

## CHAPTER VI

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF HAREM LIFE

(a) *My Turkish Hostess, Makboulé Hanoum (Madame Nadgi Pasha)*

**D**URING my second visit to Turkey the British Ambassador invited me to the Sultan's Selamlik. A more ridiculous performance it would have been hard to imagine, nevertheless it was an excuse for people to gather together and talk. . . .

The Turkish soldiers, collected on the square, were fine specimens of humanity! The music, as the Sultan drove down the short hill to his own mosque, was good, but the Sultan himself, seated with his son, was deathly pale with terror, and indeed cut a poor figure. Coming back when the prayers were over, the horses went at a sharp trot up the hill, making it necessary for the corpulent generals of the suite, who followed on foot, to run. No theatre could have provided a more absurd show than those red-faced generals puffing and blowing up the hill, catching their swords between their legs, and all the while being fully aware of the amusing spectacle that they provided for the visitors.

That day turned out to be a lucky one for me, for I met Kiamil Pasha, the Grand Vizir, a man who has played a big rôle in the history of Turkey. He was a Turk of the old school, and a man of vast culture, with fine manners. He not only spoke perfect English, but understood and loved England as no other Turkish statesman has done



before or since. In faultless, cultured English, without even an accent, he explained to me how, when, and why he came to understand the greatness of England. How different the map of Europe might have been to-day, if only the Liberal Government had responded to the appeal of Kiamil Pasha !

The Grand Vizir invited me to meet his daughter. Nothing could have given me greater pleasure, and when later his " official " son came to fetch me, I drove to Nichan-tash with the feeling that something was beginning in my life.

Kiamil Pasha's daughter and I became friends at once. And to-day, after twenty years, I can say that nothing, not even war which sometimes separates friends, can end so far as I am concerned, this close union of heart and mind. My affection for Turkey and what I understand of Turkish life (for Makboulé, unlike Zeyneb, is Turkish through and through) I owe to this friend, whom I call my " Turkish sister."

I shall always remember her kind hospitality and the trouble she has taken to explain so many things to me. Can I ever forget our long talks, when, seated on our cushions round the old brass mangal, we made coffee ; how often I think of those confidences that lasted deep into the night, when two women, one from the East and the other from the West, seemed to be exchanging their very souls.

Physically my friend Makboulé was everything that I was not and everything, therefore, that I most admire. Small, slight, with blue-black hair, lovely brown eyes and a soft voice, beside me, she looked like a little brown mouse. In twenty years she has not changed physically and what I said of her then, I say to-day. Her distinction, her exquisite manners, her kindness, her loyalty, her Eastern charm and culture, and her understanding of the West,



will always class her in my mind as one of the finest examples of her race.

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The three things I had made up my mind to do in Constantinople, and which our Ambassador said were impossible ;—to meet Abdul Hamid, to visit his favourite daughter, about whom I wrote a book, and to visit the Treasury,—my friend's father arranged without any apparent difficulty. "You see," said the Ambassador, when I told him the impossible had been possible, "you did not require me after all."

I went daily to see my new friend, and together we made the most delightful excursions whenever it was possible ; and when it was impossible, her brothers, or her fiancé accompanied me. Strange it was that I, the European, could borrow my friend's fiancé and brothers, but she could not go out with either.

So during my visit, the Grand Vizir's horses were well exercised, and the brothers chartered his elegant steam launch to take me to the Holy Tomb at Eyoub, up and down the Bosphorus, to the islands and all the beautiful sites in the neighbourhood. The weather was magnificent, the Bosphorus usually lay like a carpet of satin under the bluest of blue skies, and as the launch threaded its way in and out the islands, I used to say to my friends, "Surely God has given to the Turks one of the most beautiful lands on the earth."

We paid some visits to the Imperial Princesses. They interested me as the study of minds immured in gilded cages. They knew nothing of the life that was going on outside their palace gates. Sometimes they drove out, but only to visit other Princesses ; or in the Palace parks or in specially restricted areas. Makboulé in describing me to one Princess told her, "I shot lions !" The Imperial lady



was much interested. To her an Englishwoman was a super-human being who could accomplish any feat. Makboulé was mistaken ; the shooting was done by a friend.

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An old kinsman of mine, threescore years and ten and more —(to count his years in the poetical Biblical way, for he is still alive and as sensitive as a woman where his age is concerned)—very much wished to meet my Turkish friend. He asked the Grand Vizir, if this could be made possible, but my friend's father regretted that he was unable to allow it. So for fun, she and I arranged a rendezvous for three o'clock at the tomb of Alexander, in the Museum, my friend was visiting for the first time.

That a young girl should feel any emotion at the thought of meeting an old man was extraordinary. She was to be married, and her father had allowed her the unheard-of privilege of meeting her fiancé, yet this meeting about which we had talked for days had in it something of romance and danger which was to her fascinating. After all, the object of the meeting mattered little ; it was the meeting that counted. It may be noted here that old age has little attraction for Turkish women. To keep it at arm's length as long as possible, old Turkish women dye their hair with henna. When one thinks how lovely white hair can be, and how hideous this scarlet " wool " appears against the brown wrinkled faces of the old women, one longs to show them the error of their ways. It spoils the expression and takes away the softness that ought to accompany their kind eyes.

Old husbands are particularly distasteful to young Turkish brides, yet in the old days, *le maître imposé* was in many instances thirty, forty, or even fifty years older than his bride.

These appalling unions of May and December are revolting in any land. With us, when twenty-five marries seventy-eight, we class the bride as a worldly being, who



has willingly sold herself for money or position. But in Turkey, when poor little twelve or thirteen found herself wedded to sixty, one felt the deepest pity for the poor innocent victim and a strong desire to strangle the man before he had the opportunity of maiming her body and crushing her soul. Abdul Hamid's fourth wife was twelve when he married her and he nearly seventy. Historians, I notice, say he was not a sensualist ! What then was he ?

Now that the *maître imposé* is swept away with the House of Osman and Turkish women can choose their husbands for themselves, they choose young men. Quite recently in Constantinople, a father tried to impose on his daughter an old husband of his choice ; she preferred the young man of her own. As she could not get her own way, she just disappeared, and after days of searching, was found in the home of the young man. Finally they were married ; and the whole Press and the sympathy of the people were with the lovers. How differently this question would have been handled in the days of Hamid !

But to return to our meeting in the Museum. After a hurried lunch, we arrived at our destination. Under the watchful eye of our chocolate-coloured attendant, whom I called Chocolate Aga, we saw all the beauties of the Museum, but the old gentleman did not appear. To waste time I went to buy photographs of the tomb and kept returning to take a long last look at this wonderful work of art. Chocolate Aga began to be suspicious. So we were finally obliged to leave the Museum, and the rendezvous never took place ! My friend and I have so frequently laughed over this adventure, innocent enough God knows, yet how dangerous ! Often during my last visit when we drove out with men as a matter of course, my friend related to other friends how her heart beat as she wandered in and out of the treasures of the Museum, her thick veil over her face, and waited for the old gentleman,



who at the last moment dared not incur the wrath of our vigilant attendants !

Just before we arrived at the Museum, we saw H.I.H. Prince Youssoffeddine, second heir to the throne, enter his carriage. He was a white-haired man past middle age, and was taking advantage of the liberty given him by the Constitution to make the acquaintance for the first time of the art treasures of Constantinople. He was an ardent admirer of our country, and did his utmost to keep Turkey out of war with England. He even went down to the Parliament and boldly spoke his mind about the folly of Turkey being on the wrong side with England. The next day he was found dead ! He is said to have killed himself ! One cannot help asking, why ?

In 1913, when Prince Youssoffeddine was heir to the throne, I, accompanied by Djémal Pasha as interpreter, used frequently to visit him. "They have given me wives," the Prince told me, "who bore me to tears. Please tell me stories of your wonderful country."

So in the style of the Conteur of the Arabian Nights, I would start with Alfred and the cakes, then Princess Mary's rabbit, and finally come to his favourite, the suffragettes who chained themselves to the lattice-work in the House of Commons. Once when I told that story, always to the accompaniment of his loud peals of laughter, H.I.H. asked Djémal Pasha to remind me that I was going too quickly, the Speaker was not yet in his place. After that, I had to learn my stories by heart, for my Imperial host soon knew them better than I, and noticed every digression.

The Prince was a sympathetic man. And how one pitied him for the useless life he had to lead ! And what a delight to see his real joy when I spoke to him of the England he loved so well. "Your dear happy country," he called it. Perhaps, after all, *he* died for England !

Kiamal Pasha gave a big dinner party, and invited me.



I was the only representative of my sex and sat on the right of the Turkish statesman.

The menu was European; I was disappointed, for I longed for more of the good Turkish dishes I had eaten with the ladies. My host quoted verbatim many of the speeches of our British Cabinet Ministers. Hearing them from the mouth of a Turkish statesman is like seeing one's own MSS. in type. All the faults stand out so clearly.

The Grand Vizir, at that period, did not eat meat. Nevertheless he ate it to keep me company, but out of the corner of my eye I saw that he did not swallow it. I remembered this when I was recently the guest of his grandson, Hikmet Bey, Turkish Minister in Belgrade. Although he never drinks wine, he filled his glasses one after the other, liqueur as well, and then only took one sip, so that I should not feel uncomfortable drinking alone.

In the large hall of the Grand Vizir's official house, where the dinner was held, the women looked at the proceedings through the small lattice-work window, just as the women of England formerly "looked at" the debates in the House of Commons. The fact of seeing a woman at this banquet must have deeply impressed the Grand Vizir's little son, for when I met him recently, now a young man doing his military service, he told me he remembered my white dress and that the Grand Vizir had given me a bouquet of blood red roses. . . .

My friend remembers this banquet, as she remembers all her father's official receptions, as moments of sorrow and rebellion—yet she said nothing at the time, and would have been angry had I expressed pity. "Why," she now tells me she used to say to herself, "because I am a Turk must I be on the margin of all good things, and get no more out of life than looking at a banquet through a lattice-window?"

When Abdul Hamid kept his Grand Vizir, Kiamil Pasha,



in exile as Vali of Smyrna, the Turkish statesman gave many balls in honour of the naval officers of the various fleets who came to this port. "Little did those sailors—and of course we loved the British most of all—think," said my friend, "as they danced and flirted, of the poor women who, hidden behind the lattice-work, were crying their eyes out with envy. They looked so elegant, such gentlemen, and every inch sailors, and it made us furious to think that all the other women except the Turks could dance with them."

My friend recalled this souvenir when we were recently preparing our own ball at Konia—the first public ball that was ever given in the Sacred City of the dancing dervishes! The old days seemed like unpleasant dreams that had gone forever.

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That time, I had stayed, as I always do in Turkey, far longer than I intended. When my friend and I at last said good-bye, however, we astonished our entourage by bursting into tears. The whole question of women's freedom seemed to me so hopeless and so pathetic. The women were too cultured to be happy and too unorganized to revolt—isolated rebellion as in the case of Zeyneb was useless—and one felt there was so little one dared to do, or could do. . . .

Makboulé was to be married; her husband is respected by all, and is devoted to his wife and daughter—but supposing it had been otherwise! I knew I could not do anything to change her lot nor could I express pity—so being unable to find the right words, tears spoke better than I possibly could have done myself. And my friend cried, because she, too, was unable to express what she felt. Yet those were happy days, though tinged with sorrow, that we spent together.



*(b) Complete Separation of the Sexes in old Turkey*

To be staying in a Turkish harem! How thrilling—how extraordinary! Immediately the imagination takes wings and the most impossible and improbable questions are the result.

The harem, however, was a disappointment. To be with my friend was a delight, and the harem was an interesting study; nothing else. Luxuries such as gold embroideries,—even our sheets and pillow-cases and towels were worked in threads of real gold,—were everywhere, but comforts, as we understand them in the West, were unknown! The most difficult problem of all, setting aside the lack of fresh air and want of exercise, was to try and get the setting to harmonize with the mentality of the twentieth century;—Paris dresses, *dernier cri*, sat side by side with the old chalvar<sup>1</sup> and enturi<sup>2</sup> of the thirteenth century and had to live together in apparent peace.

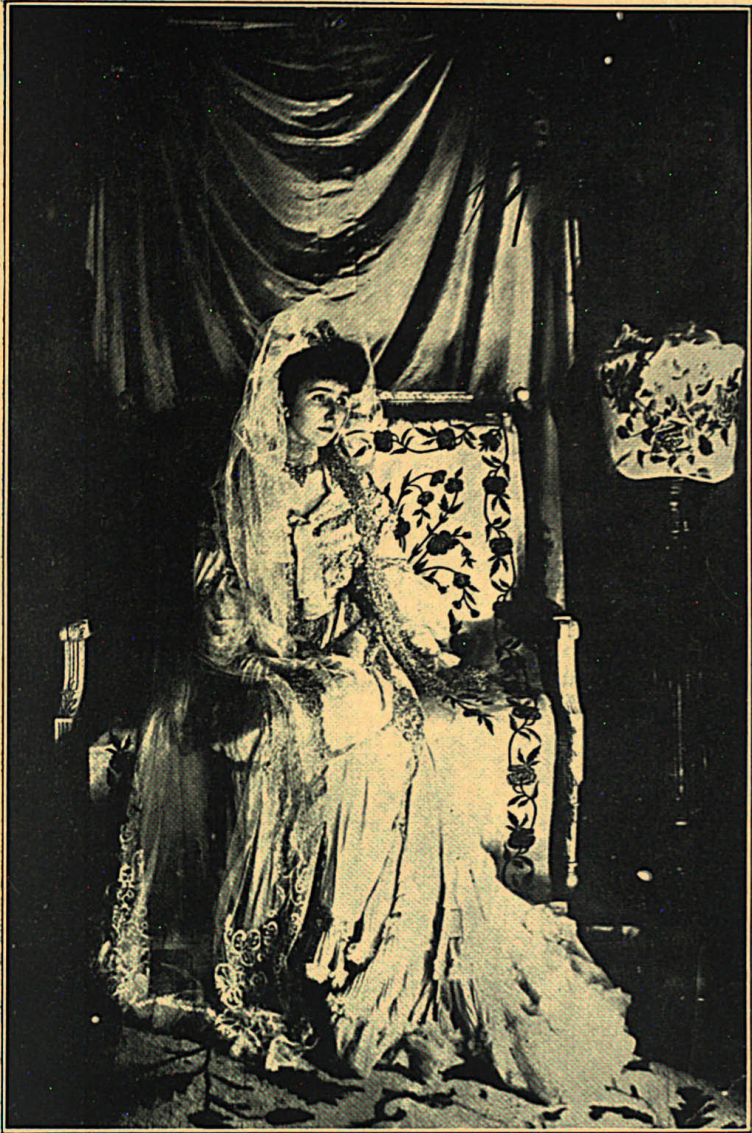
That even in those days, high-born Turkish women wore European dresses indoors, is no doubt an unpleasant surprise to readers eager for harem "atmosphere." I remember at the time of my visit I sent some photographs back to a London paper. They were returned with the comment, "These are not Turkish women." The paper in question published its own photographs of Turkish women—either women of the people in national costume, or Europeans dressed as Turks for the occasion. Some papers, especially popular papers, will cling to the old Arabian Nights setting even to-day, and harems and polygamy, although they know polygamy has gone for ever.

The house in which I lived was a large konak or palace

<sup>1</sup> Tunic.

<sup>2</sup> Pantaloon.





THE LATE ZEYNEB HANOUM, HEROINE OF PIERRE LOTI'S "DISENCHANTED,"  
SEATED ON HER BRIDAL THRONE



looking onto the shores of the Sea of Marmora. It is right in the heart of old Byzantium, and the costliest treasures of that period were scattered about amongst the roses of the garden and the fallen fruit, and no one seemed to know their value. There used to be a priceless fountain,—there were two, but an Ambassador's wife who came to return my call, and above all make the acquaintance of a harem, admired it so conscientiously, that my host had it dug up from the place where it had lodged for centuries, and taken to the Embassy.

The konak is divided into two :—the harem, the selamlik, the women's quarters, and the men's quarters. They are like two houses side by side, with separate entrances, and a door leads from one building to the other. If you enter by the men's entrance, there is a strong atmosphere of stale smoke, and the place looks like a men's club, well kept if you have good servants, badly kept if you have not. The servants are naturally men.

It is more difficult to enter the women's quarters unless you know how. You push open a primitive wooden door, insecurely latched, and then go up a marble staircase on to a verandah. It was here, that my friend and I used to sit every day to see the setting sun, and drink our coffee and tea. We loved to sit on that verandah and bathe ourselves in the sun, and then watch in silence the greatest theatrical representation the world has ever seen, the changing colours of the setting sun. It was like a sacred ritual. All of a sudden the clouds would take shape and march majestically round, as the setting sun changed from bright gold to crimson and purple and died away. Then the muezzins from the neighbouring minarets would sing of the glory of God as the panorama passed, scene by scene. At the same time the whole city and the exquisite waters of the Marmora would wrap themselves in a cloth of scarlet, whilst the tall dark cypress trees stretching to Heaven



like the minarets themselves, and the roses climbing everywhere according to their own sweet will, would also be bathed in the changing tints of the setting sun. From that verandah, I have watched the majestic mosques and the city in all its magnificence, over and over again. There is distinction and originality in the mind that loves the heights and long, unending horizons. The Turk, whether you like him or not, has done his work well. Constantinople, thanks to his contributions in architecture, has become one of the world's famous masterpieces of art.

Double doors lead from the verandah to the harem, the women's quarters. When first the door was opened, and a hat appeared, the old ladies seated everywhere either scampered away like rats, who have been playing in a deserted home, or they covered their faces entirely. They were seated cross-legged on the floor. Some were embroidering; some rolling their cigarettes; others smoking; others still drinking coffee; and most of them not even thinking, and too lazy to dream. All these women sat together irrespective of class. Who are they? One smiled at me and I sat down beside her. She told me her son had seen me at the Palace. He was aide-de-camp to one of the Imperial Princes, yet there seemed no difference in either appearance or manners between her and my friend's nurse (foster mother) who sat next to her. These ladies did not eat with us, my friend has insisted on eating with her husband and brothers, and for them to eat with men was quite out of the question!

One day, when I was returning from Pera on foot, a British colonel, longing to see a harem, dared me to take him in. Together we arrived at the door, up the steps, through the doors, and lo! he was in the harem! At the sight of the male "giaour" in British uniform, the women shrieked, all instinctively pulled their veils over their faces. Those who could, rose and waddled away, whilst others,



in sheer terror, buried their heads in their voluminous pantaloons.

We walked through the harem into the selamlık, where he was given coffee and cigarettes. I was anxious for him to meet my friend, but as her husband was away, she dared not face the wrath of her ignorant and fanatic entourage. What could and would they not do, if she, in the absence of her husband, should thus defy the laws of the Prophet?

There was one old lady, fourscore and something, who had been to Mecca, and had the title of Hadji. I used to put on a veil, sit beside her on the floor, and try to talk. She wore no glasses and worked at the finest embroidery on the coarsest possible canvas; she sat on her little stock of goods, and one day she rose and gave me the lot. With many thanks I accepted her gifts—the stuff was more like armour than linen—kept them for a few hours and then returned them. She wept tears of joy over the recovery of her lost treasures.

“Supposing you put on a hat and come out,” I said to my friend, “what would she do?”

“She would go out and rouse the whole neighbourhood, and the house would be stoned. Who can quite tell what an ignorant fanatic will and can do?”

Naturally the offspring of ignorance is superstition. All of them had adorned themselves with charms against the evil eye. When anyone was sick, the wise woman with special healing breath was called in. With them, the idea of a man doctor was out of the question. Prayers, the burning of certain herbs and the laying on of hands were the usually prescribed cures and it was astonishing how many were cured.

It was over the care of the children that I was most worried. A child would be carried from a hot Turkish bath through the draughty corridors; my friend's little daughter was swung in a kind of hammock attached to



the end of the bed by an ignorant peasant woman. The exercise seemed much too violent and the child might so easily have had a fall and bodily injury for life. For a foreigner to interfere was to incur the wrath of all these fanatics. Besides, as my friend exclaimed, other friends of hers had brought in an English nurse, who had opened the window on her little charges, and killed them.

But how tedious is this eternal separation of the sexes ! Once in a while it is not harmful for men to dine alone, let off their steam, and tell their smoking-room jokes free from the restraint of feminine influence. Also men, who are generally workers, have a certain personality, and they do not bore each other as women do. There is too their excuse of talking business, which is a reason for excluding women. Women's parties—hen parties as we rightly call them—are hopelessly dull in any land, and they have no *raison d'être*. There is plenty of time during the day to talk to women friends *en tête-à-tête*, plenty of time for women to discuss the things that they do, better than men. But such discussions are nothing like as instructive as those in which men and women exchange ideas. That is why in countries where men and women mix freely civilization can go ahead.

Sometimes visitors came from afar to pay their respects to the Pasha's family. Nobody asked them to stay to lunch, they just stayed as a matter of course, according to the custom of the country. Their age demanded respect for them, and some of them—very few—ate with their fingers. In those days slaves with golden jugs and basins came between each course to pour water over the hands of the guests, so even the poorest had her fingers quite clean. It needs skill to eat without a knife and fork, as I learnt to my cost when I ate with the primitive people in Asia Minor, where I travelled, long before there was any question of Angora as a capital.



The presence of these uninvited women excluded my friend's brothers and husband from the table ; for which they were as sorry as we. Men at the table put the conversation on a different plane ; they discussed politics, history, and geography ; psychology and personalities, and a hundred and one interesting subjects. As my friend said, " They bring us news of the great outside world to which we do not belong, and it's good to listen to them." It was these ignorant women who set the bent of conversation at meals and cramped my friend's life in her own house : the power of ignorance is great. They were, however, kindly souls, not even requiring pity, for they were happy enough without one material care—they were guests and aged, two qualifications which made them sacred to the Turk. To speed the departure of some who had been in the house for over thirty years, salt was placed in their goloshes, but evidently the charm did not work, for they never went away and, although my friend's father has been long dead and buried, they still remain. The Pasha's widow has inherited them.

Another day, I again took matters in my own hands, and I brought a Turkish colonel to dinner. He was handsome, Western, and vain. The ladies of the capitals where he had been military attaché, had taught him the " value " of his beautiful eyes. I put on an evening dress, but my friend wore her oldest dressing-gown, so that her husband should not think she had a hand in the plot. Every other woman had to be ordered off the scene, and both the gardener and the coachman came in to help with the service.

" How can we ever hope to progress," said my friend, " with this appalling fanaticism deep down in the bones of the people ? "

" It is the custom," said my friend's husband, " but I do not like it, and as soon as a post in one of our Embassies



is vacant, I shall apply for it, so that I can share the pleasures of life with my wife."

He was *not* one of those unintelligent men, who pretended to admire the useless customs of the country, but he had faith in the future and was sure that progress would come by slow degrees, provided no false steps were taken which would put the clock back. He was not of opinion that the Turk was more jealous than any other Southerner; nor did he hide behind the lame excuse that since all women are the possessions of men, the Turk by keeping them under "lock and key" proved that he valued his cherished possessions. Just about the same percentage of European men as Turks would keep their wives in seclusion if they could, and just about the same proportion of Turks as Europeans would set them free. Fortunately these questions have not been left exclusively to men.

Once, in the country, we went for a dangerous but charming picnic. A village carriage, with curtains all round, drew up to our door. Thickly veiled, about ten of us women got in and drove to the Forest of Belgrade. In the heart of the forest we sent our carriage away, and told the coachman to return in an hour's time. Then we met as many men as we were women. They had taken their departure from another door, and dismissed their carriage in the same way! What plotting and planning there had been and what a delicious sense of danger there was only to exchange a few thoughts with nice men, with whom it was strictly forbidden to take an excursion to the lovely forest. To me, the Westerner, it seemed strange, indeed.

This year, I motored again into the forest, which has now become a Turkish edition of the Bois de Boulogne or Hampstead Heath. It was Friday, the day of rest. Osman and Fatma, like "'Arry and 'Arriet," walked arm in arm, he wearing some kind of a hat, and she a scarf twisted into a turban. Farther on, father, mother and



the children sat cross-legged on the grass whilst mother served out the meal alfresco and the whole family seemed happy in their newly found freedom. How well I remember my friends' terror at our most innocent escapade! To them the new state of affairs must seem incredible!

The more one thinks of it, the more extraordinary it seems, that the Grand Vizir's daughter, adored by her father, married to one of the highest personages in the land, should have been subjected to the tyranny of ignorant fanatic slaves purchased at the slave market, and equally ignorant guests and relations dependent on her father's charity, and that there was no remedy. And yet, that unbreakable fanaticism, which crippled all freedom, vanished with the advent of the Ghazi Pasha as rapidly as though it had never existed.



(c) *Polygamy, Marriage and Divorce in old Turkey*

My chocolate-coloured slave who had been bought as a little child for £60, was what the Turk would call a *beau parti*. Belonging as she did to a Grand Vizir's family, several offers of marriage for her reached the family, and one morning consent was given for her marriage to a coffee-coloured railway official. She was overjoyed. He had sent a ring. Her fate was signed and sealed, and in a few weeks she would make the acquaintance of the man she had married. Although she was devoted to the family with whom she had lived all her life, her face was beaming. In the harem she had become a very interesting person.

On the morning of her marriage, clad in scarlet, with a scarlet handkerchief over her black woolly hair, and wearing many bracelets and long earrings, she stood as usual at the door waiting for me to wake; for nothing would induce her by waking me "to drag my soul back from the other world into which it has for a time taken flight!" When I did open my eyes she at once showed me her wedding ring and seemed to be very happy about it. Being, as she was, a member of the family, she had to have her trousseau like a daughter of the house. A special wedding reception, a dinner of ladies only, was arranged; and a performance of Kara-Geuz (Turkish Punch), which particularly interested me, was given. After that her husband would see her and take her away.

When I questioned my friend about this giving away of human beings without even asking their consent, she answered, "It is the custom; they know no other," and certainly my chocolate attendant was happy.

But for thinking people—how monstrous! "Things are not always as bad as they seem," said my friend. "People walk round the customs, and the young people



meet, though, it is true, the parents generally get their way in the long run."

Marriages in the days of Hamid were, of course, arranged. I have been visiting Turkish women whilst offers of marriage have been made for the daughters of the house. One day the man's mother, who had seen the prospective bride, called to make an offer on behalf of her son and stated her terms. "But, of course, we wish our son to go on living with us," she said. "No, we have decided that we want to keep our daughter," was the answer. "Thank you, then I am afraid the marriage cannot take place," was the reply. There was no ill-feeling—why should there be?—and the ladies still exchanged Bairam visits.

Another bride whom I had met told me she had seen her fiancé through the window; he was short and dark. On the day of the wedding she found he was tall and fair. She had looked at the wrong man!

There used to be two ceremonies connected with a big wedding. First of all there was the legal wedding, when the bride in one room and the bridegroom in another were solemnly asked whether they consented to the marriage or not.

Then followed the social part of the ceremony. Clad in a particularly handsome gown, with a diadem of diamonds, and with long strings of real silver threads round her neck, which she distributed amongst her friends for good luck, the bride drove to her new home, where she was seated on her bridal throne to receive the congratulations of her women friends. Truly an interesting spectacle! But even more curious to a foreigner was the absence of the bridegroom. Then there were the presents displayed and unguarded; and the open door through which all who would could enter, the Grand Vizir's wife, as well as a slave! For the foreigner, a unique and picturesque wedding.

"May I congratulate you," I said to one bride, a dear



friend. "Wait till I have seen my husband," she replied. She did not seem either worried or pleased by the "unknown fate," but there was a look of unending sadness in her eyes and later she wrote to me, "To be given away like a 'thing' to a man one had never before seen and whose whole personality may be a complete contradiction to your own, is a pretty poor foundation on which to build a home and a family. You need to be a 'thing' to accept such a situation! Even the courtesan is more to be envied! Her sad calling is her living, and she comes to it by stages. She has been seduced, she has fallen and been deserted. Could she have consented to what we cultured and thinking women have to endure? We women are 'provided for' the men, and if we do not please him, all he has to do is to repeat the phrase, 'I divorce you' three times. The injustice of it all is revolting!

"When I saw my husband for the first time, I said to him at once, 'Please sir, I beg of you to divorce me. I dislike you intensely, and I can never change.' Yet, in justice to my husband," she went on, "let me say he was, perhaps, better than most men. It is his privilege to unveil and undress his bride. (Could society conceive a greater degradation!) That humiliation he spared me.

"I went to my new bedroom, so ugly, so unsympathetic. How could I sleep in a room that bore the 'stamp' of the master everywhere? I was standing in my dressing-gown, my long hair in two plaits hung to my knees, my feet were bare and my gown was very short. He entered. I could have fainted. He called me endearing names. What impertinence! Summoning all the courage I had left, I turned my confused face to him. 'Sir,' I exclaimed, 'have you no shame? I have only just met you. Leave my room at once.' He left like a lamb. When he had gone, I quickly dressed myself, threw myself on the bed and sobbed myself to sleep. It was my fate, he would not divorce me;



only suicide or flight could end my misery. I determined on one or the other."

Another confidence—the confidences of Turkish friends would fill many books. . . .

"Twenty-eight and a widower with seven children," he exclaimed.

"When were you married?" I asked.

"At seventeen," he replied.

"Why so young?"

"I met her when I was five and she was three; she was my little companion and we played together. She had long fair plaits that I used to braid and unbraid. Then at eleven she was veiled. I saw no more of her. It was as though she was dead. I could not live without her, so I waited till she was fifteen and I married her. . . . As the customs of the country would not let her go out with me, I stayed at home and we used to read and sing and play Oriental instruments together. Then she died. I did what I could to save her, but the appalling fanaticism with which she had been surrounded during her childhood, the lack of medical attention, made her condition chronic. And now, when all our conditions have changed, and according to the Ghazi's laws I could have taken her about to enjoy life with me, she is at rest, and I am father and mother rolled into one."

. . . . .

Turkish women love romance. They will listen by the hour to a love-story. They are a highly imaginative people. Their love songs and poems (gazelles) addressed to the "unknown beauty with the veiled hair" are not our milk-and-water compliments. There is a difference in temperament between the Othellos of the East and the matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxons.

Mahomet's own love story is beautiful. His absolute



devotion, his fidelity to a woman years his senior whose friend and confidant and husband he was, is all the more remarkable, when we remember what a sensualist he later showed himself to be. When he was in the depths of despair, when no one had confidence in his message, Aiyché gave him courage to go on ! He discussed everything with her, and she helped him. . . . In spite of her long list of successors, Mahomet never could forget her, and when one of the young and beautiful demanded as a reward for her charms to be loved more than Aiyché, he answered, " You are asking of me what I cannot give ; Aiyché was sent to me by God."

I had been with Sut Anna, Makboulé's foster-mother, to visit the two wives of a dancing dervish. Number one, a woman of his own age, had no children, and so herself had chosen as wife for him a young creature with no personality, young enough to be his daughter. In that way the wife could keep her moral empire over her husband ; indeed she merely used her young rival as a means to an end. Both women were busy with the preparations for the expected baby, to whom the first wife referred as " our child," and she seemed to be as worried about the fate of her rival as she would have been about her own daughter. Yet who knows what sorrow was gnawing at her heart strings, for she loved " the master " and no one can share the object of one's affections without a pang.

How undignified and degrading polygamy is ! How it destroys the peace of the home !

The following heartfelt description of a home where there are two wives comes from the able pen of Halidé Hanoum. Her own mother died when she was a tiny child, and her childhood was one of great sadness owing to her father having two wives. She writes :



“When a woman suffers because of her husband’s secret love affairs, the pain may be keen, but its quality is different. When a second wife enters her home and usurps half her power, she is a public martyr and feels herself an object of curiosity and pity. However humiliating this may be, the position gives a woman unquestioned prominence and isolation.”

“Whatever theories people may hold as to what should or should not be the ideal tendencies as regards the family constitution, there remains one irrefutable fact about the human heart, to whichever sex it may belong—it is almost organic in us to suffer when we have to share the object of our love, sexual or otherwise. There are as many degrees or forms of jealousy as there are degrees and forms of human affection. But even supposing time and education are able to tone down this very elemental feeling, the family problem will not be solved. The nature and consequences of the suffering of a wife who in the same house shares a husband lawfully with a second wife and equal partner, differ both in kind and in degree from that of a woman who shares him with a temporary mistress. In the former case, the suffering extends to children, servants and relations—two whole groups whose interests are from the very nature of the case more or less antagonistic, and who are living in a destructive atmosphere of mutual distrust and a struggle for supremacy.

“On my own childhood, polygamy and its results produced a very ugly and distressing impression. The constant tension in our home made every simple family ceremony seem like physical pain, and the consciousness of it hardly ever left me. The rooms of the wives were opposite each other and my father visited them in turn. When it was Teize’s turn everyone in the house showed a tender sympathy to Abba, while when it was her turn no one heeded the obvious grief of Teize. She would leave



“the table with eyes full of tears, and one could be sure of finding her in her room crying or fainting. I remember very clearly my feeling of intense bitterness against polygamy—it was as a curse, as a poison which our unhappy household could not get out of the system.

“I was so full of Teize’s suffering and was so constantly haunted by her thin, pale face, tear-stained and distorted with grief even when she was kneeling on her prayer rug, that this vision had hitherto been like a barrier between me and Ablā. Yet the one emotion of sudden pity for Ablā was as natural to my heart as the other.”

. . . . .

On my return from my visit to the two wives I discussed with my friend my impressions of what was on my part a morbid curiosity.

“No woman of any dignity, however much she loved her husband, would permit a second wife,” said my friend. “She leaves him to her rival! That much progress at least we have made. Not one of my friends would put up with polygamy.”

My friend’s husband, respected throughout Turkey, is a most courteous, honest and moral man. “With our laws,” said my friend, “you can never be sure where you are.” Another friend quoted the laws. Imagine being at the mercy of these laws!

#### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

*Chap. IV, verse 3.* Marry what seems good to you of women, by twos or threes; and if ye fear that ye cannot be equitable, then only one, or what your right hands possess. (That is female slaves.) That keeps you nearer to not being partial.

*Chap. II, verse 226.* Those who swear off from their women they must wait four months, but if they break



their vow God is forgiving and merciful. And if they intend to divorce them God hears and knows.

Divorce (may happen) twice. Then keep them in reason, or let them go in kindness. It is not lawful for you to take from them anything of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within God's bounds.

*Verse 230.* But if he divorce her (a third time) she shall not be lawful to him after that, until she marry another husband, but if he divorce her, too, it is no crime in them to come together again, if they think they can keep within God's bounds. These are God's bounds which he explains to a people who know.

Egypt has given us examples of how this law of divorce can be brought to the level of the cheapest music-hall farce. Sometimes a divorced woman is given to a man friend to marry, and it is arranged before hand that they shall divorce, so that the bride can remarry her first husband. It is a dangerous experiment, and one has to be pretty sure of the person to whom one trusts oneself; for often, the temporary husband refuses to give the bride back to her first husband.

"The wife and the home have no status," said my friend. "A man may take a fancy to one of the odalesques, and if she has a child, that child has the same rights as those of the wife. He tires of the wife; he has only to say three times that he divorces her, and all is over. You must own that such laws put a terrible weapon in man's hand, and leave the woman defenceless. Think on what poor security we build up our families. This very afternoon my whole life could be changed and my home gone for a mere man's caprice, or, what is worse, a woman's!"

Considering these laws carefully, and the latitude given to man, the Turk must be a good husband, or the woman must make particular efforts to hold him, or how can one



explain why so many homes hold together? No doubt, also, the children do help to keep a home together, as they do in the West. . . .

Zeyneb told me a story to illustrate the funny side of these laws of polygamy. It happened to a friend of hers devoted to her husband, of whose affection for her she thought she was quite sure. A foreign writer was visiting the Turkish lady, and the latter was assuring her visitor that polygamy had practically ceased to exist in Turkey. She quoted the witty remark of a Pasha: "When four wives were four tillers of the ground there was some sense in polygamy, but not when she gets her dresses from Paris," and gave other examples. The foreign writer took notes.

All of a sudden, came a slave announcing that the Bey's second wife was waiting in the big salon! She had come to take up her residence with her husband. She appeared to be a woman of the people and had brought her wardrobe in a large bundle. And she was an expectant mother. . . . Imagine the humiliation!

When once the first shock was over and explanations and excuses had been offered to the foreigner, who was indiscreet enough to remain, the first wife had the fortitude to order coffee to be taken to her rival. But the new wife was nowhere to be seen; the house was searched in vain. She had vanished. Leaving the ragged contents of her bundle, she had taken in exchange everything of value in the room. Amidst tears and laughter and "for goodness' sake never tell the Bey," the lady of the house decided the thief was a first-class actress.

"At best," said Zeyneb, "a Turkish wife plays much the same rôle as the woman with whom a Western man lives but does not marry. You go to a Paris studio; you know some feminine hand has supervised the arrangements, perhaps cooked the meal, but you never see her. Hers is the rôle of preparing everything for the master, but she



shares none of his pleasures. She may bear him children, even that does not give her the right in any way to share his life, but in the West he puts a little more tact and heart into the wording of her dismissal.”

To-day, under the Swiss Code and the unwritten social laws set down by the Ghazi, all this is ended. A girl meets her future husband as she does in England and accepts or refuses his offer of marriage as it pleases her. She and her future husband must go together to the town hall and sign the marriage documents in the presence of the mayor, as in France. This is the only ceremony that counts.

Divorce has to be decided by a court of law, as in Switzerland.

The whole position of the woman is different !



(d) *What the Passing of the Veil Means to Turkish Life*

The following impressions of "taking the veil" are written by a Turkish woman :

"GOOD-BYE TO YOUTH."

"Up to the age of ten, Turkish girls used to lead the life of little European children, dancing, riding, mixing with European boys ; their hair loose and their dresses short. Up the steps they climbed, they laughed, and they romped ; and then came the veil, and who but a Turkish woman can understand what that means ? Always a black veil to shut out the sunlight, as if a pall had been placed over our very souls. It is a moment of unending sadness when one feels the age of ten approaching.

"At that age, European children are as free as the air and happy as the larks, but little Turkish girls who have seen their friends drop out of the circle await their turn with dread. A veiled friend can no longer go to the Christian's balls nor join us at the circus, and we mourn for her as though she were dead.

"I am thinking of a sad spring morning of long ago. I was twelve years old, but the constant terror in which I had lived had accentuated my tendency towards uneasiness and melancholy. The life I was forced to lead had nothing in common with my nature. Ever since I could remember, I had loved the bright light, open horizons, and galloping on horseback against the wind ; and now all my surroundings were to become calm and monotonous.

"As time went on, every day I put off the moment for wakening, because I had to open my eyes in the same room, and the same white muslin curtains were always there to greet me.



“ How can I explain my jealousy at seeing how contentedly all the furniture lay in the soft light which filtered through the latticed windows of our harem? A heavy weight was pressing on my spirit! How many times when our governess came into my room did she not find me in tears!

“ ‘What is the matter, darling?’ she would ask, and touched by her tenderness, I would sob without even knowing the cause of my sorrow.

“ Then I dressed myself slowly, so that there should be less time to live! How was it, I wondered, that some people feared death! Death would have been such a change—the only change to which a Turkish woman could look forward!

“ In our house there was scarcely a sound, hardly were the steps of the young Circassian slaves heard as they passed along the corridors.

“ Our mother was kind but stern and her beautiful face had an expression of calm resignation. She lived like a stranger amongst us, not being able to associate herself with us in our thoughts or our ideals.

“ The schoolroom where we worked the greater part of the day looked on to a garden thick with trees, and perfumed with early roses. Its furniture consisted of a big oak table and chairs, shelves full of books, a globe and three busts in plaster of Paris, of Napoleon, Dante and Mozart. What strange thoughts those three men, so different and yet so interesting, suggested to me. What a curious influence they all three had on my child mind!

“ It was in this schoolroom twice a week that we studied the Koran, but before the lesson began an old servant covered up the three great men in plaster. The Hodja must not see these ‘heathenish’ figures.

“ When the Imam arrived, my sister and I went to the



door to meet him, and kissed his hand as a sign of respect. Then he used to pass the bony fingers, which we had kissed, over our hair, saying as a greeting, 'May Allah protect you, my children.'

"With the Hodja-Effendi, there came into our school-room a perfume of incense, of burnt henna and sandalwood. His green tunic and turban, which showed that he had visited the Holy Tomb at Mecca, made his beard so white and his eyes so pale, that he seemed like a person from another world; indeed, he reminded me, not a little, of those Indian fakirs who live on prayers.

"From the moment he sat down at the table, my sorrows seemed to vanish for awhile, and an atmosphere of calm and blessed peace took possession of my soul.

"'Only God is God,' he began.

"'And Mahomet is his Prophet,' we responded, as we opened the Koran at the place he had chosen for the lesson.

"'Read, my child,' he said.

"I took the Holy Book, touched my forehead with it, kissed it, and then began to read the prayer which is a rhythmed chant, without, of course, understanding a word I read. The Imam read with me in a soft low voice, and when the chapter was finished he murmured, 'You read well, Neyr, may Allah protect you.'

"Then he questioned us on the prayers we had learnt, on the good we had to do and the evil to avoid, and his voice was so monotonous that each sentence sounded like a prayer.

"When we had finished, he asked, as he always did, to see our governess. I went to find her in the garden, and she came at once. As the Hodja could not speak English he asked us to say to her, 'You have a fine face. Allah loves the good and the kind, and those who go the way they should go. He will be with you.' And before he went



away, taking with him the delightful perfume of incense, he shook the Englishwoman's hand.

"Another day, after the lesson, he said to me, 'Neyr, you are twelve years old; you must be veiled. You can no longer have your hair exposed and your face uncovered—you must be veiled. Your mother has not noticed that you have grown a big girl, I therefore must. I teach you to love Allah, you are my spiritual child, and for that reason, I must warn you of the danger henceforward of going out unveiled. Neyr, you must be veiled.'

"I was not even listening to the Imam! An awful agony had seized and numbed my soul, the words which he had uttered resounded in my brain and little by little sank into my understanding—'Neyr, you must be veiled.' That is to say, to be for ever cloistered like those who live around you; to be a slave like your mother, and your cousins and your elder sister; to belong henceforth to the harem; no longer to play in the garden unveiled; nor ride Arabian ponies in the country; to have a veil over your eyes, and your soul; to be always silent, always forgotten, to be always and always a thing.

"'Neyr, you must be veiled,' the old Hodja-Effendi began again. I raised my head. 'Yes, I know, Hodja-Effendi, I know that I must be veiled since it is necessary.' Then I was silent.

"The old Imam went away not understanding what had happened to me, and without my having kissed his hand. I remained in the same place, my elbows on the table. I was alone. Everything around me was deadly still.

"Then suddenly Miss M. (our governess) opened the door, her eyes were red. Gently shutting the door and coming towards me she said, 'Neyr, I have seen the Imam, and I understand that from to-morrow you must be veiled.'



“How sad she looked! But I could say nothing. I let her take me in her arms and carry me into her room at the end of the corridor, murmuring all the while ‘The barbarians!’ And together we wept, I without unnecessary complaints and she without useless consolation.

“When my sorrow had lessened a little I questioned my governess.

“‘In England are the women veiled? And the children free?’

“‘The women and children are free.’

“‘Then I will go to England.’

“‘Silence, Neyr, silence.’

“‘Take me to England.’

“‘I cannot, Neyr,’ she answered.

“But all that day and all that night I dreamt of free England I longed to see.

. . . . .

“The country house where we lived was very large with big rooms, long corridors and dark halls. Now and again carriages passed bringing excursionists to the neighbouring wood, and when we heard the wheels rumbling over the uneven road we rushed to the latticed windows to see all we could.

“Sometimes we used to go with Miss M. to see Stamboul, which was on the opposite shore. Miss M. loved the town and used to take us there, as often as possible. Sometimes we used to ride with my brother in the country and I loved to feel the wind blowing through my untidy hair—but all that would be over now! Sometimes my father would take me to see friends of his—foreigners they were—and the girls and boys played together, and I laughed and played with them. But I understood that when veiled, I could only be on the margin of their great life, that each day part of my right to existence would be taken from me,



a veil would cover my face and I should only be a Moslem woman, whose every aspiration and emotion would be trampled underfoot.

“ The moment had come.

“ We were to go out with mother that afternoon. On my bed in the monotonous room I disliked so much a black mantle, a cape and a veil were placed.

“ Several persons had come to see me veiled for the first time. Awkwardly I placed the pleated skirt round my waist, the cape over my shoulders and then the veil over my face. It hid the tears that were falling, and lest they should be seen, I did not lift it again.

“ ‘ Neyr,’ asked mother, ‘ are you ready ? ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ I answered, and followed her with my head up in spite of my grief, and from that day, from that moment I had determined on revolt.”

Contrast with this the life that Perihan, my friend’s little daughter, leads in Konia to-day. According to the old customs she is now at the age when she, too, should be saying good-bye to youth and taking the veil.

The sun is blazing through the open windows ; the lattice work of former days—the “ jealous ” lattice work, which used to give the room a look of desolation and melancholy—has gone for ever. Except for the negress, with a scarlet scarf over her black woolly hair, who brings us at frequent intervals delicious cups of coffee and sweetmeats made by a Turkish friend, whose hobby is cooking, there is no Turkish atmosphere about the room. In the old days, divans, cushions, and carpets furnished the houses ; to-day the pupils of the School of Arts and Crafts turn out, under the guidance of a German professor,



cheap, ugly Western furniture, which the loyal citizens of the Republic willingly buy. . . .

My friend and I have talked till deep into the night and this morning have begun again. She is one of those friends with whom one never can count the passing hours, nor come to the end of a conversation. Makboulé now has a home. In the old days, the harem where she lived worked itself. The food came from somewhere, the old cook who could neither read nor write nor even tell the time, cooked by instinct ; that very accurate timepiece, his own healthy appetite, told him exactly the right time to serve the meals. Slaves, bought thirty or forty years ago, and their offspring ; Greek and Armenian servants, competent generally, honest sometimes, all managed to do their allotted part in the general running of the harem ; the men ran the selamlik.<sup>1</sup> The Hanoum<sup>2</sup> looked on, and the Pasha paid the bills. . . .

And now this same friend has had to find out for herself how things are done, to instruct her servants who are Turkish and, though willing enough, have to be watched like little children. Call them away in the midst of their ironing, and they come at once, leaving the iron resting on the middle of a garment. There are some things which can be heated, and some not—how can they tell ? Why not paraffin as well as water ? Before anything is heated permission has to be given.

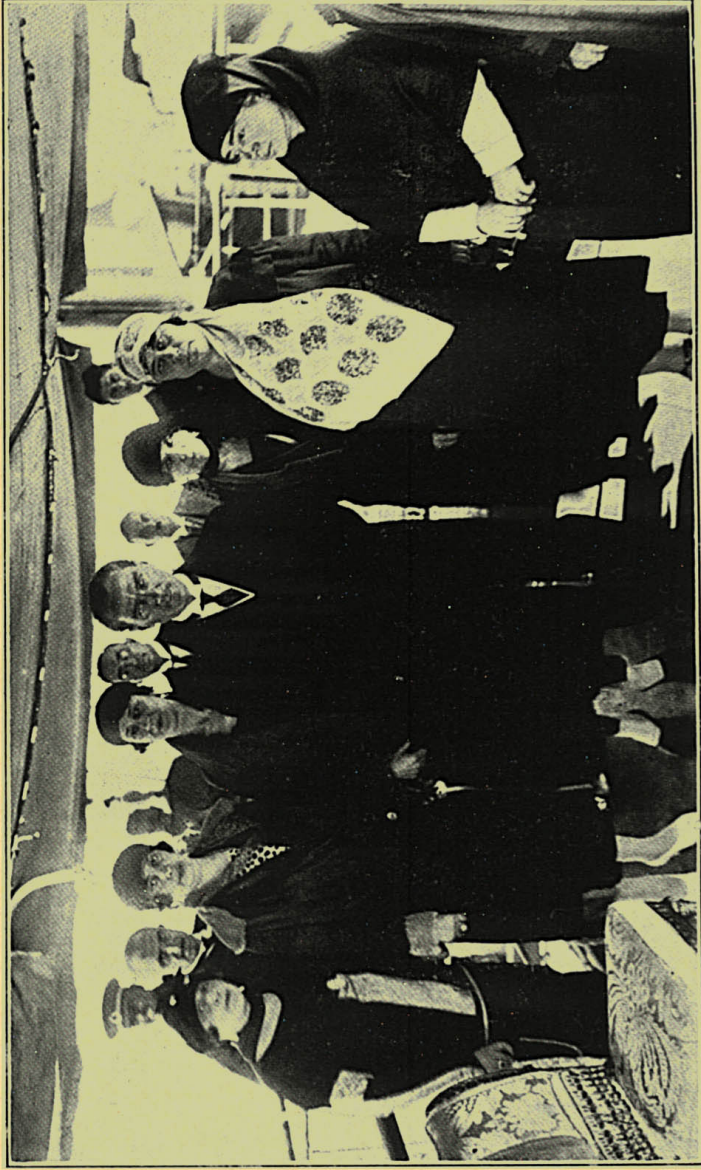
And how are they to know the value of these curious European things ? The door will neither keep open nor will it quite shut. A block of priceless rock-crystal will keep it both open and shut, so why not use it ?

There is to-day the same sisterly attitude towards one's friends as in the harem days. Going into mixed society has made women very vain ; they have morning, afternoon, and evening dresses. The arrival of "Femina" with the new models is waited with feverish excitement. My friend,

<sup>1</sup> Men's quarters.

<sup>2</sup> The lady.





**MUSTAPHA KEMAL PASHA WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE " UNION OF TURKISH WOMEN "**

He is President of the union, and takes the keenest interest in the progress of women.



with her pencil, like a schoolmistress, marks her copy : the new Drecol for A ; Lanvin for B ; Vionnet for C. By the time that the friends arrive their dresses are all chosen for them. They hunt the bazaar for stuffs ; one cuts, another fits, another machines, another does the skirts, another the sleeves. . . . Whoever would have supposed in the old days that my friend could have turned out such excellent French dresses !

Through the open windows, as we sip our coffee we hear friends arriving . . . some of them are on horseback ; astride, riding unaccompanied by their husbands. . . . The women of the people, still covered, except for one eye, look on and wonder what it all means. Three years ago this never could have been ; to-day the Ghazi Pasha says it is all right, and so it must be. . . . " Will you both come too ? " someone calls. We have to refuse for we have no horses, and we are going to lunch with two charming writers who are to show us the art treasures of the city . . . how different from the old days when a woman could not even drive out with her husband !

The Governor calls, with his wife ; and the Préfet calls, with his wife. Most of the women, for the sake of economy, they say, but rather, I believe, because it is so charming a custom, twist their scarves into turbans. This means a turban for each dress, and as one cannot get hats in Konià, a hat from Constantinople for each dress would mean a small fortune. I notice that the Governor's wife and the Préfet's wife have hats alike—they have not yet learnt the European habit of " exclusive rights " in hats and dresses. . . .

All of a sudden in comes my friend's daughter. The stairs are steep ; she has rushed in like the wind and is breathless. She must tell her mother the news as soon as possible. . . .

Tall, slim, and erect, and with a very healthy appearance,



our beautiful young friend wears blue serge knickers, a gymnasium tunic and a school cap. . . . She greets me, her English aunt, and then a whole torrent of Turkish flows forth. . . . She has worked hard, and the result of the exam. has been excellent; and indeed she has so much more to learn than the little girls of the West; French and Turkish; the history of all nations; the rights of the citizens of the Sovereign State called "Patrie"; home economics; cookery; sewing; and many other subjects. When one suggests that it is too much, the answer is: "Our country is behindhand, we must make up for lost time." It is a national duty to work. . . .

"What a wonderful thing it is to be able to send a child to school," said Makboulé. "It's such a fine training in democracy." And I remember that one day at the Bazaar she drew my attention to a funny little cobbler, with whom she was speaking. "His daughter goes to school with my child," she said. "And she's such a nice little girl." They visit—the Grand Vizir's granddaughter and the cobbler's daughter—as though they were equals; a step more advanced than our democracy. "My child will be educated," went on Makboulé. "I was not educated, I had only culture, and that I picked up when I acted as father's secretary. Our children can all be independent if they wish. What a splendid thing."

As a reward for her excellent work, Perihan is going to invite all the boys and girls of her school to tea and then to the cinema. It sounds a very innocent entertainment, but what will the people of other Moslem nations say when they read of such a departure from all the recognized customs of the country and religion?

Another treat is also in store for our little student. She is coming with me to the newly opened museum. The Ghazi Pasha has turned the sacred home containing the tombs of Mevlané and the dancing dervishes, where



formerly none but members of the sect could enter, into a museum open to all. . . . Seven thousand people visited it in one day. . . . Celebrated archæologists and scientists are busy ticketing the sacred relics, and converting them into historical treasures.

Perihan is passionately interested in archæology and history. The director explains to us the signs and symbols. She questions him about so many things, and takes notes about the translations of the Seljoucide writings. . . .

“ I shall make archæology my life study,” she tells her mother. “ As soon as I can, I shall go to Rome and Athens and Egypt.”

“ Why not ? ” answers her mother. “ It is fine for a girl to have a profession. . . . ”

Our little student then shows us the latest gymnastic exercises she has been learning, and when that is over, she takes the dog for a run. . . .

The door closes, and my friend was silent for a few minutes. Then she added : “ How good it is to see my child so happy. When I think how different my daughter’s childhood will be from my own, although thanks to my beloved father I had far more liberty than most girls. When I compare her freedom with all the unnecessary restrictions placed on us by religion and custom ; when I feel that she will never even know what a veil means ; can you wonder at the veneration we women have for our great Ruler, who has made this change possible and given us all the right to take our part in the life going on around us ? Loyalty and affection can never repay him, for what he has done for us. It would be a poor specimen of a Turkish woman who did not thank Allah for the Ghazi.”



(e) *The Sultan's Harem Gone Forever.*

When I was invited with my friend to celebrate the Courban-Bairam at the Imperial harem, Makboulé assured me, that I was the only European, to whom such an invitation had been extended.

Early in the morning, we were awakened by the plaintive cries of the sheep being sacrificed in the selamlik. It was Rechid, the coachman, the most pious person in the household, who, though he could not read, was a specialist in Turkish history, and knew the words of his Koran, though not their meaning, who was chosen as *Vékil*, or Sacrificer. He was holy, but his hand was very old.

I thought of these sacrificed sheep when, later, in London I met the Begum of Bhopal coming from lunch where she ate next to nothing, as her hostess had not provided her with *sacrificed* meat. So upset was the Royal lady about this omission, that she at once attempted to found hostels in London, where Moslem students could eat sacrificed meat. The animal sacrificed is slain, in the name of God. It may be in accordance with Moslem tradition, but nothing will ever make one believe it is humane. Even now I cannot forget, after all these years, the plaintive cries of the sheep.

I had gone with a fellow officer of my host to the market, where we purchased eight sheep. These were harnessed like ponies and led back to their new destination. They were perfectly at home, poor beasts, perfectly obedient and trusting. It seemed too cruel to think of the fate that was reserved for them the next day. The ceremony was in commemoration of the Sacrifice of Isaac, a Bible story which has become more Moslem even, than Christian or Jewish.

The story is now so much part of the Moslem religion



that the famous Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem is built round the rock where the Sacrifice was prepared and the Angel stayed the hand of the father about to sacrifice his only son. As a small child when I first heard this story from Genesis, it frightened me. It seemed incomprehensible that a father, who loved his children, should be asked to sacrifice them ; and to-day, though I understand the New Testament meaning of sacrifice, the story still brings something of the old terror. And so this story of Genesis, given, as it was, so important a place in the Moslem religion and the Court functions, had an added interest for me.

I am afraid I displeased my officer escort, for instead of going to tea at the Pera Palace, no great amusement, I followed the sale of the sheep from mosque to mosque until sunset closed the market gates. Poor sheep, petted and carried on the purchasers' backs like children one moment ; sacrificed the next ; and then distributed to the crowd of beggars who came flocking into our garden like a pack of hungry wolves !

This was the only meat some of these poor people tasted during the whole year. The mixture of romance, Bible history, Moslem tradition, and charity was, however, a curious one, particularly for a Westerner.

. . . . .

It was cold that morning, and the dew was still on the rose bushes as we drove to the Ottoman Court. What a strange hour to be attending a Royal ceremony !

But it was none too early, for there were many formalities to be carried through, before we took our places on the allotted cushions, behind the lattice-windows, through which we were to watch the men's part of the ceremony—the *baise main*. My friend, accompanied by Miss Chocolate, our slave, and Chocolate Aga, wore a yashmak, now gone forever, and a more becoming head-dress,



except the Tcharchaff it would be hard to find. When we drove in behind the huge wall, which separates the Imperial harem from the outside world, the carriage, with the coachman, had to drive away at once, and black eunuchs, one on either side and one behind, helped us up into the yashmak room, where veils were removed and ironed.<sup>1</sup>

What an extraordinary Court! All the officials were women. The Hasnadar (treasurer) was dressed in a quaint costume dating from the beginning of the dynasty, and carried a staff of office. A quaint figure she made with her bright henna-dyed hair, much-blackened eyes, false flowers and many jewels. In and out amongst the guests she hobbled, greeting some, asking news of others and welcoming all the Imperial Princesses, who came in full official costumes with orders and fur mantles, to pay their homage to the Sultan; she was a very old, trusted and much-respected official.

The young Imperial Princesses wore long dresses, many jewels, orders and golden mittens studded with precious stones. They reminded one of the little Infantas in the Prado. Most of the Imperial dresses were studded with precious stones, and one of these was recently offered to me in a Damascus store for £50; "a mere song," said the merchant, but it was not pretty.

And so in an ugly stucco palace with an exquisite view—women who were graceful when young, perhaps, gathered to display badly cut dresses and jewels that were too big and too badly set to look real. All my friend's friends were clad in French dresses, so tight as to make a striking contrast to the voluminous garments of the Princesses and the Court officials. Everyone was unveiled, for the Sultan had the supreme privilege of seeing his women subjects' hair.

Miss Chocolate, our attendant, followed us all the time

<sup>1</sup> This is an honour paid to high personages.



and at lunch stood behind our chairs in case we needed her services. We had seen the ceremony of *baise main*, and after wandering in and out of the large rooms of the Palace we had lunch with the Sultan's two wives and innumerable Princesses. The meal was long, the gold table-service heavy; we drank only water served in large crystal goblets, and we talked almost in whispers; no one quite understood why I had come, and above all why I had no husband.

After luncheon, the Sultan came from his side of the palace to receive the women, who knelt before him. He had had a long day, was still tired, and kept his eyes open with difficulty. He was not even an interesting personality like Abdul Hamid, who did question one about one's country and one's impressions of his. Very stout, with a red face and coarse features, he seemed like an old man who was recovering from a long and painful illness and was not yet quite convalescent.

My friend reminded me of his thirty years of captivity by order of Hamid, and one felt sorry for him. Nevertheless, he was no ornament, and of little use.

The Imperial wives had all been bought at an early age—they were generally Circassians—and specially trained in deportment and the arts of seduction for the rôle they were to play in the harem.

The Court etiquette; the large retinue of gaudily dressed slaves of every shade of skin, from chocolate and coffee to pure white; the brightly coloured yet ugly palaces in the very worst taste; how strange and interesting they all appeared to me. Yet what a heavy expense to the State this army of polygamous Princes and all their offspring must have meant, and added to this were the Princesses and their husbands, Court functionaries, slaves, attendants, horses and jewels. And of what utility were they to the State, hidden behind the high walls of the Imperial harem?



Our Royalties serve the State and work as no commoner could work for the public welfare. There is between them and the people a common bond of gratitude and sympathy which is touching indeed. The Princesses of the Imperial Ottoman House took no part in State affairs. They were offered to great men of State such as Enver Pasha, as a reward for distinguished services. An Imperial Princess was also offered to the Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, after his final victory. But he declined the honour. "Of what use," he said, "could such a luxury be to me—a simple democrat?"

Most of these Imperial ladies are now in Europe; some in Switzerland; some in Paris; some on the Riviera. Some have the wherewithal to keep up an easy existence; some are almost destitute.

Physically they had to be attractive, but their ancestry and characters were not taken into consideration at all. Only when they came to be mothers of future Sultans did they have any position. The mother of the reigning Sultan, the "Validé-Sultana," was the highest lady in the land—the one woman before whom the Sultan knelt, and to whom all the women's petitions were addressed.

Parents generally sold their children to the Sultan for a good sum; and it flattered their amour-propre to have borne children for the Imperial harem. Everything for their advancement turned round their capacity for physical attraction, and when once they had captured the Imperial eye, the one crime that they dared not be found guilty of, was sterility. If any writer wants scenarios in which hatred of a rival, who has given birth to a boy is brought to the height of tragedy, let him go to the Imperial harem. What kind of rulers could one hope to find bred in an atmosphere such as this?

Abdul Hamid's mother was, it is said, an Armenian who had been a professional dancer in the service of Esmé



Sultana, sister of Abdul-Medjid. The son of any woman by the reigning Sultan is entitled to be in the line of succession.

Although little is known of his childhood, his father, the kindly Sultan Abdul-Medjid, who loved his other children, was much alarmed about the character of Abdul Hamid. Kemal Pasha (no relation, of course, to the national hero), his most important tutor, said he was cunning, distrustful, sulky, lazy, ignorant, and refused to associate with other boys. In spite of the fact that he had a very pronounced Armenian type of face, nothing offended him more than the suggestion that he had Armenian blood in his veins. He even sent fourteen military cadets into exile for using an Armenian, instead of a Turkish word.

His mother died when he was seven, and his father's fourth wife brought him up, if there is any bringing up in an Imperial harem.

One of the usual consequences of polygamy is naturally infanticide. Since all children are legitimate, the fewer the children of the Pasha, the more money there is to be divided amongst the family after his death.

Mahomet II's law, legalizing infanticide in the Imperial family, was passed to pacify popular opinion, and it was therefore regarded with favour.

Of Murad III's eighteen sons, seventeen were put to death on the accession of the eldest in 1594. One of the sons of Abdul-Medjid's sister, Atëya Sultana, had to be killed in conformity with the palace law. To buy off the jealousy of the mothers of the other Princes, when the Sultana again expected a child, her husband spent large sums, but it was of no use; the child was killed, and the mother went mad.

In the days of Abdul-Aziz and Hamid, the next heirs, Murad and Reshad, were treated in such a way that the one went mad and the other almost mad and both were perfectly useless as rulers. For fear of Western public opinion, they



were not killed ; perhaps killing would have been more merciful. Reshad was not allowed to leave the Palace, received no visitors and was guarded day and night by both soldiers and spies.

Could any system be worse than this ? After all were the Sultans responsible ? It is a wonder, brought up as they were, and born of such unions, that they were not worse.

Women everywhere, slaves, odalesques, dancing girls, Court officials, and foster-mothers to whom respect was paid by the Imperial ladies ; groups of six women, one to command and five to execute the order, giving coffee ; groups of six serving the sweetmeats and water ; groups of cigarette distributors—was it even possible to count the women within these walls ?

Were they happy ? Once a year, it is true, they were solemnly asked whether they would like to go, and if they said they would, they were either given to some Pasha as a reward for distinguished services, or to some high-born lady to find husbands for them. One of these women, "palace-lady" she was called by the slaves, was our guest, and often she would come and sing for us. If I was indiscreet enough to ask for Eastern songs, my friend's husband had to retire. She was a pretty, docile, obedient creature with no personality whatsoever, and accepted the husband my friend found for her, without a murmur.

Another palace-lady lived in the basement of our konak. She had once formed part of the harem of Abdul-Aziz and had been married to a Pasha. When, however, she understood how much her sterility made her husband suffer, she found another wife for him, came penniless to my friend, and was content to earn her board and lodging as dish-washer, wander about the garden veiled, and dream of the past.

What an unhealthy atmosphere, physically and morally, pervaded this Imperial harem ! Little fresh air, no exercise,



the wrong food, no serious thought, women taken possession of, and then given away like pet dogs ! It reminded one of a stud in our country, except that more attention is paid to the pedigree of the horse's mother than ever was paid to the mothers of Turkey's rulers. Can we expect anything else but intrigues, daily tragedies, and often crimes ? Hatred was natural with all that army of "bought" women waiting for a chance movement of their bodies to attract the Imperial eye and lead them to the coveted position of Sultan's mother—the first lady in the land.

. . . . .

We drove back to Stamboul as the sun was setting ; the yawning shopkeepers were slowly closing their little establishments for the night ; and the silver-voiced muezzin from the top of his minaret was singing to the glory of God. What a land of contradictions and surprises ! Here, in the twentieth century, God's Shadow on Earth, the Commander of the Faithful, was allowed to carry on a most degrading commerce in women and no one dared protest. "What would you do ?" asked my friend. "I would get some dynamite and blow the whole gangrenous establishment into eternity," I answered. "What else is there to do ?"

And yet one remembers the storm of disapproval there was when the present ruler, seeing no possibility of reforming the House of Osman, rotten from root to branch, just swept it aside.

Seated in the President's modest little villa at Tchan-Kaya, listening to him as he explained the part that he intended Turkish women to play in the life of the people and the uplifting of the Turkish race, one could not help remembering the Sultan and his harem.

With the end of the House of Osman, an ugly, unhealthy chapter of Turkish history is now closed forever,