

ey; they pass at once from torment to satiety. Lovers there are prisoners, always watching to deceive their keepers, and always alert to seize the first opportunity, because it seldom happens, and is soon lost. Secret as conspirators, they conceal their good fortune as a crime, because it is attended with no less fatal consequences. Indiscretion can scarcely avoid the poinard, the pistol, or poison. Its destructive consequences to the women render them implacable in punishing, and to revenge themselves, they are frequently more cruel than their husbands and their brothers. This severity preserves a considerable degree of chastity and decorum in the country; but in the great towns, where there are more resources for intrigue, as much debauchery prevails as among us; only with this difference, that it is more concealed. Aleppo, Damascus, and above all, Cairo, are not second in this respect to our provincial capitals. Young girls are reserved there as every where else, because the discovery of a love adventure would cost them their lives; but married women give themselves up to pleasure with the more freedom, to indemnify themselves for the long and strict restraint they have endured, and because they have often just reasons for revenging themselves on their masters. In fact, from the practice of polygamy permitted by the Koran, the Turks, in general, are enervated very early, and nothing is more common than to hear men of thirty complaining of impotence. This is the malady for which they chiefly consult the Europeans, desiring them to give them *madjoun*, by which they mean provocatives. This infirmity is the more mortifying to them, as sterility is a reproach among the Orientals; they still retain for secularity all the esteem of ancient times; and the best wish you can make a young girl, is that she may soon get a husband, and have a great number of children. From this prejudice they hasten their marriages so much, that it is not rare to see girls of nine or ten years old married to boys of twelve or thirteen. It must however be confessed, that the apprehensions of libertinism, and the severity with which that was punished by the Turkish police, greatly contribute to these premature unions, which must likewise be reckoned among the causes of their early impotence. The ignorance of the Turks will not suffer itself to be persuaded on this head, and they are so irrational as to force nature, at the very time their health is impaired by excess. This is also to be ascribed to the Koran, in which the amorous prophet has taken care to insert a precept inculcating

this species of duty. Montesquieu, therefore, is in the right, to assign polygamy as one of the causes of depopulation in Turkey; but it is one of the least considerable, as there are few but the rich who allow themselves a plurality of women; the common people, and especially those of the country, content themselves with one, and persons are sometimes to be met with, even amongst the higher ranks, who are wise enough to imitate their example, and confess that one wife is quite sufficient.

What we are able to learn of the domestic life of the husbands who have several wives, is neither calculated to make their lot envied, nor to give a high idea of this part of Mahomet's legislation. Their house is a perpetual scene of tumult and contention. Nothing is to be heard but quarrels between the different wives and complaints to the husband. The four legal married women complain that their slaves are preferred to them; and the slaves, that they are abandoned to the jealousy of their mistresses. If one wife obtains a trinket a token of favour, or permission to go to the bath, all the others require the same, and league together in the common cause. To restore peace, the polygamist is obliged to assume the tone of a despot, and from that moment he meets with nothing but the sentiments of slaves, the appearance of fondness and real hatred. In vain does each of these women protest she loves him more than the rest; in vain do they fly, on his entering the apartments, to present him his pipe and his slippers, to prepare his dinner, to serve him his coffee; in vain, whilst he is effeminately stretched out upon his carpet, do they chase away the flies which incommoded him; all those attentions and caresses have no other object than to procure an addition to their trinkets and moveables, that if he should repudiate them, they may be able to tempt another husband, or find a resource in what becomes their own property. They are merely courtizans, who think of nothing but to strip their lover before he quits them; and this lover, long since deprived of desires, teized by feigned fondness, and tormented with all the listlessness of satiety, is far from enjoying, as we may well imagine, an enviable situation. The contempt the Turks entertain for their women, arises from this concurrence of circumstances, and it is evidently the effect of their own customs. For how should the women retain that exclusive love, which renders them most estimable, when so many share in the affections of their husband? How should they possess that modesty which constitutes