wheels; and after that there were comments on the state of the horses, as they were slowly attached to the vehicle; and on the unusual circumstance of a Turkish woman hiring a carriage, without previously bargaining with the owner for the sum to be paid.

But Yusuf, the son of Hussein, who found more amusement in watching the slow motions of the arabajhe than in keeping guard over his father's chronometers, put an end to the astonishment of the party by informing them that the person who had engaged the vehicle was a slave of the Imperial Serai; a piece of information which tended considerably to expedite the preparations of the coachman, and to excite the curiosity of his companions.

The Female Cœlebs, meanwhile, had emptied three chibouks; and as the ashes of each was deposited in the little brass dish that rested on the carpet, brighter and fairer visions rose before her; and on each occasion that she drew from amid the folds of the shawl which bound her waist, the cachemire purse that contained her tobacco, and replenished her pipe, she indulged in a more flattering augury of her day's speculation.

To render the circumstance more intelligible to the European reader, it may be as well to state that there are few tradesmen in Stamboul who would hesitate to marry an Imperial Slave, whatever might be her age or personal infirmities, as she is sure to bring with her a golden apology for all her defects: and thus it was not astonishing that the wife of Hussein sighed as she remembered that her son Yusuf was yet a child, and that consequently she could not offer his hand to her visitor: and the more sincerely that the worthy watchmaker did not stand high in the favor of fortune; the 'accursed Giaours,' as the angry Hanoum did not hesitate to declare, selling for the same price demanded by the Turkish artisan for his inferior ware, watches that were as true as the muezzing, and as enduring as the Koran.

At length the araba drew up beneath the latticed windows; and the two friends, resuming their slippers, shuffled across the matted floor of the harem, followed by the compliments and *teminus* of their hostess; mattresses and cushions were arranged in the vehicle by the hands of Hussein himself; and their yashmacs having been arranged, they were ere long jolting over the rough pavement of the city of Constantine.

They first bent their course to the Charsbees; and the confidant pointed out many a grave-looking, middle-aged Musselman to the admiration of her companion; but the freed woman only

shrugged her shoulders, uttered a contemptuous 'Mashallah!' and turned away her eyes.

The stream of life flowed on beside their path. Turbans of green, of white, and of yellow passed along; but none of the wearers found favor in the sight of the husband-seeking fair-one. Hours were wasted in vain; she was as far removed from a decision as when she stepped into the caique at Beglierbay; and the patience of her companion was worn threadbare; she became silent, sullen, and sleepy, and still the araba groaned and drawled along the narrow streets; human nature could endure no more; and after having been jolted out of a quiet slumber three several times the confidant disgressed from weariness to expostulation.

'May the Prophet receive me into paradise! Is there not a True Believer in Stamboul worthy to become the husband of a woman whose hair is gray; and who has long ceased to pour out the scented sherbet in the garden of roses? Had it been my fate to come hunting through the thoroughfare of the city on the same errand, I should have chosen long ago. The freed woman only replied, desiring the arabajhe to drive to the quarter inhabited by the *sekeljhes* or sweetmeat makers; the finest race of men in Constantinople. When they entered it, she began to look about her with more earnestness than she had hitherto exhibited; but even here she was in no haste to come to a decision; and although she passed many a stately Musselman whom she would not have refused in the brightest days of her youth, she 'made no sign' until she arrived opposite to the shop of a manufacturer of *alva*, a sweet composition much esteemed in the east; where half a dozen youths, bare legged, and with their shirt sleeves rolled up to their shoulders, were employed in kneading the paste, previously to its being put into the oven.

'*Inshallah*—I trust in God! He is here'—said the lady, as she stopped the carriage; 'See, you not that tall stripling, with arms like the blossom of the seringa; and eyes as black as the dye of Khorasan?'

'He who is looking towards us?' exclaimed her companion in astonishment; 'The Prophet have pity on him! Why, he is young enough to be your son.'

The answer of the freed woman was an angry pull at her yashmac, as she drew more closely together the folds of her *feridjhe*. The young and handsome *sekeljhe* was summoned to the side of the araba, and found to improve upon acquaintance; upon which he was informed of the happiness that awaited him, and received the tidings with true Turkish philosophy; in a few days the bride removed into a comfortable harem, of which the ground floor was a handsome shop, fitted up with a select stock of sweetmeats at the expense of the Sultan; and those who desire to see one of the principal actors in this little comedy, need only enter the gaily painted establishment at the left hand corner of the principal street leading into the *Atmeidam*, to form an acquaintance with Sulieman the *sekeljhe*.

Another occurrence, equally authentic, and still more recent, is deserving of record, as being peculiarly characteristic of the rapid progress of enlightenment and liberality. An Emir of the city, celebrated for his sanctity and rigid observance of all the laws of Mahomet, had a fair daughter, who sometimes indulged, in the solitude of the harem, in softer dreams than those of her austere father. Unfortunately for the stately priest, a guard house, tenanted by a dozen armed men, under the command of an officer whose personal merits exceeded his years, was established not a hundred yards from his house; and, as the youthful commander paced slowly to and fro the street to dispel his ennui, it so chanced that he generally terminated his walk beneath the windows of the Emir's harem.

The first time that the pretty Yasumi (Jasmin) Hanoum peeped through her lattice at the handsome soldier, the blood rushed to her brow, and her heart beat quick, though she knew not wherefore. The young beauty led a lonely life, for she was motherless, and her father was a stern man, who had no sympathy with womanly tastes; and, satisfied with providing for her daily necessities, never troubled himself further. It was by no means extraordinary, therefore, that she amused her idleness with watching the motions of the stranger; nor that by dint of observing him she ere long discovered that he was rapidly becoming an object of interest to her heart.

Then followed all the manoeuvres of an eastern beauty, who has no means of communication with the other sex, save those which her woman-wit enables her to invent. A shower of lavender buds, flung from the narrow opening of the lattice upon his head, first attracted the attention of the gallant Moslem

to the Emir's harem; nor was it diminished by a glimpse of one of the whitest little hands in the world, which, ere it closed the aperture, waved a graceful salutation that could be meant only for himself.

But the youth knew that he was playing a dangerous game, and he consequently moved away without making any answering gesture; and resolved to stroll in the other direction, rather than encourage the advances which had been made to him. Once or twice, he accordingly walked as far as the slipper stall of a Jew merchant; but this uninteresting individual squinted hideously, and smoked tobacco of so odious a quality that it half-suffocated the more fastidious Osmanli. Of course there was no persevering in such an encounter, and he was consequently compelled to resume his original line of march; being the more readily induced to do so by importunate memories of the little white hand which showered down upon him the sweet-scented lavender buds; although he did not suffer himself to suspect that such was the case, and lest he should be addressed from the dangerous lattice, and thus become more deeply involved in the adventure, he amused himself by singing of Sultan Mahmoud's ballads in his best style.

But, unfortunately for the success of this laudable intention, the imperial poet has written none but love ditties; and the young soldier chanced inadvertently to fix upon one in which an anxious suitor calls upon his mistress to reveal to him the beauty that he has hitherto beheld only in his dreams; he invokes the moon from behind the clouds that veil it, the hidden leaf from the heart of the rose where it is folded, and loses himself in hyperbole on the subject of the concealed loveliness on which he longs to look.

No wonder that the imprisoned Yasumi Hanoum listened until she believed that the Prophet's paradise was opening about her; no wonder that on the morrow a lock of hair as black as midnight fell at the feet of the minstrel, as he paced his accustomed beat, and still less wonder that the white hands and the dark dress began to trouble the dreams of the gallant Moslem, and to bewilder his imagination.

He was smoking his evening chibouk seated on a low wicker stool at the door of the guard-room, when chancing to look up, he perceived a female rapidly approaching from the direction of the Emir's house. There was nothing remarkable in such a circumstance, for the street was a great thoroughfare, and many women had traversed it during the day; and yet his attention was irresistibly attracted to the stranger; and as she reached his side, their eyes met: '*Shekhar Allah*!—Praise be to God! I may speak to you at last,' murmured a low soft voice; 'perhaps I should not tell you that I love you, but who can war against fate?'

The deep dark eyes were averted, the light figure moved away; he had looked upon the Emir's daughter!

Prudence was at an end; and many a midnight hour did the young soldier spend beneath the latticed casement of the enamored beauty. At length her adventurous hand raised the envious jalousie, and as the moonlight fell bright upon her, the lover looked upon the fair face which was destined never more to be forgotten; and from that moment he vowed that death alone should make him relinquish his suit.

But, alas! what hope could be indulged that a saintly Emir would bestow his daughter upon a soldier, upon an individual doubly obnoxious both from his profession, and from the fact that it had grown to power upon the ruin of the Janissaries? The youth asked, supplicated, and was answered with contempt and loathing.

But the tears of the fair girl when she learnt from his own lips the failure of his suit, only strengthened him in his determination of success; and having confided his adventure to a friend who was devoted to his interests, he resolved either to compel the consent of the Emir, or to incur the penalty of exile, rather than exist near the woman whom he loved, without a hope that she could be his. Accordingly, having summoned half a dozen of his men, he informed them that he had a quarrel with the Emir which he was determined to decide; and intrusted them to loiter about the house of the priest, and should they hear any disturbance, to enter as if by accident; and, in the event of the Emir desiring them to seize their officer, and carry him before the Seraskier, to obey without hesitation.

This arrangement made, the lover once more intruded on the seclusion of the priest, and with all the eloquence inspired by sincere affection, besought him to revoke his resolution, and to