







HAREM LIFE

CSL



CSL

# HAREM LIFE

by

## PRINCESS DJAVIDAN HANUM

*Ex-Wife of Abbas Hilmi II  
Khedive of Egypt*



LONDON  
NOEL DOUGLAS

1931





CSL

NOEL DOUGLAS

Proprietors: WILLIAMS AND NORGATE LTD  
38 Great Diamond Street, London, W.C.1

AS-001421

392.6 ✓

D 47 #

4213





CSL

TO

LUISE GRÄFIN VON WESTPHALEN  
*née* GRÄFIN FRANKENBERG

ISA

This book is dedicated to you—  
to your friendship and your understanding





## PREFACE

Perhaps some readers will want to know who Djavidan Hanum was, in order to make a juster criticism of her opinions and her outlook on life—perhaps also to understand her better.

A daughter was born to the Graf Josef Török von Szendrö and the Gräfin Sophie Vetter von der Lilie while they were in Philadelphia, and the accidental place of her birth did much to decide her fate. Later, in the old family home, this child of the New World enjoyed a new liberty, for she was never subjected to the yoke of a conventional faith.

When she married the Khedive of Egypt—Abbas Hilmi II—she became a Mohammedan. But the Moslem religion did not replace an earlier belief or demand a change of faith—it was the first religion she had herself chosen. She entered a new world ready to make new religious ties without having first to cast off or deny the old ones. She was resolved fully to comprehend the beginnings of the Moslem faith, and she became immersed in serious research upon the sources that threw light on its origin.

Her first Mohammedan name was Zubeida, later she changed it for the name Djavidan.

What else she is may be read in the pages of her book—though often only between the lines.





# HAREM LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### CREATORS OF THE HAREM

The Turkish word "harem" comes from the Arabic. The verb from which is derived the substantive "haram" is "haruma," and implies to be forbidden, not permitted, or illegal, but at the same time to be holy, protected and inviolate. The Caaba and the entire sacred domain is "harem." Everyone who enters this zone is protected, and cannot be given up to a pursuer or taken prisoner. During the time of pilgrimage not the smallest living creature may be killed within the harem, the place of consecration and sanctuary. Before the conquest of Mecca by the prophet Mohammed, the nomad tribes had a right to "harem"; but Mohammed deprived them of their right, and granted the privileges of divine refuge and divine protection to the Caaba and the holy place alone:—"Any man who approaches the Caaba is hallowed against every danger."

No other word has been used with so little regard for its meaning as the word "harem," since it has been employed to denote that part of the house or the palace in which the women lived. It was "harem" only for the owner of the house. The region became untouchable and inaccessible to external law, control or investigation—it was completely subject to the arbitrary will of the master. Mohammed's





saying, "Men are made for the protection of women, and women for the protection of men" (second surah), found no credence in the women's harem, behind the locked doors and the gates guarded by eunuchs. Under cloak of a religion, which was falsely and arbitrarily interpreted by a series of cruel, suspicious and jealous masters, arose customs and usages which were not only foreign to the original character of Mohammed's sayings, but would stand in sharp opposition to all his teaching. And finally the area which gave personal harem to the man guarded the women within its limits only so as to keep them without rights and without protection.

In Mohammed's time women were not kept apart, veiled and locked up. They were as free as the men, and they took part in public gatherings and prayed together with the men. The places appointed for prayer consisted at first merely of four walls without a roof where prayers were said on the sand, while on rainy days Mohammed commanded the people to pray at home. There were no prayer rugs then, but in later times the kind of rugs that could be used for praying became a topic of religious argument. Silk rugs were forbidden by the religious leaders of Egypt on the ground that their agreeable softness might exert a sensuous stimulus which would then destroy the effect of the prayer. Mohammed made mention of silk only in connection with men's clothing, when he said in the fifth Hadith: "Allah forbids men to wear gold ornaments and silk garments." Which did not, however, prevent the subsequent wearing of long silken robes and cloaks by his followers.





Separate prayers for the women were not introduced until after a deputation of women had come to Mohammed complaining that the men pressed forward inconsiderately during worship, and that the women must always stand at the back where they could no longer ask questions of the Prophet when they did not understand his words. Then Mohammed arranged that on two days of the week, Monday and Thursday, there should be a service for women, at which their difficulties could be explained. Later, all explanation was forbidden in spite of the fact that the seventeenth surah says, "Ye need not follow that ye comprehend not." Everyone had a claim to explanation; everyone had the right to ask questions. Mohammed's teaching should be accepted with the heart and the understanding, not simply spoken with lips unmindful of its meaning, as often happened afterward. Since the Koran is written in Old Arabic it requires special study, and those who spoke only Turkish did not understand a single word. Mohammed himself prayed in twenty different ways, and the outward form of the prayer on which the emphasis was laid in later days was for him irrelevant. In his own time Mohammed was the only man who had more than one wife. But religious law established every man's claim to four married wives, while sexual relations with slaves were limited to those of his own household, i.e. slaves who had been inherited, bought or received as presents. All children were legitimate, and the children of slaves had the same rights as those of the married wives. Mohammed never forbade marriage with people of a different faith. In the event of a man's marrying a





Christian or Jewish girl his only command was that the girl must be pretty or rich. When divorce occurred after a mixed marriage Mohammed decided that the child belonged to the better parent. The wife had the same right to divorce as the husband. For either partner the grounds for divorce were: incurable illness, drunkenness, impotence, sterility, denial of God, infidelity, refusal of marital rights and the loss of love on one side or the other. The wife had still another ground for divorce: if the husband could not support her and the children. Later on the wife had not any grounds for divorce. Among plain people a sheik sometimes attempted to mediate if the helpless wife had turned to him in her need. His mediation usually consisted in praising tolerance and forgiveness as virtues well pleasing to Allah, and perhaps it extended to giving a few admonitions to the husband. That was the only help the wife could expect. Among well-born people any interference from outside would have been impossible. The man alone had the right of divorce—even when he had broken every law of Islam. The following traditional tale clearly shows that Mohammed regarded mutual love as the foundation of marriage. In Medina Mohammed observed Kais following his married wife Berida when she no longer wished to have anything to do with him. Mohammed summoned them both to him, and at first he gently encouraged the wife to stay with her husband. But Berida said that she felt no more love for him. So Mohammed explained to Kais it was useless and senseless to try and hold any wife who did not love her husband, and that he might not force her to continue the





marriage. Thereupon Mohammed himself granted the divorce.

According to religion the husband could divorce his wife twice. After the two divorces he could marry her again without further complications. After the third divorce the wife had to marry another man and be divorced from him before she could marry the first husband again. This condition was intended to warn the man against thoughtless words. At the time of marriage the husband had to settle a dowry on his wife corresponding to her social position and his own financial standing. In case of divorce the regulation laid down in the second surah ran: "And reasonable provision must be made for divorced wives." All women had rights over their own bodies. Even the slave was permitted to refuse to give herself, regardless of whether she had been acquired as booty, inheritance or purchase.

In the course of time all these humane fundamentals of Islamic belief, definite and unambiguous as they are, were so subtly twisted and distorted by conscienceless sheiks and teachers, according to the will of the masters or rulers who paid them, that a false and unjust religion grew up out of the original teaching of Mohammed. Not a single thread led back to the well-planned beginning from this labyrinth of customs, usages and superstition—this chaos of prohibition, restriction and sin.

Among Mohammed's sayings there is no word of covering the head, hiding the hair or veiling the face. The custom of covering the hair was later introduced by the mullahs, while jealous sultans were responsible for veiling the face. Mohammed com-





manded women to cover their bodies, because in his day they went about scantily covered with a cloth and with breasts bare. If their faces had been veiled and their hair hidden, Mohammed would never have fallen in love with the beautiful Zainab, the wife of his adopted son, Zeid. One day Mohammed came to see Zeid and found Zainab at home alone, combing her long black hair. Her beauty made so great an impression on him that he spoke the following words: "Praised be He whose revelations dazzle us because we cannot interpret His divinity." The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that Mohammed regarded love as a divine revelation. Again, in the thirty-third surah he says: "And thou didst hide in thy soul what Allah purposed to reveal, and thou fearedst men when Allah should better have been feared"; Mohammed thus confessed the wrong he had done when he replied to Zeid's questions concerning his conversation with Zainab with the words: "Keep your wife for yourself and fear God," instead of immediately and frankly admitting his own feelings for her. Zainab became the wife of Mohammed after her divorce from Zeid.

Mohammed was the only exponent of religion in his time. Only when he was detained or ill did he send a *vali* to represent him; and until long after his death every religious office was unpaid, for all the elders had other positions or trades which supported them. It was their duty to discuss and correct all improprieties publicly. Not until the reign of Moawiya, the fifth caliph, were religious teachers regularly paid, but from that time on they were under orders from the masters who supported





Then. All complaints against powerful or influential people were suppressed, and the prophets became willing tools in the hands of their rulers. Later a law promulgated in Constantinople provided that only the sultan himself or a man personally chosen by him should conduct religious services.

Mohammed endeavoured by every possible means, including the severest punishments, to do away with the cruel habit of child-murder which then prevailed, and further forbade the practice of abortion. In the sixth surah we read: "They are lost who have murdered their children and refused the gifts Allah gave them." Most of the girl-children were killed as soon as they were born, or else they were buried alive.

Poverty led to these murders, and it was poverty that decided many families to make eunuchs of their sons. They wished to spare them the desire for a wife since they had not money enough to support a family. In the fourth surah Mohammed describes this inhuman practice as a "suggestion of Satan." But not only did the criminal mutilation become an established custom, but its development kept pace with the growth of the harems. As for child-murder, which had arisen among the Arabs under pressure of poverty, it flourished in the following age for other causes. Desire for power, avarice and jealousy led to child-murder in the later harems; and finally the law of fratricide, which gave religious sanction to the murder of a brother as a means of security against rivalry, became a state law under the sultans.

How could an institution which was utterly opposed to the laws and precepts of religion be





8  
Given the name and rights which Mohammed had accorded to the holy place and the Caaba alone? "Harem": refuge, inviolable sanctuary. It should have been called differently: *Maballa sharara*—the place of religious wrong!

Mohammed would have been astonished if he had seen the places which were later covered by the protecting name "harem," for the sanctuary they offered to women was full of menace. In his day sensual pleasure was not an exclusively indoor occupation. Nor had it been separated from love. The people lived in primitive huts and tents where sand was blown in on the wind: they cooked their food there, and the odour of garlic was stronger than the perfume of roses. The rain came in to cool passion, for houses were not yet fitted to preserve an artificially created atmosphere of heavy sensuality, much less then, to produce it. Passion was stronger in those days, readier to take the field and more firmly established, as it is in all epochs when conflict has set its mark on possessions of every sort. Peace was regarded not as a period of assured quiet but as a state that might be changed in a day. This constant "preparedness" strengthened natural instincts and preserved their independence. Men fought battles and brought home women as part of their booty, and these conquered slaves introduced an aftertaste of war into love. But their influence was not evoked so as to rouse desire in a man by a display of large numbers of women, and, in his virile self-confidence, he would never have entertained the idea that he might be betrayed. There was no thought of secluding women behind locked doors, for people lived a common life





together. Fleshly desires were not deliberately forced upon a man in the atmosphere that surrounded him, and he was free to seize whatever object stirred his desire.

The first four caliphs—Abu Bekr, Omar, Osman and Ali—were called Rashid, “those who followed the right path,” to distinguish them as just, in contrast to the unjust men who succeeded them. They were strongly bound up with the establishment of the religion and were conscious of their duty to spread it abroad and to strengthen it at home.

The first caliph and first Moslem—Abu Bekr—was Mohammed’s father-in-law (his daughter Ayesha was Mohammed’s favourite wife). When he wished to profess the Mohammedan religion and Mohammed recited the confession of faith to him: “There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet,” he became thoughtful and decided that he was ready to bear witness to the first part—that there was no other God but God—because he was convinced of it; but whether Mohammed were God’s prophet, that he did not know. Whereupon Mohammed replied that the testimony, “There is no other God but God,” was sufficient in order to become a Moslem, the rest—what had to do with him, Mohammed—he might quietly leave out. Abu Bekr set very little store by any worldly goods. He said that prayer brought us half-way to God, that fasting brought us to the doors of His palace, but that only almsgiving secured us entrance. He gave proof that he had lived and acted on his conviction, for all that he left when he died amounted to no more than five dirhem (one dirhem equals seven or eight shillings). When his successor, Omar, heard





of the size of the "estate" he is said to have remarked. "God be gracious to the soul of Abu Bekr, he has left a difficult example for his successor to follow." But the imitation was not difficult, for a close spiritual relationship seems to have determined the succession. Abu Bekr's kindly nature was so like Omar's that the Arabs called these caliphs "Omaran," the two good Omars. Omar's most beautiful legacy to humanity is worthy to be compared with Abu Bekr's five-dirhem estate. He forbade that any slave should be sold again if she had borne her master a child. The following is one of the most important of Omar's sayings: "The power of the Arabs be broken if the ruler who governs the land is without either the piety of the Mussulman or the generosity of the heathen!" Omar himself had experience of the generosity of the heathen, for under his government the kingdom of the caliphs spread immeasurably. Nevertheless he lived almost exclusively on barley-bread, often denying himself salt, which he considered a superfluous luxury.

In the years devoted to the spreading of the faith a single thought seemed to inspire all: to make victorious war. Everyone helped in the great work of conquest, and the same emotions governed men and women alike. In Abu Bekr's reign women avenged their husband's deaths with bow and arrow; they shot pennants from the hands of Christian standard-bearers, and shared in all the dangers and hardships of war. In the fighting before Damascus they proved their courage and cold-bloodedness. All the women and children were carried away by the leader of the Greek infantry, Peter (the leader of the cavalry was appropriately





named Paul). Among them were many women of the tribe of Hamzar, who fought and rode like the Amazons of old. Peter lost his war-impassioned heart to their chieftainess, the beautiful Kawlah, sister of the captain Derar. But his attempts to win her resulted only in Kawlah's placing herself, together with the equally courageous Opheirah, at the head of the captive women and attacking him and his followers with tent-poles. Peter's love was changed into hate, and he gave orders to have the Arabian Amazons cut down with the sword; but Derar's help came in time.

Under the second caliph, Omar, women still continued to fight. At the city of Yermouk they were placed close behind the attacking line to form a wall which should prevent the Moslem army's retreat. Every man who turned to flee and showed his face to the women was so received by them that he would rather meet his worst enemy than submit to their violent handling. Three times the Mussulmans were repulsed only to be mercilessly driven forward again by the women, whose courage at length decided the successful outcome of the battle. During the battle, seeing that Kawlah had been wounded by a Greek, Opheirah ran to her assistance and quickly struck off the head of the assailant.

As the result of extensive conquests, Osman, the third caliph, in spite of the greatest munificence, could not help leaving more than eight hundred million dirhem in the treasury of the caliphate at his death. This enormous sum could no longer be compared with Abu Bekr's five dirhem. At Sanaa (the capital of Yaman) Osman destroyed the temple Beid Ghumdan, over the gates of which was the



inscription, "Ghumdan! he who destroys thee shall be slain." Thus the third caliph was slain while reading the Koran. On the same day the fourth caliph, Ali, was elected his successor.

During Ali's reign Ayesha, Mohammed's widow, desired to seize the caliphate for herself. She had wide influence and a great following, for she had been the prophet's favourite wife and was actually called the Mother of the Faithful. She herself commanded the army she had collected, and joined battle with the Caliph at Koraiba. Although her troops outnumbered Ali's, his strategy proved the stronger, and Ayesha's army was defeated and scattered; while the tent-like litter on the camel that had carried her from one part of the battlefield to another was pierced in so many places by darts and arrows that it looked like a porcupine. When at last the wounded camel was lying on the ground and the fighting was over, the Caliph sent Ayesha home, escorted by his two sons and a splendid retinue. But he thought it wise to arrange that she had no further voice in affairs of state.

During the lifetime of Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, Caliph Ali had no other wife. Various names were given to Ali which attest to his courage, wisdom and humanity. He was called the "Victorious Lion of God" by the Arabs: *Faid el Amwar*, "the Giver of Light," by his worshippers the Shi'is: and *Sheik Mordman*, "the King of men," by the Persians. He left notable poems and sayings, one of which runs: "If a man desires to be rich without means, powerful without subjects, and submissive without a master, let him renounce all his sins and serve God, and he will surely find these three





things." "The Kingdom belongs to the only powerful God" was the inscription on his seal. His son Hassan was elected to the caliphate but refused to take office. "The caliphate will last for thirty years after me, then a monarchy will be established," was Mohammed's prophecy. Exactly thirty years after his death Hassan renounced the caliphate and Moawiya illegally named himself the fifth Caliph and first Sultan, and instituted the succession to the caliphate by inheritance—in opposition to the religious law, which provided that a caliph should be elected. Moawiya made Damascus his place of residence, where he formed the first seraglio, thereby laying the foundation of the harem. In the green palace of El Kadra there now exists a sharply defined section which was set apart for the women and where pleasure ruled a broad realm of its own. The Sultan introduced what corresponds to the European priesthood, with rank and fixed payment. A new era began with Moawiya, for he emulated the pomp of the Egyptian and Persian courts and subordinated his dominion to a desire for splendour. And in such circumstances the softening musk-laden atmosphere of his household of women rapidly spread over the country. The treasury of the caliphate was freely looted, and Moawiya proved himself a connoisseur of jewelry by sending a bracelet worth a hundred thousand dinar to Ayesha. He was greatly influenced by harmonious verses and tales of love. Thus a young man who gave voice to his despair in a poem found audience with Moawiya. The governor of Kufa had robbed the poet of his beautiful wife, and he could not live without her. The Caliph commanded the governor





to give back the wife instantly. But the governor was so enamoured of her charms that he begged the Caliph to grant him the incomparable enjoyment of this woman for one year, after which delay he would gladly lay his head at the Caliph's feet. Moawiya liked the unhappy husband's verses better than this amorous readiness to die, so he sent for the wife and gave her back to her husband.

His son Yazid I was interested only in singers and in revelry, eating and drinking. The external use of perfume was not enough for him, so he strengthened the effect of wine on his senses by the addition of musk, which made his kisses seem more desirable to women. He was the first caliph to drink wine openly and to wear silk clothing. With deliberately induced intoxication and bewildering perfume the corrupting influence of the harem grew stronger and led to debauchery and extravagance.

There were, however, times when conscience made a stand. Yazid's successor, Moawiya II, sought refuge from the illegal inheritance of the caliphate in peaceful protecting darkness. He renounced the throne, the power and the responsibility, and spent his life after his abdication shut up in a dark room where he gave himself up to prayer. He was called *Abu Leilah*—"Father of the Night." A masculine conscience prompted abdication and flight to prayer; a feminine one with conscious resolution sent a beloved son to death. Under the Caliph Abdalmalik, the leader of the army, Abdallah Ebn Zobeir, undertook a hopeless struggle against an immeasurably superior force. His mother urged him not to wear armour, which could only





delay the end. Her motherly love further strengthened the will of the son who was dedicated to death, with a drink made of musk. She quieted his only fear—lest his corpse be violated—with the words: "If a sheep is dead it feels no pain when it is skinned." As he died, bleeding from countless wounds received in the bitter fight, he recited another Arab saying: "The blood from our wounds falls on our feet but not on our heels." In this assertion he showed his proud satisfaction that he had never shown his back to his enemies. His mutilated body was nailed to a cross where for days it gave out an intoxicating fragrance, the last gift of his mother, who then died of sorrow for the loss of her child.

The choleric temperament of Walid I vented itself on sixty-three wives in alternate marriage and divorce. As compensation he was followed by the Caliph Suleiman, the "Key to Bounty." After the sudden rages of the one, and the gentleness of the other, love had its day: the reign of Yazid II was controlled by a dancer. While his brother Suleiman was still caliph Yazid bought a slave, the beautiful Habbaabah, "the Best Beloved." His great love for her roused the displeasure of the Caliph, who forced him to give her away. When Yazid became caliph his wife Saada, wishing to secure his favour, asked whether he still had an earthly wish now that he had been raised to the throne. "Habbaabah," he answered. Saada had a search made for the slave, who had been sold to an Egyptian. She found the girl and fulfilled her husband's wishes by giving his beloved back to him. But the Caliph's great love caused Habbaabah's death. In a garden, beside the Jordan, a delightful place for making





love, Yazid playfully threw a specially fine grape at Habbaabah. She caught it, swallowed it and was choked to death. For seven days the Caliph refused to permit the burial. He could not separate himself from his dead love. She was hardly buried when he gave orders for the grave to be opened; he must see her again. A week later he died of longing for her.

The Caliph Hisham rightly met a miser's fate. The chief purpose of his existence was to lock and seal up all his treasures and possessions. He was the first caliph to own vast numbers of clothes packed into countless cupboards which no one but himself might enter. After his death hundreds of cases were found filled with furniture, clothes and linen, and thousands of trousers and shirts lay hidden under his forbidding seal. His successor, Walid II, established his reputation for generosity by sharing all these treasures indiscriminately. He was the most extravagant of all the caliphs. Music and women were his great passions, and they inspired him to write shameless erotic verses. He left his compositions lying about everywhere in the hope that some illegitimate father would adopt them and publish them; and he seems to have had an understanding of the predatory habits of authors for he was never disappointed of his hopes. He was endowed with incredible physical strength which plagued him day and night, for he was totally unable to dissipate or destroy it. What he used up seemed to come back redoubled as if nothing could weaken him. If a strong peg were firmly driven into the ground and then fastened to his foot, he would pull it out as he leaped into the saddle. He would ramble over the desert for hours under a burning sun, and his prayer





to the powers of pleasure expressed itself in the wish that women might become lionesses so that he could measure his untamable, never-failing force by theirs.

Caliphs have even established the reputation of animals. The courage of the Mesopotamian donkey, which is said to be unequalled, is commemorated by the name which Merwan II received from his subjects. They called him Merwan Himar al Yezirah—"Merwan, the Mesopotamian donkey." He had not only the courage of the donkey but also its cleverness—a trait that on one occasion claimed for its victim the head of a nun. While Merwan was in Egypt this nun roused his desire. She hoped to preserve her chastity and to redeem herself from the Sultan's lust by giving him a miraculous ointment which would make him invulnerable. When she handed him the vessel containing the magic balsam the Caliph decided to test its efficacy immediately. He applied the salve to the neck of the nun and with one stroke her head fell. By the precision of his sabre-cut he kept her from learning of the swindle, for she was dead before she realized her fate. Being all-too-human may cost a victory to even so strong a caliph, and even courage and audacity are subject to certain penalties. Merwan had not only made an involuntary martyr but had to submit to defeat. He was the last of the Omayyad dynasty.

The following—Abbasid—caliphs made Bagdad their capital. And the whole palace area, which covered a third of the city, was called "harem"—holy ground—because it was the seat of the caliphs who were the chief guardians of religion. The





Omayyad in Damascus had learned how to exclude all but the most pleasant sides of kingship, so that their life gave them a satisfaction far beyond their deserts; but their behaviour had opened the gates to the Abbasid Bacchanalia. A mania for collecting took possession of the sultans. The palaces were filled to bursting with wives, dancers, singers and eunuchs. Men tried to swallow whole sheep, drank till they could hold no more and devoured dates until death intervened. They drenched themselves with perfumes, distributed jewels and trinkets by the bushel to their eunuchs and favourites. They staggered like blundering cattle from one pleasure to another. But the constantly perceptible taxing of their own bodies no longer led to enjoyment or satisfaction; they wanted to possess and control everything, to gratify all lusts, to enjoy all bodies—bodies from which distinction of sex had vanished before their mania for collecting objects of desire. And if now and then a ray of real love shone out, its light could not last long in the face of dangers from all sides. It ended in the death of one of the lovers, or it was extinguished by the noxious vapour of unbridled passion.

The first Abbasid caliph, Abul Abbas Al Saffal, demonstrated his generosity and the wealth of the caliph's treasury by presenting one of his male favourites with two million dirhem, which exceeded any single gift made by his predecessors. The price of slaves rose and was constantly rising owing to the great demand for them. Abul's successor, Abu Gafar al Mansur, paid a hundred thousand dirhem for a beautiful companion for the night. Under the caliphate of Mohammed Al Mahdi even the pil-





grimage to Mecca became a pleasure-trip. There was nothing uncomfortable about it and nothing interfered with ordinary habits, thanks to the six million dinar which went to its organization. The freshness of rare fruits and the chill of the drinking-water were preserved by masses of snow carefully carried by thousands of camels in an endless chain across burning wastes of sand. Under this caliph fruit again played a fatal part. The jealous rival of Caliph Mohammed Al Mahdi's chief favourite poisoned a pear and gave it to the woman she wished to get out of the way while they were on a journey together. But the beloved favourite innocently handed the beautiful fruit to her royal lover.

The domain of pleasure and power was hedged about by immediate danger from daggers or poison. The next mouthful of food might be laden with mortal agony, and any movement of the hand might be the signal for the quietus. But no one thought much about these possibilities of finality, and indeed in the delicately graceful turns of the poetic speech of that day these violent prospects lost their shocking crudity. Death and poison were topics at banquets, subjects for rhyme, themes for music. Perhaps it was precisely the constant imminence of annihilation that stimulated a delight in harmonious rhythms. There were even women among the composers. Olayya, the daughter of Caliph Al Mahdi, was not only the most intellectual woman of her time, but also a poet and a composer. She seems to have had only one failing—a stain on her forehead which she covered with a jewelled band. Nor does this artistic beauty seem to have scorned the pleasures of the table,





as she showed in her saying: "The Devil takes the man who gets up in the morning and finds a cold roast in the house without making away with it for breakfast!" Judged by this saying the poetess and perhaps also her verses must have been marred by grossness. Out of all this debauchery of the senses there suddenly appeared a single man who loved hardship and desert wanderings—Caliph Haroun Al Rashid made the pilgrimage to Mecca on foot. He was the only caliph who pilgrimaged on foot—in spite of that fact, however, his life indicates no ascetic harshness. During his reign occurred an extraordinary case of illness which was completely cured by a specialist in the diagnosis of sweat. One of the Caliph's wives had a paralysed hand. But the Caliph desired only women with sound limbs for his companions in pleasure; he therefore consulted a physician, who prescribed that the wife must appear before the whole court without delay. When she came the physician went resolutely up to her and began to strip her, beginning at the feet. In a determined effort to protect herself from this revealing treatment the patient forgot her paralysis. The physician declared that the source of the disease he had cured was to be found in the fact that during an especially violent embrace the woman had secreted a great deal of sweat which collected and lodged in her hand, thus causing paralysis. When she was forced to defend the original site of the trouble she regained her health, and the Caliph welcomed his deft-fingered beauty fellow once more.

It is not remarkable that in times thus completely given over to physical interests an animal comple





should darken the human brain. Mohammed Al Amin seems to have been obsessed by such a complex. He was constantly surrounded with legions of women and eunuchs, the white ones among whom he called his grasshoppers, while the black ones were his ravens. All the ships he built had the forms of animals; lions, elephants, horses, eagles and snakes rocked on the Tigris like a menagerie fleet. His successor drove a hundred and thirty thousand dappled horses laden with sacks of earth to a site suitable for an observation-post. Here, because of his suspicions, he had a hill constructed which should overlook the whole surrounding country, and on top of the hill he built a palace. Tel El Mekari, "hill of the draught animals," was the name of this palace in Samara. First a hundred and thirty thousand sacks were made for transporting the th, and afterwards fifty thousand little sacks to d food for the fifty thousand workmen. He was the first caliph who added to his own name the name of God: *Bi'llah*, "in God," or "by the grace of God." Every conceivable sadistic and masochistic eccentricity sheltered under this divine protection. Caliph Ga'far Al Mutawakkil had the appetizing habit of ordering his servants to throw vessels full of scorpions and snakes, like packets of poison, among the guests at his banquets. No one dared flicker an eyelash; everyone must let himself be crawled over and bitten, for the Caliph's beneficent hand immediately distributed the antidote. But he had no unguents that could cure the sword-thrust to which he fell victim during one such banquet. Some Turkish slaves who had been revolted by his behaviour did not allow themselves to be intimi-





dated by the name "Holy place," but forced their way into the palace and struck him down.

The Caliph Mohammed Al Onuktadi undertook to make a wholesale purification of the corrupt palace. He cast out again everything that was forbidden by the Koran. He banished from the court all singers, soothsayers, jugglers, buffoons, lions and dogs. He lightened the tribute, and on two days of the week he permitted all his subjects to inform him of their grievances. He would certainly not have to complain of lack of work. But the moral cleansing which he had planned remained a pious wish, for no man could hope to dam the contaminating streams of the world he lived in.

Eunuchs—forbidden by Islam—played a large part in that world. To circumvent the religious prohibition they were bought by the Mohammedans only after they had been promoted to the eunuch's state by Jews and Christians. They were not only servants, watchmen, spies and instruments of pleasure, but also generals, statesmen and governors. Under the Caliph Ja'far Al MuktaDIR a eunuch, Munes, was the most successful general, while the final decision in difficult legal questions was actually left by the judges to Yamek, a prostitute. Munes was a whole man in spite of his sexlessness, and in the case of Yamek the line of the heart was not stronger than the line of the head.

The palace and its grounds were guarded inside and out by seventy thousand eunuchs, both black and white, besides the eight hundred sentries who watched the gates. The Caliph's bodyguard consisted of one hundred and sixty thousand men. In the great hall of state in the palace stood a tall tree





With eighteen branches made of purest gold. On its branches there swung birds studded with precious stones, who sang melodies as they flapped their wings. The ambassadors from the Greek Emperor stood speechless before these wonders and before the dazzling splendour with which every room was furnished.

The eunuch Munes was outraged by the behaviour of the Caliph, who, not content with the women and eunuchs at his command, exercised an unlimited and arbitrary despotism over all his subjects. Supported by the militia, Munes broke into the palace, wreaking vengeance and taking plunder. He overpowered the Caliph and took him, together with all his family and all his concubines, as prisoners to his own house. From which fact it can be seen that eunuchs knew how to live in state. To imprison all the concubines of a caliph requires more space than is needed for a week-end visit. During the days following the raid a rapid change of scene took place. Kaher, the brother of the captive Caliph, was raised to the caliphate and then deposed, and Ja'far Al MuktaDIR was reinstated. A brotherly reconciliation took place, but the eunuch Munes felt that his life was in danger. Later he left the court and went to Al Mawsil, where he collected troops, and then attacked Bagdad. The Caliph was defeated and beheaded.

Why should the soul of the eunuch have been plunged in endless sadness when the severed head of the Caliph was brought to him? He took the most particular care that no harm should come to any member of the family or any of the servants, and this time he forbade looting under penalty of death.





The twelve-year-old son of the beheaded Caliph could collect no followers, for all were afraid that men would not rule the land, but that the child's government would rest in the hands of eunuchs and women, as his father's had before him. Although Munes knew the cruel and avaricious nature of the proposed Caliph Mohammed Al Kaher Bi'llah, he was finally persuaded to support this new caliphate with his powerful influence.

During the reign of Al Kaher Bi'llah an opposing faction that hoped to make Abu Ahmed caliph was defeated. Al Kaher summoned Abu Ahmed to the palace, and had him nailed to the wall in a part of the palace set aside for the women. At that time the overseer of the favourites, concubines and slaves was not only the chief mistress of the court; she was responsible also for important and dangerous prisoners of state who were placed under her protection. For this reason she bore the title *Kabrama*, "Woman of Vengeance." So prisoners learned the meaning of the harem—"refuge, protection." Al Kaher was the cruellest and most covetous of the caliphs. After robbing his own mother of her entire possessions, he had her tortured to death on the bare assertion of two witnesses who declared that she still had some pieces of jewelry hidden away. He had the eunuch Munes executed to show gratitude for support of his caliphate. It is oppressive enough for one man to be under obligation to another, but to be under a lasting obligation to a eunuch to whom he can feel only masculine superiority is impossible. All the more was this true at a time when there were no longer any permanent values or lasting emotions. Com-





Pamans for a night replaced companions for life; hosts of castrated youths took the places of friends; prostitutes were entrusted with responsibility for the law; the chief guardian of religion tortured his mother to death for the sake of a few jewels, and the place where all these wrongs, sins and murders were done was called—like the holy place of the Caaba—"harem."

At the door of the great mosque of Bagdad stood Al Kaher, the deposed Caliph, with his hand extended for alms. Deposed, imprisoned, blinded and finally set at liberty, now he was himself wrapped in the darkness into which he had thrust so many other men. The power of the caliphate and the glory of Bagdad were in danger. Estates and provinces had fallen away, and freed themselves from the temporal sway of the Caliph in order to ally themselves with various emirs, princes and governors. At last a severe famine broke out. Mothers roasted and ate their children, and corpses floated on the waves of the Tigris. These were the inhuman women who had stayed their hunger on the bodies of their children and who had been drowned for punishment. Now reigned the last caliph to lead the services in the mosque, followed by the last caliph to command the troops and control the treasury. On the enormous chessboard of Moslem history the chief guardian of religion was no longer invincible, although all the caliphs were good chess-players. But the cleverest play could no longer suspend the decision, nor could Fate be cheated by the delusion of divinity cherished by the last Abbasid caliph, Al Mostazem Bi'llah.

On the threshold of Al Mostazem Bi'llah's palace



lay a stone which the faithful kissed with as deep reverence as they kissed the black stone of the Caaba at Mecca. A piece of black material hung over this parody of a stone, and the lips of the faithful touched the material with the same humility that they showed in touching the black damask which hangs over the stone of the Caaba in the holy place in Mecca.

"Harem!" . . .

This usurped name seems to have given the last member in the long chain of caliphs the delusion of likeness to God. He thought his face so god-like that it must be profaned by no human gaze. Just as Mohammed's face was usually pictured in ancient drawings with a cloth over it, so the Caliph hid his face as if he were Mohammed's equal. Al Mostazem Bi'llah covered his face with a mask or a curtain-like cloth whenever he left his palace. Serried masses of people gathered together in streets that were too narrow for such a multitude; all the windows and doorways were filled and the roofs were covered with respectfully gazing subjects. The never-failing trick of isolation which has been played throughout thousands of years proved its magic. The more marked and striking the difference between the elect and the suffering herd the more readily people believed in the elect; their justification of course lay in the designation Bi'llah, "In the Name of God." The pride of this last Abbasid ruler had no limits. Even people of the highest rank and importance rarely had access to him. But there was nothing divine and nothing human about his unveiled, unmasked life. He was consumed by the most miserable avarice in spite





of the fireworks of pomp which he employed to conceal it. He was the caliph, the highest religious power and the mighty protector of religion, but he seized the property of another man and refused to give back millions' worth of jewels that a believer had in confidence entrusted to him. The voice of conscience was unknown to him; he heard only the voices of his singing birds and of his favourites. He was deaf to the call of duty, deaf to the approaching storm, inaccessible to warning, for he felt himself sacrosanct, as if no earthly power could drive him out of the isolated domain of his palace.

Hullaku, the Mongolian Tartar prince, waked him from his deluding dreams. The Caliph awaited him sitting in front of golden vessels filled to the brim with precious stones. He trusted in these shining treasures—in their enormous value and the dazzling magic of their possession. . . . Do you not see, O Caliph, how the glittering stones shrink, how they dissolve, how they melt, how they change into human tears? Have you not learned that tears are worthless? What have tears ever bought of you? Could their meaning penetrate your mask and reach your human understanding? To whom have you ever shown mercy that you should now count on the mercy of an enemy? Are you not aware that a different kind of treasure would have to lie at your feet before you could hope for the right of sanctuary? Your vessels are made of gold but in them lie Hunger unsatisfied, Distress unrelieved, Sorrow uncomforted. They are not filled to the brim with glowing riches; it is not budding prosperity that grows and blossoms and flourishes within them. Your dead stones are barren and cold, they sparkle





only out of malice that you, the Mighty One, have fallen victim to their glittering treachery. They are amazed that your eyes were so dull, that your heart was so hard, and that your soul was so remote that you could neither see, nor feel, nor gather up the true prosperity that lay on your path.

Before golden vessels filled to the brim with precious stones, the Caliph Al Mostazem Bi'llah awaited the conquering Tartar, in the conviction that these treasures, for the increase of which he had actually turned thief, would be able to influence other men and to corrupt them. But the sight of this incalculable wealth stimulated the Tartar Hullaku only to a charitable gesture: he had all the jewels divided among the leaders of his army. Now there remained only a captive caliph within the shelter of the holy place. The same night all the Caliph's wives and all his sons—over a thousand—with five hundred eunuchs to wait on them, were taken to the Tartar camp, to Hullaku's large tent. What accidents decided individual fates? Perhaps the brightening of a gaze, perhaps a resemblance that stirred memories, perhaps a sudden desire. Or did this crowd of women in their humiliation have no more effect on the Tartar than the heaps of jewels which he handed over to others?

The fate of the Caliph was not immediately decided. But when it was decided it was dreadful. He was sewed into a leather sack and dragged through the streets of Bagdad. The last Abbasid caliph had hidden his human face, a leather sack concealed its horror in death. Plundered and devastated, the protecting holy place bore witness to the bitter irony of its name, under the treacherous cover of





which men had been turned into animals, prisoners had been tortured, women's souls had been regarded simply as an ever-ready couch of pleasure, and hosts of creatures had been mutilated only to watch over valueless valuables. Harem . . . Refuge. . .

After a careful investigation of the lives and activities of the Osman sultans—later heirs of the caliphate—the “modern” harems seem like the blessed fields of paradise. Their customs and regulations have something of the seductive sweetness of *halwas*, and one would almost wish to have one's mouth smeared again with this gluey confection.

For the old sultanate had been nourished on a food that was not precisely sweet—a diet of stranglings, beheadings, hangings, poisonings, drownings and imprisonings. This regimen seems to have established the dynasty, moreover it gave rise to a certain Theory of Relativity in murder, for a sultan always hoped that the fulfilment of his own murderous desires would bring other and contrary ones to naught. How was it possible for the women of those days to bear children, in knowledge that in all probability their children would fall victims to the sword or to poison? When the shadow of destruction darkened every emotional relationship, how could there have been loving kisses and affectionate words? How could people court a favour that led so easily to the gates of eternal silence?

Perhaps instinctive desires made the women so acquiescent that they grew blind and deaf. Or perhaps the times had bred a peculiar type of woman who lived one day at a time, closing her mind to





all thoughts of the future. For "to-morrow" was an incalculable problem; a world of horror might be revealed before that time. Perhaps there prevailed a mad belief in the strength of all that was physical, so that each woman in the fascination of her body, the soft and gleaming smoothness of her perfumed skin, the glowing of her eyes and the rosiness of her lips, found a guarantee that she—just she alone—was sacrosanct and immune from all dangers. These women were cut off by their self-esteem from any sense of equality that could make them feel like ordinary people. Each of them took for granted that hers was a unique fate, the exception that proved the rule. They must have had a special conception of the ego. Perhaps the soul slept behind a heavy curtain of dreams, leaving the body to an empty thoughtlessness—the body was so young and blooming, and so desirous of living its short crowded life whose only destiny lay in arousing desire and allaying it. But children are born after desire has been satisfied, and these children were dangerous, for they were heirs to the sultanate.

Sultan Bayazid I established the precedent of fratricide which was followed automatically until the time of Mohammed II. Under this sultan for the first time fratricide became the law of the land and the basis for coronation festivities. On the day that a new sultan ascended the throne, all his brothers were killed. This was in accordance with a published *fatwa* which found its support and religious justification in a saying in the Koran: *Elfitnet min el katl*—"Uneasiness is more destructive than a death-blow." Thus the Koran was made to sanction murder.





The sultans of that period put to death not only their brothers, but also their grandsons and their nephews. All the male children of the sultan's daughters must die immediately after they were born—the umbilical cord was left untied—and all the male descendants of the sultan's sisters and brothers were likewise murdered. This legalized cruelty, which has no parallel in the whole of history, was made a part of religion by the mufti. The Arabic proverb: "There are no family relationships among kings," here found literal confirmation. If any male member of the sultan's family (brothers, grandsons, nephews) escaped the massacre, it was only because he was absent, or that he had fled, or had been safely hidden, or finally that he was the sole heir to the throne. Were women to bear children, were they to care for them lovingly and bring them up for this end? The murderers did not always wait for the birth; they threw the pregnant slaves into the Bosphorus. This method saved both time and trouble.

Not until four hundred years later, under Sultan Abdul Medjed, was the religious law of fratricide repealed. Until that time dumb executioners did their work with the strangling hemp rope. How could there still be men who prayed five times daily in the words of the same Koran from which were taken the regulations for murder, when their own child or their brother might fall a victim or had already fallen victim to those regulations? Comrades of youth, playmates of their own blood, feeble infants—all suddenly became enemies to those who ascended the throne. Was not the wickedly distorted interpretation cancelled by the words of the Hadith,





2  
that high positions should be occupied only to the glory of God, and in the spirit of God?

The caliphs had been distinguished teachers and expounders of Mohammedan law in Babylon and Egypt, and the Turks had bowed to that law's decisive authority. But the loss of the caliph's temporal power brought with it a loss of faith in their infallibility, and their religious office was transferred to the mufti. The muftis—doctors of the law invested with special authority—were responsible for the two sanctioning *fatwa*, one of which justified fratricide while the other permitted the breaking of an oath or of faith between a Moslem and an infidel. What sluices of madness were now opened! Ropes hissed through the air, seeking necks which they must strangle “by religious authority,” new-born children were allowed to bleed to death, pregnant women were thrown into the water, and all these grim happenings were part of the coronation festivities. The muftis profaned the Koran, and made Mohammed the sponsor for the murder of brothers, children and wives. The last breath of the dying was followed by festivals of rejoicing, and after the festivals more graves were filled. All these events coiled like poisonous snakes about the sultan's throne on which the Padishah ruled and raged. For Selim I incorporated in one person the offices of Sultan, Padishah and Caliph.

Even these titles were insufficient for so much incarnate divinity—Heaven must be looted in Selim's honour. He was called the “Shadow of God upon Earth,” and he liberally handed out the shadows of death to whomsoever might darken or





threaten the shadowy path of his divinity. Cruel acts of violence were associated with craven fears; curses hovered on the same lips that uttered prayers and titles stolen from God; wicked men went on pilgrimage and fasted; conquerors became the obedient toys of their own lusts, bowed to the arbitrary rule of beautiful boys and submitted to the enervating multiplicity of the women they had collected in their harems. Schools were founded for the training of pages, and thousands of boys were purchased—Georgians, Circassians, Roumanians, Hungarians, Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians—and brought into the seraglio to receive a page's education. The eunuch who was chief courtier of the seraglio, *kapu aghasi*, and under whose protection the pages were placed, had no easy task. He had to punish all impropriety among the lads very severely although he knew their destiny. Most of the pages were castrated. Those who were later lucky enough to be chosen as the lovers of important people easily achieved position and honours. Their opportunities of advancement were determined by the intensity of the feeling they were able to arouse and to maintain, and success was easy of achievement, for pederasty was the favourite vice not only of sultans but also of the powerful nobility, and abuse of the pages was universal. Disturbances often arose in these page schools. Hysterical desires flamed up in revolt and released a sort of distorted mass-erotism against which even the hardest blows were powerless.

As early as the time of Bayazid I the pages came into their own. They were confidants, accomplices, fellow-revellers at banquets and companions in





pleasure. Mohammed II went so far as to make princes out of his boy-favourites—an aristocracy of the senses. His chief favourites were the Princes of Lesbos, Athens and Wallachia. The numbers of the women were not exceeded by their male rivals, for all the court officials had to bring their pretty daughters to the Sultan's harem as if a tribute had been exacted. Beauty was all that was demanded of the body—not a specific sex—but music might also be a factor of importance. One day when Suleiman I was still Crown Prince, he heard the son of a Greek sea captain play the violin, and when he had seen the boy, the Sultan laid the foundation of one of the greatest careers a favourite has ever had. The sailor lad became the Prince's inseparable companion, and later, as Ibrahim Pasha and grand vizier of the kingdom, he controlled the Sultan's government. He shared all the honours of the Padi-shah and all his booty. He conquered lands and territories for his master, and then in gratitude for the favours he had received and in proof of his own worth, he laid them at the Sultan's feet. Side by side the Sultan and the erstwhile sailor made their entry into conquered cities. Side by side they received ambassadors and deputies. Together they wielded the destinies of the Osman Empire and equalled one another in arrogance and pride. But in spite of this community in the sultanate, Suleiman I was still the proper heir by inheritance, and in him also stirred the suspicion that had tormented his ancestors—anxiety for his life and fear of the friend whose power equalled his own and might threaten to exceed it. Although the favourite paid royally for the Sultan's grace, abusing neither confidence





her position, and was the strongest support of the whole kingdom, the Padishah yielded to cowardly temptation, and engaged six mutes to strangle Ibrahim Pasha, the greatest of all grand viziers, at the height of his fame.

Coincidentally with Ibrahim Pasha's career a woman of the harem rose to power. At first a slave, next she was made *Sultana-Khasseki*, and from this position of "the most intimately favoured" she rose to be the Sultan's most influential and cruel counsellor. She was the Circassian *khurrem*, called Roxelane. Her envy had waked the Sultan's suspicion against his favourite, Ibrahim Pasha. The beautiful *khasseki*, whose charms were concealed by veils in accordance with the accepted custom, now revealed her womanly virtues in an influence which brought about the cold-blooded strangling of two viziers and the murder of Mustapha, who was the son of the Sultan by one of Roxelane's rivals.

To be overseer and controller of the harem of that period, and at the same time to give satisfaction to the sultan, the sultana-mother and the harem inmates, called for more talent than to be grand vizier. It was the most responsible and the most dangerous of all positions. The chief mistress of the ceremonies in the harem of Murad III had to look after forty *khassekis*, one hundred and two children and five hundred slaves. She had charge of the court ceremonial also and had to train the slaves, she even concerned herself with the affairs of the government. She must know about everything and be informed of everything that happened, for the seclusion of the harem was only a physical one, in spite of all its veils and precautions. There were some connecting





links which made possible a measure of communication with the outside world. The patronage of *khassekis* has been known to promote gardeners to a *khodja's* position. Then, as expounders of the scriptures, they had free entry to the harem. Under Sultan Murad III there were four religious teachers who visited the royal harem, and they made it possible for the more ambitious women to exert an influence in affairs of state. With the help of intermediaries secret correspondence was carried on. The Khasseki Rephia, the Venetian Baffa, was in correspondence with Catharine de' Medici and intrigued in favour of her former countrymen. Women ruled, conspired, condemned, favoured and upheld their power by sorcery.

It is a delightful thing to have the favour of the Sultan, but a sultan's favour quickly turns to new seductive objects. An influence founded on masculine pleasure has no stability. So the Khasseki Baffa came to the correct conclusion that a sultan without male desires was the ideal for her schemes of a permanent position. Magic knots were tied, untied and charmed, and as a result many Turkish and Jewish slaves were thrown into the Bosphorus, for the Sultana-Mother watched over the precious virility of her son, and every harem, however isolated, was riddled with espionage and treachery. Grand viziers fell into disgrace when they gave counsel that the sultan should go to war, for all the women of the harem united to prevent a campaign. However different the goals they pursued, and however contradictory were the ambitions they nursed, still all needed the presence of a man who could be influenced and controlled.





The harem avenged itself. It must satisfy the lust, the caprice, the pleasure of the master. *Dar Il Seadet*, "the house of happiness," is the name of the women's apartments, but this secluded realm of happiness had made itself into a force of intrigue before which everyone trembled, and the man who thought he governed the harem was precisely the one who first fell a victim to it. For, with the single exception of the mother of the future sultan, all these women knew they were doomed to loneliness and oblivion after the death of the reigning sultan, and that a memory of their past brilliance and splendour could not make up for the darkness of the old seraglio. So long as the master reigned they shared his rule, his power and his wealth, and with their jewels and their beauty they reflected his glory, potency, passion and all his royal humours. In their caressing hands they held the complicated controlling threads that led to cruel injustices or to tokens of favour, always by way of obedience to the sensual instincts. It was within their province to silence or to suggest, to confirm the position of a slave or to get rid of her. For since the sultan's women were his absolute possession and therefore safe from outsiders, they might have the last word in decisions concerning viziers and generals without fear of revenge. The poison of calumny tainted the women's happiest hours. The rebellious wills in their yielding bodies sought vengeance for the shortness of their reign. Perhaps the very next hour would bring banishment. Then the harem of the new sultan would sweep into the magnificent situation of its predecessor, and the discarded women must relinquish the opportunities they had kept





to themselves, but which they had not been able to guard against this bitter ending. The only woman who had nothing to fear from a change of sultans was the chief mistress of ceremonies in the harem, provided she had fulfilled her task with diplomatic skill, and had succeeded in winning the approval of the *sultana khasseki*. For the first-born son of the *sultana khasseki* was heir to the sultan's throne; and the woman who had formerly been a favoured slave had now, as Sultana-Mother, the strongest place in the harem.

During the reign of Sultan Murad III occurred the great circumcision ceremony which surpassed all previous Osman celebrations. For fifty-five days the madness reigned. The festival was financed by gold from the public treasury, and millions of money were spent in order to ensure that a small piece of skin should for ever be remembered in the history of the sultans. A year before the ceremony the rulers of all the other countries were informed that the Crown Prince was to be circumcised; and the correspondence of the various kings, princes, emperors and ambassadors on the subject of circumcision was most artistically inscribed. Finally official couriers bore invitations to all parts of the country and to foreign lands, bidding the whole world pay heed to a part of the body which is not usually a subject of conversation.

The Hippodrome, which in the time of Suleiman had seen the fabulous splendour of his sister's wedding celebration, was now made notorious in memory of Suleiman himself. Its vast size was not thought sufficient for the ceremony, and it was rebuilt. Neighbouring palaces were made higher,





New ones were put up, all the façades fronting on it were changed into *loges* like luxurious living-rooms. Galleries were erected which would have satisfied the whim of a Nero. The festive atmosphere was not to be disturbed by any coming and going throughout its prearranged duration of fifty-five days, and unity of effect was to be created by arranging that all the different performances should take place in the same surroundings. Galleries and tents that were palaces of prodigal magnificence were set up as temporary dwelling-places for the spectators. On the first day of the feast the Sultan, followed by a splendid retinue, proceeded to the seraglio appointed for him. Then followed, with a day's interval, the Crown Prince, the sultanas and the whole harem, surrounded by the dark sea of eunuchs. Tall artificial palms borne by hundreds of janissaries accompanied the entry of the Sultan's son. They were the sign of his supreme virility, and symbolized the strength that penetrated the seven spheres. Their tops were divided into seven sections with coloured wax balls, each of which was hung about with glittering mirrors, and models of animals and flowers. Streets had to be widened, houses torn down and roofs removed to make space enough for the entrance for these palmy symbols of male potency.

Circumcision gifts to the value of millions were heaped in the Crown Prince's rooms—jewel-studded caparisons, bridles shining with diamonds, golden robes of state, silver furniture and precious stones. The nobles of the land surpassed the kings of foreign countries in the magnificence of their presents. Every day a new company unrolled its





festive array and representatives of each trade laid its most costly products in homage at the feet of the Crown Prince. Dervishes, jugglers, dancers, conjurers, musicians, followed one another in a bewildering uninterrupted procession. Displays of archery, lance-throwing and horsemanship, shadow and puppet plays were varied with the roaring of living wild animals or tame troops of life-sized horses, elephants and giraffes, made out of sugar. All the animals modelled in sugar symbolized the sweetness of women in contrast to the palms with their assertion of male strength. The whirling dust was laid by hundreds of hose-carriers who used the empty pipes for administering blows whenever it was necessary to maintain order.

Hundreds of aspiring believers daily courted the favour of the Sultan, and with upraised finger begged for the privilege of being circumcised. Their wishes were immediately granted. In the evening, when the day's exhibitions were over, the Hippodrome and its neighbouring palaces, tents and galleries, shone forth in floods of light that illuminated the whole city. Then came the hour of the victims. Even their provisions made a stimulating display, for the whole of the floor of the Hippodrome was covered with food. Oxen and droves of sheep roasted whole, thousands of rice-filled dishes, mountains of loaves—all these were devoured by hungry mobs. Then legions of slaves cleaned away the bones, hoofs and horns which made a battlefield of this place where humans had been sated.

After all the excitements of the day began a pompous ceremonial in which visits were exchanged and the populace surged back and forth to express





approval and admiration of the visitors. It was a densely inhabited little city that had been brought into being just for this one feast, and its citizens met for the first time in a splendour that had robbed the treasury of millions merely to make an act of circumcision into an exceptional historical event.

As soon as the patient's wound was healed it was the custom, if he had already reached manhood, to present him with a beautiful slave as a reward of his sufferings. During the period of the Osman dynasty the slave was often still a child. In the case of this prince who had achieved an historical degree of brilliance by means of his feast of circumcision, the present of the single slave was immediately transformed into a well-supplied harem, which corresponded well with the variety and luxury of the preceding ceremony.

The Prince's passionate temperament had already given proof that he had reached the necessary maturity, for his love had resulted not only in pleasure but in death. One night when he wished to force his way into the women's quarter of his mother's harem, the eunuch refused him admittance. The Prince immediately stabbed the faithful creature, for his royal love for one of the slaves was as strong as death. The slave, however, had to atone for such preferment. The Sultana Valide was a peace-loving mother, and in spite, or perhaps rather because, of the fact that the slave had promised the Crown Prince an heir to the throne, she had the girl thrown into the sea the next day. One heir more or less was scarcely to be counted when he was the son of a father who had begotten one hundred and two children and then affirmed the credibility of his





self-control in an ascetic book: *Futubatus-siam*, "Preparation for the Fast." The melodious title would have graced the Yoshiwara, but the contents of the book probably kept the mighty Sultan Murad III from completing the count of the second hundred of children he had begun. In any case he was the only sultan to write an ascetic book, thereby proving that one may very well be an author without having an author's training. The sultans who immediately followed Murad III acted within the self-appointed limits of normal cruelty and wrong; not until Murad IV did the fever curve rise again. This twelve-year-old occupant of the throne was the sworn enemy of gaiety. He quickly developed a deaf-and-dumb sign language in his subjects as a result of fear, and nobody dared to use his voice as a means to making himself understood. Once when the Sultan noticed some women singing and laughing in a field he had them all drowned; he forbade women to go to market because he heard their shrill voices when he rode by. He had all the coffee and smoking houses torn down in order to destroy meeting-places which provided opportunities for conspiracy. The barbers' shops were forced to serve their clients one at a time. Even women were not allowed to meet together, and all lights had to be put out an hour after sunset.

He terrorized his women, but in the harem he bent before the authority of his mother. Although his favourite slave had presented him with seven daughters only, he wished to make the "Glowing Star" his Sultana; but his mother succeeded in preventing this. Female children furnished neither a claim to respect nor a pleasant title, only the slaves





who were the mothers of sons became *khasseki*. Later, after other slaves had borne him sons, the career of the "Glowing Star" was lost in girl-bearing darkness.

Murad's successor, Ibrahim I, did not institute a reign of terror; he was merely the slave of his own lusts. His favourite resort was a soft couch covered with perfumed sables, and the dreams he dreamed there were never lonely. Women, boys, perfume, flowers, furs, jewels, wine, sport—everything that appealed to the senses he loved with equal ardour. Like a South Sea islander, he stuck blossoms behind his ears and wore flowers instead of heron plumes on his turban. His house dress was a broad double cloak of sable drenched in ambergris; his court dress was covered with precious stones, and even in his beard he fastened single jewels. Under this most voluptuous of all the sultans the harem was filled with innumerable women.

Seven of Ibrahim the First's many wives bore the title *khasseki*, the "most intimately favoured." They were all bearers and representatives of his grace and had borne him princely sons. To each was accorded her own court, her own *khaia*—mistress of the harem—slaves, eunuchs and her own revenue, called *bashmaklik*, shoe-money. The *khasseki* also possessed carriages decorated with jewels, horses and golden jewel-decked caparisons. Ibrahim's favourites among the slaves were *Shekerpara*, "Bit of Sugar," and *Shekerbullie*, "Sugar Cake." Ibrahim's appetites gave him no peace, and often he changed his partner twenty-four times within twenty-four hours. He introduced a new custom of carrying court ceremonial into the affairs of his





fragrant sable-covered couch. Every Friday viziers and nobles accompanied the newly selected slaves to the Sultan's bed. Perhaps the official *coucher* strengthened his power. At night he would sometimes ramble about the city by torchlight, only to return suddenly to the seraglio in wild haste.

Once while thus riding he caught sight of a posterior of extraordinary size, and as he looked the covetous idea occurred to him that the woman's vast size might well increase the intensity of the pleasure she afforded. He gave orders for the fattest woman in Bagdad to be produced, and the whole city was rummaged through for massive feminine charms. But the most corpulent of all the women did not seem to the searchers to come up to their master's wishes. At last they discovered an Armenian whose ample body surpassed all hopes. Apparently the Sultan's ideas of the pleasure-giving qualities of size found satisfactory confirmation if conclusions can be drawn from the lasting favour shown to the Armenian. She received the governorship of Damascus, which she ruled according to her own fat taste. Submitting to his sensual yoke, Ibrahim followed the countless twisting paths of his erotic passions. Besides the favourite slaves he had a male favourite, Mosaybb Jussuf, who had high honours. He was a beautiful youth and enjoyed the unlimited esteem of his master. On the contrary, the court physicians fell into immediate disgrace when, fearing the results of the Sultan's behaviour, they warned him to show moderation.

The hot wind of passion seemed to blow holes even in the locked doors of the harem, so that greengrocers became the confidants of the ladies





of the harem—spinach and sugar found one another and united. The lovely “Piece of Sugar” cost a courageous spinach-dealer his head. For in the harem of that time also, the women warred with each other; ambition and greed for power enlivened their days. The Sultana-Mother had a thorn in her flesh in the shape of the Armenian whose influence increased as steadily as her body weight. So she invited the favourite to dinner and had her strangled during the course of the meal. At the time when the Sultan’s chief country justice had been given the significant nickname *Oglan Pesewengi*, “Procurer of boys,” gentler methods of elimination could not be looked for among the women. Sensual pleasure was the central point about which everything revolved. Out of it arose power and control, and hate and death. Everyone must bow before it. The Sultan held the value of pleasure higher than the dignity of the royal family, for his sisters were made to wait on the favourites and put up with all their moods. Poor *Sünbüllü*, the “Hyacinth,” *kislar aghasi*—chief court steward of the Sultan’s harem—led a difficult life. Among all these women some so proud, some so exalted, some so humble, he had to mediate, reconcile and conceal. His exhausted brain, which had already borne the responsibility of the harem under three sultans, was no longer fresh enough to follow up his master’s mad search for pleasure and to mitigate its results. Even in his own home he could have no quiet, for his high position required him to maintain an official harem. Certain immunities are the prerogative of every eunuch, but there is something sublime about a eunuch in his own harem. The poor “Hyacinth” was unlucky





56  
One day when he added to the number of his "wives" by purchasing a slave. According to custom he had bought her as a virgin. But Sünbüllü's desires were not taken seriously either by the slave dealer or by the woman who examined the slaves, and so it happened that the virgin had hardly reached the house of her new master when she bore him a boy. Still the "Hyacinth" did not lose his head, and even expected to extract a profit from the occasion.

Sultan Ibrahim had just been presented with a son by a *kbasseki*, so, making up his mind quickly, he took his beautiful slave, together with her child, to the royal seraglio to offer her as nurse to the Sultan's son. He was both successful and unsuccessful, for the Sultan liked the slave's son better than his own, and he liked the eunuch's slave also; consequently nurse and child aroused the hatred of the Prince's mother. One day when the Sultan was in the garden, enjoying himself happily with his wives and children—the enjoyment consisted of throwing wives and children alternately into a tank of water—the Prince's mother began to curse Sünbüllü, the slave mother and the alien child. Enraged at this hostile outbreak, the Sultan snatched his son out of her arms and threw him into the water. The child was rescued from drowning, but Sünbüllü felt that his position was endangered. He suddenly felt a religious longing to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and this he was allowed to do. The black Hyacinth boarded a ship with "his" son, with his whole harem, and with the enormous riches which he had gathered together under three sultans. But the bad luck which had followed him ever since the purchase of the slave still pursued him.





After he had set sail, desperate pirates were sighted, and he was warned not to continue his journey. But the Sultan's Chief Eunuch was courageous—he had forgotten fear during a life of perpetual danger spent in close proximity to women. He sailed on. Maltese galleys followed the ship and the pirates attacked and overpowered the crew. The guardian of the harem died fighting with his sword in his hand. All the women and all the treasure fell into the pirates' hands. Fate took the eunuch's child from the grace of the Sultan to the grace of Heaven: he was brought up by the Maltese as an Osman prince and inducted into the Order of Dominican Friars. Under the name of Father Ottomano the son of the eunuch Sünbüllü and of the virgin slave lived the stirring life of an adventurer.

In the reign of Mohammed IV destiny raised a page to the heights of honour, for the page's apartments were training schools for the most improbable possibilities. The Sultan commanded that his favourite—Hassan Aga—should be treated with the same marks of honour as he, the Padishah. He was to be regarded as the complementary duplicate of the Sultan. To give outer confirmation to the inner bond, the clothing of the partners was of the same cut and the same material. They rode horses of the same colour and with the same bridles. To win praise from the Sultan poets glorified Hassan Aga. He was described in verse as "the Rising Sun," "the Image of the Sultan" and "Most Blessed." Streams of jewels flowed to his feet and the Sultan himself called upon his high nobles for gifts for the object of his choice.

Confusion reigned in the harem. . . . Feminine





influences must conquer! They would not be repressed. Favourites would not renounce the pleasure of being taken everywhere by the Sultan.

Like the tail of a comet, hundreds of silver-inlaid carriages filled with women followed the Caliph when, robed in his white brocade and fur cloak covered with brilliants, he left his residence on the way to the palatial tents where he would receive news of the latest conquests of his army.

Male favourites were more dangerous than female rivals, because they were more secure from a woman's vengeance. The Sultan's mother, the *khasseki*, the slaves, and the chief eunuch, *kislar agbasi*, entered into a conspiracy against "the Rising Sun" whose glowing, destructive mastery became ever more secure. But the only result of this harem-revolution was that the Sultan, who enjoyed his bonds, condemned the *kislar agbasi* to death, and the power of the *Sultana Valide* was scarcely great enough to change the death sentence to banishment. The "Sun" shone on—his rays not only warmed his creator, but convinced the common people (who had before this proved themselves very adaptable to this variety of rays) of their pleasant beneficence. The "idol of the kingdom" took over all the power of the vizier, who had to look on while the Sultan talked over secrets and affairs of state with the favourite. Such superabundant honours turned the head of the "Most Blessed." The Mosayb—often called *Khasseki-Mosayb*, although in his case the title did not imply that he had raised male descendants for the Sultan—became more demanding and self-confident. He forgot that in spite of his royal clothing he merely stood in the protecting shadow





of the Sultan, who in his turn was only the "shadow of God" upon earth. His pride brought about a fall which made him into a *kapusi aghasi*, a simple doorkeeper.

When Mohammed II asked the poet Fehmy whether there were any pleasures inaccessible to the Sultan, the poet said "Yes, those of being divorced from four tyrannical lawful wives at once." These unattainable joys remained the envy of the Khasretul muluk kings. For the Osman kings had no married wives. The title "Sultana" belonged only to the mother, the sister or the daughter of a sultan. Every sultan had carefully to consider before bestowing his favour, for his sensual pleasure was not a spontaneous delight, unencumbered by responsibility. He had to attest to his choice by raising the rank of his new favourite, whereas to choose a eunuch involved no change of rank or title. These looser obligations had nothing to do with marriage or divorce, and often they had nothing to do with the female sex. Abdarrachman Pasha, the *keislar aghasi* of Mohammed IV, had a harem of boys. But such upsetting ideas did not seem to impair the authority of the powerful *keislar aghasi* to whom court etiquette granted precedence over the grand vizier, and whose hand all the other viziers had to kiss. His ceremonial title—*Oğlüm Sultanım*, "My Lord Son"—may, perhaps, have compensated him for things he could no longer attain.

At a time when two-year-old children could be given in marriage, nothing was amazing. The daughters of sultans were frequently married at this age. Reason dictated the choice of husband for





the little doll princess. In this way the sultanate and the kingdom made sure of a supporter who was bound to perform equal service in return for his distinguished marriage. Otherwise he was free of obligation, for, since daughters were a commodity supplied to the sultan by the dozen, they met with no great consideration. If the *damad*, the sultan's son-in-law, incurred the sultan's displeasure, his punishment was at best the not unmitigated fall from his high estate, and the princess looked further for a husband. Thus it could happen that when the time came for a properly consummated marriage, the sultana had already had several husbands. No *damad* had an enviable situation, for in the harem he remained his wife's inferior, while she could arbitrarily determine his fate by virtue of her intimate relation to the throne.

Nor is it remarkable that the Osman sultans sprang upon the throne like wild animals, and that once on the throne they continued to behave like wild animals, when it is remembered that they were prepared like bulls for a bull-fight, by long years of the darkness and stillness of an unnatural imprisonment. The Crown Prince of those days was subjected to an almost stricter isolation and guard than the women. Within the limits of the sultan's harem he had his own harem, a little prison, the so-called "Prince's cage"—one prison within another. There he spent his life—often half a century—until he was set free by accession to the sultanate, or by death. Anyone who wished to communicate with the Crown Prince without the consent of the sultan was put to death. The complete separation was intended to prevent alliances, unfavourable





influences and party conspiracies. In spite of the fact that the prince's lot was not enviable he often hesitated to leave his prison when the doors opened at last. An intrigue might easily bring about a further change of sultan, and then the freed prisoner would have had to expect not the throne, but death. In some cases the corpse of his predecessor had to be laid at the open door as a reassurance before the prince found courage to accept his liberty.

No one had a just appreciation of the tragic in those days. At a time when the horse's tail of the grand vizier was often fastened above the Great Gate as a sign that the army was again taking the field, people did not trouble themselves with human considerations—instead they cultivated flowers. . . . There was every conceivable kind of flower festival, even simple tulip festivals, when the colour effect of each individual tulip was accentuated by a lighted lamp. The beauty of all these flower-beds rejoiced the sultan and his wives and became a deciding factor in the cultivation of tulips, for the Turkish varieties put their sisters of all other countries in the shade. When a Dutchman introduced the flower into his native land he gave it a name which was derived from the Turkish word for turban.

New feasts provided opportunities for new honours, and under Sultan Achmed III there was a "Master of the flowers"—*Shukufedshibashi*—who had a quasi-control over all flowers and flower ceremonials. He was furnished with an artistically inscribed diploma the end of which called attention in flowery speech to the following duties: "that all cultivators of flowers must recognize the bearer as the Sultan's accredited Lord of all the said





flowers: that they must bring to him for judgment the open eye of the narcissus and the perfumed ear of the rose; that they must not use against him the ten tongues of the lily. Also they must take heed not to soil their tongues with the indecent talk of the showy pomegranate trees; but with closed mouths like the rosebud they must listen to his commands and obey them; and never speak out of season, like the hyacinth that grows prematurely blue. Like the violet they must bow modestly and humbly, and not show themselves refractory to his directions. . . .”

Under the rule of Achmed III came an epoch of flowers which affected the carpets and strewed them with embroidered roses, all dewy with diamonds. They lost none of their freshness when the red-booted feet of the nobles walked on them at gorgeous receptions. This sultanate lay in peaceful paths of contemplation, among flowers and embroideries. Numerous song-birds twittered about the Sultan as he sat, in domestic comfort, surrounded by the women who spoiled and loved him. He thoughtfully stitched thread after thread in gay abundance, through brocade or damask fabrics, until they were covered with flowery colours. The Sultan embroidered and the grand vizier ruled. But rulers could not even embroider with impunity—this dreamy occupation could not take the place of the usual strangling and killing. The thread of peace was cut short by rebellion. A storm of revolt blew this quiet and flower-loving sultan from his throne, and it was no grateful shower of blossoms that made him yield.

Achmed III had had a deep comprehension of women, flower feasts, embroidery and leisure. But





His violent successor destroyed everything that he had loved. All along the banks of the Bosphorus the rows of bright kiosks surrounded by flowerbeds, which had been the resort of tender happiness, were laid waste; embroideries and woven fabrics were scornfully destroyed and a like hatred was extended to the women themselves. All those who had counted on the magic of the feminine arts of seduction as a recognized calling had their passions cooled by drowning.

The veils that concealed women's faces grew thicker, the closely fitting outer garments became wider; flowers and women were no longer allowed to be enchanting. Always the tyrannical spirit grew stronger. During the fifty years of his imprisonment the Prince had not only lost his susceptibility to charming women but had even developed a mania for persecuting them. It was not enough for Osman III to lock up the harems, he must seclude them from the streets. Women were allowed to walk abroad only four times a week; their other days the Sultan reserved for himself and for his hatred. When he went out no female thing was allowed to cross his path. Nevertheless there were five hundred inmates in his harem. But he would not see even these selected women unless he chose. His boots were studded with large silver nails which gave the signal for flight, and when his heavy ringing step was heard in the harem everyone had to creep away and hide. Then one of the frightened women would be summoned from her hiding-place at his desire, though she came with little enthusiasm.

The craft he had learned harmonized with his nature—he was a master-shoemaker. All the Osman





princes had to learn a handicraft after the traditional example of David and Solomon. Whether the craft acquired had a helpful effect later, during the reign, is a doubtful question. Did not the memory of airless years of vindictive imprisonment cling to the "trade" practised in the "Prince's cage"? Did not these occupations have the same effect as convict labour? After such burdensome preliminaries in a house of correction the prince could scarcely be expected to show kindly and magnanimous traits when he came to be sultan. A cramped and terrorized existence in a prison does not pave the way to a true kingship.

Conqueror and ruler! The Osman dynasty demonstrates more convincingly than any other the impossibility of combining two offices which require such different qualifications. And if the function of caliph is added to those of conqueror and ruler the triple disunity is complete. One can look only for failure from such an abnormal combination. But such philosophic resignation could not be expected of the sultan's subjects, and so some sort of show had to be put up for them. Wrong was called right, murder was legalized and religion was made the pandering cloak for any evil. Once more Evil and Irresistible Strength became the symbols of invulnerable authority. From a series of shattering experiences was bred a blind race of subjects which offered the only possible foundation for the sultanate. Murder and terror were the means of insurance against rebellion, and power licensed all possible excesses.

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" would have been too Biblical and uncertain, for





who is fool enough to give anything voluntarily? The former sultans had long recognized this comprehensible lack of generosity in their subjects. Their harems would have been empty if they had waited for a happiness which was voluntarily offered—to say nothing of what would have become of the race of eunuchs! Neither infants nor the brothers of a Crown Prince would have voluntarily held their breath until their deaths made the throne secure for the heir. The peace-loving mufti's *fatwa*, reinforced by the words of the Koran, did not carry the necessary conviction. "The Law of Fratricide" sounded more encouraging than a bare "Law of Murder," and the brotherly relationship suggested the duties implied by a bond of blood. The Sultan's strongest supporters were the mutes who stood about him prepared for murderous deeds, waiting in alert silence for the command to strangle which heralded the beginning of new coronation festivities. Then followed a dramatic little scene played more as a matter of routine than as a credible reality: the Sultan prayed at the graves of his brothers, probably for their souls which were no longer rivals for his throne. Not until then did the new Padishah accept the homage that was his due. . . .

Meanwhile the "great purification" went on in that "abode of happiness," the sultan's harem. No consideration was now given to women of rank or title or to those whose bodily proportions made movement difficult; nor was it of any use for the harem's inmates to make a demonstration by breaking all the windows and wailing and screaming so loud that the people in the street could hear. Clear out quickly! was the word, for the seraglio must





be cleaned and aired for the female followers of the new Padishah: old exhausted pleasures must make way for new. The women whose charms had passed their hey-day were driven in crowds into the old seraglio out of which new candidates for power poured rejoicing. And the trembling and humiliated *kislar agbasi* who had formerly been omnipotent led the horde of women who had been so long entrusted to him into the darkness of oblivion. Perhaps this *balancez vos dames* was the last figure he led in the harem quadrille—a change of sultan subjected all heads to likelihood of removal. In long rows the “most favoured,” the “favoured” and all their obscure sisters in pleasure took their weeping way to the old seraglio, where, like worn-out circus horses, they would revolve in the circle of memory to the end of their wasted lives. They all knew that their days would end thus, that the glamour and happiness of a favourite’s lot would lead her hither, and that neither magic nor beauty could delay the coming of the fate which set her on the road to the old seraglio. All the women took from the present whatever their jewel-decked and perfumed hands could reach; they flattered, caressed, kissed and courted their way to the enticing heights of voluptuousness; they intrigued, conspired, poisoned and cleared out of their paths anything which might endanger their careers: they were exactly as cruel and merciless as the master for whose sensual pleasure and pastime they existed.

The time was short, and at the end of the short span a living grave awaited them. With this knowledge in view all that they had gained grew valueless, for nothing secured them against the dark conclu-





sion. Its shadow lay already on gold brocades, shining jewels and all their deceitful splendour. Hate and fear had been the decisive factors in the realm of women also, for they were the means by which intimacy with the sultan was attained. This sultan who might change from one minute to another, this rocking, treacherous throne and the murders that it entailed. . . . A breathless pursuit for confirmed supremacy took place in the realm of sensual pleasure—a pursuit of coquettish titles, honours, recognition and rank—but always there was the same dreadful change of scene as each new ruler ascended the throne.

Every Osman prince had his first lesson from the mufti in the presence of his father, the sultan. It was a great ceremonial occasion, and after the lesson the prince had to kiss his teacher's hand. It was just such a mufti who had in his time given the sanction of religious assent to the law of fratricide, which might some time claim the prince as its victim. The lesson began with the prayer of the faithful—for the right to murder appertained to religion, too. The lofty sanction of the supreme religion must be exploited—to the glory of God and the security of the dynasty. And so the story of the Osman dynasty goes on—until it reaches its climax on an isolated summit of power: on this dizzy height Grand Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan was enthroned.





## CHAPTER II

## YILDIZ

Abdul Hamid, the last great riddle of the East! Dark restless eyes glow in his pale face; a titanic will inspires his frail body; he is as stubborn as a madman, for he feels himself threatened by a fatal precipice if he retreats a single step from the path he has chosen. And who can find the thread that leads to the centre of this labyrinth of dark deeds and thoughts, where the soul of this powerful, fearful and lonely man has its essential being?

He seemed like one possessed of a devil who can never rest. His fear of poison made every mouthful taste bitter. Always he fancied his life was in danger and dared not sleep two nights in the same room lest he should be murdered. Yet he bore the title: "The Shadow of God on Earth." At common prayer on Friday this name—*Fillulahi Filgalen*—resounded from the lips of the khatib in many mosques. The words rolled through the building and echoed round walls gilded with inscriptions from the Koran; the sound mounted into the very dome, as if space were all too small for the great name. And he to whom it belonged was Abdul Hamid. Did he feel safe from death, Shadow of God as he was? or was it just this title that so oppressed him and bent his narrow shoulders? How he must have despised the men who hailed him as the divine shadow, and those who submitted themselves without question to this God in man. All the





Priests were paid creatures that he had chosen to proclaim his immortality.

The Shadow of God dwelt in the white town of Yildiz—the Star—inside high walls where bodyguards protected him. Every strand of a vast net of intrigue that bound his subjects in helpless captivity was held in his hands. There was no escape from the finely woven tissue, not a single defective mesh through which a prisoner might slip, for the strong threads of the net stretched over the whole country and made an elastic prison that grew big or small according to the capricious will of the master. There was no resisting the mysterious fisherman, for his office as caliph proved that his rights were confirmed by God. Those who should have guarded religion most closely were among his tools, for he had issued an order that only the sultan in person or a priest chosen by him might celebrate the mysteries of the faith. All lay entangled in the net, even the slender towers of the minarets and the shining cupolas of the mosques were caught in its meshes.

Mullah and imam, khatib and mufti, cadi and alim no longer raised their eyes to God, instead they focused their frightened gaze on the human descendant of the stars in Yildiz. The real stars were no longer to be seen. It was as if the net were a barrier raised above the earth itself, and all that was visible through it was a sort of stage sky. Even the heavens must be governed and made to serve earthly aims. The Caliphate *per se* was God's charter, a perpetual pledge to the Faithful that all things on earth happened for the preservation of Islam and for the increase of its



glory. And since obedience to the caliph's commands comprised the whole duty of believers, and their consciences grew tough in the atmosphere of religious subterfuge, they cared little what means were employed so long as the royal orders were fulfilled. The Shadow of God was omniscient. He saw and heard everything that happened on earth, and an army of spies worked night and day in the interests of divine knowledge. They noted every trivial event, and no man was too powerful or too humble to escape their observation, for they bred like scorpions in every house and palace. Always they lay in waiting and hovered over Islamboul—the Heart of Islam—like a thundercloud. Even the light of royal favour could not scare them away, and anyone who felt their venomous fangs knew from that moment that he was lost. The silent Bosphorus would soon receive his body, for there were bridges over it that have been known to gape under a man's weight. Or a cup of exquisitely aromatic coffee might be his last drink. Men of high rank were often invited to drink it in the palace itself, where it was served with the ceremonial hospitality that coffee etiquette demands.

The slight admixture of poison was measured with an accuracy learned during long years of experience that had made it possible to time the effect precisely. When a man was bidden to Yildiz out of his turn he knew very well what lay in store for him, and since there was no escape he obeyed the summons with exemplary dignity and fatalistic calm. Setting his more urgent affairs in order, he took leave of his family, donned a





Gold-laced uniform and for the last time secured the diamond order on his breast. Strange that the sultan had awarded it as a token of high favour.

It has always been taught that death by the sultan's hand, or even at his bequest, conferred an honourable distinction on the victim, for such a fate guaranteed his felicity in the next world. Kara Mustapha Pasha, who was grand vizier under Sultan Mohammed IV, was loaded with honours and titles, but still his heart's desire was to achieve the final, the perfect happiness, and to die by the sultan's order. Eternal bliss has always been seductive, while for the man who so liberally dispensed pure felicity it signified only a careless gift. How much harder it is to prepare for heaven by a long life of discipline on earth than to go through life thoughtless and heartless, and at the end to offer the neck to rope or sword, and thus win eternal bliss with one quick gesture. But still there were sceptics who had rather keep their heads, even if by so doing they forfeited their claim to blessedness. And perhaps it is natural that a man should like to keep what he has even if it is only a head.

Passavan Oglu, who later became Widdin Pasha, would not yield up his earthly life to Sultan Selim III, and for ten long years he defended himself obstinately against his master. Each time the executioner delivered to him the *ferman* that pronounced his sentence to eternal happiness he received the missive as a token of esteem. But at every repetition of the distinction he ravaged the adjacent country, annexing new domains just as often as he was threatened with death, until he became a formidable power, with eighty thousand men at





his command, and for ten years he had kept at bay whatever troops the Sultan sent against him. Thus, because he felt no need of felicity, he had forced the whole country into submission. Only then was he left to himself. The Sultan made peace with him and actually endowed him with the three horses' tails, emblems of a pasha's rank. Then in the fullness of time the wretched man died peacefully and in prosperity as Widdin Pasha. He would not be converted, and so passed into eternal darkness. As the son of a night watchman, it may have been his inherited doom to seek the shades of night. Some men will not let their souls be saved—not even by a caliph.

But nothing like this could have happened under Abdul Hamid. If he once destined anyone for the fatal distinction he would accept no refusal. He felt himself in some sort responsible for his subjects' very souls, and he guided them to the gates of paradise with the conscientious soul-saving zeal of a good father. There he left them to themselves. Allah is great. It is strange that when the great Caliph was informed of his deposition from the throne and received the fatal *fatwa* from the mufti, he prayed for his life in terror that did not at all befit a caliph. He never remembered the many righteous murders he had committed, nor did he bring them forward to bear witness to the justice of his rule. Even if they were too many to be reckoned in entirety, still the statement of a round number might have sufficed.

But in that last moment, with the sword at his throat, the Caliph racked his frightened brain for memories of real services he had rendered,





not for those wrought by his divinity. And after much troubled heart-searching, all he could lay to his credit were two murders left undone; these he remembered, and not the deaths that had given assurance of felicity. Again and again he protested that his life must be spared because he himself had spared the lives of his two brothers, no longer remembering that by his forbearance he had robbed Murad and Reshad Effendi of their hopes of salvation. Abstract ideas and convictions seem remote when death is imminent, and we know that many men would rather go to hell by their own choice than appear in heaven at a stranger's command. One is never grateful for what one owes to another. Giving is not so sure as taking. But the Shadow of God could not hope to win men's praise if he built his earthly realm on a foundation of robbery. Accordingly his "Take" must be subtly transformed into "Give." He "gave" felicity with death—that he "took" human life at the same time could not be avoided. Sometimes, to be sure, the punishment was less absolute and a death-sentence was commuted to exile or imprisonment.

Abdul Hamid kept his brother Reshad Effendi in captivity for thirty-five years. All that time the Prince was a prisoner in his own palace and anyone who tried to communicate with him ran great risks. A German physician, Dr. Marie Siebold, was condemned to exile immediately after she had been summoned to treat a dying woman in Reshad's harem. Even foreigners had to submit to an influence that feared no political consequences. If embassies and consulates inter-





vened they were seldom able to protect their countrymen's rights and properties effectually, for pledges and assurances were treated like so much waste-paper within the thteefold walls of the palace. Thus the city of Yildiz was built round a central wrong, a city of seven thousand guards and six thousand inhabitants who lived in perpetual captivity, severed alike from their country and their fellow-subjects and from humanity itself.

Yildiz is situated in full view of the Bosphorus, overlooking Scutari, the Isle of the Princes and part of Stamboul. Countless numbers of chalets and kiosks had been placed at any point which commanded a wide prospect. Powerful telescopes furnished the little buildings with far-seeing eyes, and proven watchmen sheltered behind their wide balconies. The Padishah often sought refuge from his restless fears in one of these watch-towers, letting only his most trusted servants know the secret of his night's lodging. Fear hunted him from palace to palace within his stronghold, and he felt no confidence in its thick walls and well-guarded gates. In an effort to rid himself of dangerous neighbours, Abdul Hamid had destroyed many of the streets of houses that used to adjoin Yildiz, and had done all he could to make the royal fortress independent of external contact and interference. Everything was organized and disciplined as within prison walls. The artisans and court officials who kept the great machine running were as far from the outside world as was the Shadow of God on Earth; they were in as close durance as the Padishah who never ceased to fear assassination in the fastness of his citadel.





The Caliph sought to still his fears with a succession of pastimes and other expedients. There were ridiculous water parties on the artificial lake; plays and concerts were given in the private theatres and reception-rooms, but usually the artists played to a single listless spectator and received only perfunctory applause. Indeed, there could be no fire in any dramatic performance when the artists felt the terrifying influence of Yildiz even before leaving their hotels. Court officials and spies were present while they shaved, washed and dressed themselves; watchful eyes followed every movement of their hands, whether they fastened an order in its place or put a handkerchief in a pocket. Finally the actors were led like prisoners to give their performance, and at the last curtain they felt so chilled by the indifferent reception that they were scarcely cheered by the richest reward, not even by a sack of gold pieces. They owed allegiance to their art as well as to the Sultan, and drew little inspiration from Abdul Hamid's hidden presence.

A eunuch received a greater measure of Abdul Hamid's confidence than any other. His Highness the Chief Eunuch was the only human being that the Sultan trusted. He was present at every audience and transmitted all the royal commands, and he was the one confidant who always had free access to the master. Certainly virility increased a man's danger in Yildiz. So accustomed was the Padishah to the company of eunuchs that he would have only castrated animals near him—even the palace cocks must forget how to crow. The weekly *selamlık* ceremony and the prayers in the mosques





must have been torture for the terror-stricken Padishah, but powerful as he was he could not escape the ordeal. No sultan neglected this traditional duty with impunity, for if he absented himself three consecutive times from public worship he would be deposed.

As the years passed Abdul Hamid became more and more a prey to his fears. He granted audience to his ministers only on the most pressing affairs and rarely let them enter his presence. Outside Yildiz his power had long been declining, but still he paid no heed to counsels and warnings. He could see new forms only in the dark world of his fears. A band of eunuchs must be disposed round his trembling form before he dared stroll along the sunny garden-paths, and an armed guard followed him everywhere as a perpetual reminder of his fears. His was a reign of terror, fear was the only living force in this realm of shadows and death. The Padishah kept a revolver in his hand by night and day. He shot at his range for hours on end, writing his name in bullet-holes all over the target, and decorating the letters with elaborate flourishes. The eunuchs watched every shot with frightened eyes. For the time being the Padishah shot at a wooden wall, but his hand could aim as surely at a man's head. Such was his fear of death that he shot whenever a sudden movement startled him, even if it were only a gardener's respectful gesture as he rose in the Padishah's presence from a squatting position behind the bush he was tending, so as to make a yet deeper obeisance. Goaded by fear he shot his own child when the little one lifted a revolver that lay on the table. The playful hand





might be the instrument of a woman's revenge, and the Padishah knew better than anyone else that no tool is too weak to inflict a death wound. All-pervading fear dwelt in his roving eyes and writhed in his body; he swallowed it in each draught of water and each mouthful of food. Fear actually forbade the Padishah to finish any food that was set before him. Whatever was left over from a course was taken to the harem—to his refuge and sanctuary—where it was laid on the table of his favourite of the moment, a suspicious mark of attention. Fear penetrated into the carefully guarded harem, and disturbed the peace of the thousand women within. Even the wine the Caliph drank brought him no pleasure or forgetfulness. This fear, this perpetual watchfulness, required that the concubines must be changed from night to night, so that his very pleasures were robbed of the ease of familiarity. He whose ways are inhuman must dwell alone. He sees danger in all human company and must fly from any feeling that might lull him to a false security, or promise him a deceptive comfort.

The only creatures that did not menace the deluded man were those he himself had trained for their high position, men whose worth he had proved through years of continual orders to poison and assassinate. For these were no longer men, their will and strength belonged to him alone; they were but finely wrought tools that he used to further his dark designs. And these designs must be secured from any control save his own. The books of the law had been removed from all the great mosques by Abdul Hamid's orders, for in





them it was laid down what was required of a caliph, and what claims and demands he must recognize. He dared not let his priests remember their sacred lore, or meditate on the truths of their faith. But even in the chaos of treachery and cruel despotism, where ruin, blasphemy and fear of death reigned, the established constitution had not been quite forgotten. The court astrologer, one of the few who enjoyed Abdul Hamid's confidence, was deputed to tell him the decision of the supreme religious court—the *Fetwa Hane*—which had pledged itself to restore the constitution. The Caliph had sworn on the Koran to respect the constitution, and he had perjured himself. But the people would be deceived and betrayed no longer, at length they felt responsibility for the burdens of their country. The last standing pillar of a rotten, worm-eaten building was broken down when the Sheik Ul Islam deposed Abdul Hamid from the caliphate and the sultanate, and took from him the limitless rights of divinity. Abdul Hamid's secretary sought to dissuade the messenger from bearing the fateful tidings in person, for he feared his master's accurate marksmanship. But when men have succeeded in dethroning a sultan not one of them will let himself be deprived of the pleasure of breaking the news. The emissaries were surrounded by black eunuchs. Abdul Hamid held the hand of his son Abdurrachman Effendi as he heard his fate, and guessed that it must be a sentence of death.

An hour before he had been all-powerful. Now he screamed with fear and sought protection in the grasp of a little child's warm hand. Time and





again he asked the same questions in fearful agitation: would they promise to save his life? would they protect him? would they let him go in safety? He reminded them of his only good deeds—he had not murdered his two brothers—surely on that account his life would be spared. The erstwhile dictator prayed that he might be permitted to withdraw to the Cheragan Palace. Next day he learned that he must live in exile in Salonika, for two sultans are too many for one city. All his sultanas, concubines and children, all his slaves, eunuchs and servants went with him. Abdul Hamid's last thought as he left Yildiz was for his pet kitten. It was not to be found, and he was comforted only when they promised to send the little creature after him.

That night a carriage left Yildiz flanked by an armed bodyguard. Abdul Hamid drove through his city for the first and last time, and as he drove he looked death in the face. He understood the muttered threats and curses, and he of all men knew that Right cannot always keep Might within bounds. Only when he saw the station buildings did he breathe freely, for only then could he believe in the sentence of banishment. Banishment did not horrify him any longer, it was a gift which delighted him when he compared it with the prospect of death. Perhaps in that first breath of freedom he forgot all the treasure he had left behind, for the treasure chamber of all the sultans—the *Kasne Oda*—still existed in modern Yildiz. True, the gold was no longer piled in a single room, instead it lay in countless safes built into the walls, or hidden in underground chambers in iron chests





and trunks. Altogether it was estimated at a million pounds in gold, notes and jewels.

When an ambassador from Constantinople visited Salonika a few days later most of the women informed him that they wished to leave Abdul Hamid. Freedom called them. They had left much of their lives, their youth and hopes in Yildiz, behind the iron gratings and the bolts and bars of the palace. So long as they lived behind double walls with a maze of gardens and apartments to serve as their prison and regiments of black eunuchs to be their warders, they had let the passing hours and days add to the heavy count of months and years, and had borne the leaden weight of their useless lives without a murmur. But the short drive to the station and the journey into exile had been enough to make the captives long for freedom. They might not know how to use their unaccustomed liberty, still none of them thought any more of the prison they had left behind, or they thought of it with horror.

One woman had been betrayed and sold by her own parents. Then the slave-trader had enticed her with his lying promises of a brilliant future, presenting the exceptional cases of a few successful slaves as the general rule. Every little slave girl had a chance of becoming a mighty sultana, and the first step towards such majesty was to be a favourite concubine. The girls were treated like so much merchandise, they were put through their paces and examined from head to foot. Only the prettiest faces and the most graceful figures were acquired for the royal harem, and even these were bought to wait for a chance that might never come





to them. It was reckoned a great honour if, after her first training, a girl was appointed as handmaid in the retinue of a sultana or favourite concubine. To be chosen for such a position proved that she had acquired the correct ceremonial manner, that she appreciated the many different forms of address and obeisance, and that she could discriminate between the proper kisses for the hand, the hem of the robe or the train. The etiquette of the harem was stricter than any court ceremonial—perhaps it was thought wise to veil its spiritual laxity with rigid external forms. Even if the harem lay absolutely at the sultan's disposal still his caprices must follow the path prescribed by political intrigue. There is a fairy tale that the sultan would throw his handkerchief to a maiden as a token of favour, and certainly handkerchiefs played their part when a favourite was chosen, but they did not flutter empty in the air—each had its appointed content.

Any maiden who had attracted the Padishah's attention received a folded gold-embroidered cloth which contained the garments and appliances necessary for the occasion. No young prince desired unlimited numbers of descendants. But if artifice failed one could rely on the skill of busy midwives, and the wives who had borne children—the sultanas—passed down strange counsels to the inmates of the harem, and took good care that a certain age-old custom of leaving the newborn infant's umbilical cord untied did not fall into desuetude.

Life and death lay in these women's hands. The sultan's mother, *sultana valide*, was the greatest power in the harem, but she seemed to have for-





gotten that she owed her own power to the child she had borne. It was the child who determined the mother's status; in some cases he brought a tender feeling to her heart as well, but never the sympathy of real mother-love. The arbitrary possession of women solved all problems of succession and inheritance. Children were divided into different categories—to be born or not to be born—just as the harem accounts were kept in double entry, a life and a death account.

The harem was a realm of shadows. If the caliph lived and walked as the Shadow of God, then the *Hasnadar Ousta*, the Mistress of the Treasury, was the shadow of the dreaded Sultana Valide. Second to her in precedence, the *hasnadar ousta* represented the royal will, and in the sultana's absence she took her place. She was responsible for the organization of the whole harem, and she determined the order of precedence among the women, so that princesses, daughters and sisters of the sultan, were under her control.

It sometimes happened that a slave who started her career as handmaid to one of the princesses might be suddenly singled out for special favour, and at the next reception all the princesses would have to stoop to kiss her hand. It was unusual for the Osman sultans to have married wives, and accordingly the *bash-kadin* had all the dignity of a wife's social status. And as it was the custom to take four wives in marriage, her position came to be invested with a fourfold importance. The *bash-kadin* was the woman who had borne the sultan his first son. All the favourites who were doomed to childlessness were entitled *bash-ikbal*, a status



*whiteh* gave them precedence over the *kadin-effendis* and slaves who bore the sultan's younger children. Finally a group of women hovered between the two clearly defined orders, a prey to constant hopes and fears, for they stood at the parting of the ways, awaiting the impulse that should raise them to an *ikbal's* rank or set them down among the *kadins*. These were the *gosde*, the girls who were being watched.

A costly retinue was assigned to each of these women. Each had her own Mistress of the Treasury and Secretary, her Mistress of the Wardrobe, Keeper of the Seal and Chief Slave. It was an honourable duty to serve her with coffee, water or sherbert. All these mistresses of ceremonies were served in their turn by other slaves, handmaids and negresses, while the entire group lay under the surveillance of eunuchs. Thus the great harem was divided into innumerable little worlds. No visit could be made within the charmed circle unless due notice had been given; the diverse hostile factions met one another only on certain days, at such ceremonies as the Friday *selamlık*, at throne-room receptions, or at betrothal and marriage feasts. Among these occasions were the days when the Sultan made his official visit to the harem.

All the inmates waited in their appointed places for his arrival. At the entrance of the harem he was welcomed by the *sultana valide*. Then he passed slowly between bejewelled rows of women, a man who cared little for the revelation of women's beauty. Still he must control his roving eye, he must not curtail the procession, for silken forms





waited to rustle forward and caress the master's footprints when he had passed. He moved slowly, as if a heavy burden oppressed him. His pale hand touched the red fez in a gesture of greeting, but there was no vital bond between him and the women, for his impenetrable majesty forbade any redeeming human contact. He had jealously preserved his isolation, and now fear was his only companion. He had long been subject to the same dread power he had let loose on his country and his subjects, and now fear was revenged on him, for it was the only living feeling that touched him. The Padishah moved like a ghostly shape when he fulfilled the rites of the weekly reception in the harem.

The first salutation accomplished, the sultan passed on to visit his princesses and favourites in their private apartments. If one of their slave girls chanced to please him, tradition required that he should seem to notice nothing—indeed it would have been highly improper to show any sign of a new attachment in the presence of a reigning favourite. Every mood had to be controlled in the harem. The chief slave was the go-between, and she informed the lucky girl of the honour that awaited her. At the same time she instructed her in the rules she must observe, for every gesture and every step that led to the royal bed must be made according to tradition. The other girls crowded joyfully round their companion and made her bathing, perfuming and robing a feast of expectation for each one of them. The sultan's private suite lay in the midst of the harem. How many trembling novices in love have made their way towards his





chamber! The most dreadful thing that could happen to anyone was for the Padishah to send her away without extending his favour to her. This would cover her with the utmost shame and humiliation.

Such a turn of events could not be hidden in the harem, for conquest in love had far-reaching consequences. A maiden who had received the royal favour could be a slave no longer, and the elaborate organization of the harem must find room for a new official. Each chosen slave prayed that her visit to the sultan's chamber would change her whole life. A new career was opened to her in that hour of meeting, and in it she sought her destiny. In other ways too it was a momentous time. Only virgins were sold as slaves, and although life in the harem—with its peculiar atmosphere, preoccupations and hopes—had left them none but a physical innocence, still each royal caprice changed the slave for ever.

Kings are used to having everything carefully and completely prepared before it is laid before them. Each maiden was conducted to the sultan's apartments with all the honour the harem could give, and the ceremony bore witness to the spiritual orientation of the whole establishment. Modesty has always been supposed to add zest to a wooer's conquest, and every conquest speaks of a defence overcome, but the sultan was too mighty to fight for his prize. His pleasures must be proffered to him, he must have a victory without battle. The slave maiden was allowed a scanty choice of fascinating devices. However beautiful she might be, the three silent obeisances that she made as





she entered the bridal chamber could not bewitch the master's senses by their eloquence—for the most part he did not notice them, for he was already in bed.

How long the way seemed from the slave's first obeisance up to the royal couch! In deathly silence she reached the foot of the bed, and there waited for the command to lift the silken coverlet and kiss the Padishah's feet. Not an attractive business, but the poor slave of love might not caress the man who was waiting for her, nor must she breathe a single tender word. In fact she was treated like a pawn, and yet she was there to be queen in the game of love. No husband or sweetheart lay before her. It was her Lord the Caliph who now desired to be treated like a man, without giving her the freedom to treat him so. She was scarcely more than a child, confused by all the instructions she had received, but she must win the Padishah's favour, and her responsibilities lay heavily on her. She was not a woman of experience or a bewitching courtesan; she felt no passion that might reveal to her intuition the secrets of the unknown way. She was a puppet, moved this way and that when the chief slave pulled the thread. She remembered that she was there on a business that was strictly prohibited in the women's silent apartments. In the harem every pleasure was reserved for one man alone, and anyone else who was detected in "the silent sin" was sternly punished. Silence lay before her at that moment, but the ban on sin had been raised.

She must follow the traditional path to the Padishah's arms, must creep under the coverlet and slowly make her way upwards. And meanwhile





The harem waited. . . . The chief slave grew calmer as the minutes passed, for anyone who failed reappeared soon enough. She remembered all the instructions she had given—they were deciding a human being's fate at this very minute—the girl would have her alone to thank for success. She knew that the sultan's expectations had been satisfied, and considered what benefits she herself might reap. As for the chosen maiden's companions, they talked in excited whispers in the common bedroom, and in spite of their envy they wished her good luck. Next day the whole harem was in possession of the story. Life offered so few diversions, and any gossip that had to do with royal favour was most deeply significant and exciting in the closed harem world. Some favourites were made by such episodes, while others were deposed and even killed.

The eunuchs locked and bolted all the gates and entrances to the harem two hours after sunset, and thenceforward the captive world was given over to melancholy. By day there was a deceptive number of occupations; visits must be made and married slaves must be received, while robes and veils called for attention. Hours were spent in the bath and at the toilet, for more hopes than could be granted were founded on physical charm. Now the captive turned the pages of a book of French fashions, now she strummed on the piano, or welcomed the meal-times that gave her a real occupation. Thus she deadened her weariness and let the consciousness of many people around her hide her inner emptiness. But when the bolting of the doors heralded the end of the day, when the eunuchs and all the listening





ears ceased their vigil, when only women remained in the great palace, then, as night closed in, they all felt the same longing. They were all alike; even if they were rivals or enemies, even if one were arrogant and another humble, if one were successful and another unknown, still they shared the same desires and longings. The favourites who had gained their heart's desire according to the standards of the harem were as poor and helpless as the humblest handmaidens. Titles, power and splendour disappeared after sundown, and dark, unexplored instincts came to life and could be repressed no longer. Night in the harem-prison pitilessly revealed the futility of existence. Each woman had to realize how far her life was from anything she had desired and how unattainable were her secret aims. Her life was not the life for a real woman. The cruel disequilibrium of life in the harem was shocking. On one side was a crowded world of women; the dark neutrality of the eunuchs formed the cross-piece; and in the weighted scale stood one man, hunted by fear and possessed of the devil. The very burden of his fantastic titles forced him further into a subterranean labyrinth of crime.

A single drive through the night air had sufficed to open the women's blinded eyes; a few days' exile in a land of liberty kindled in them a love of life that they had not known for years. The hopeless desired to live once more. So Abdul Hamid's banishment brought freedom to multitudes of women. What happened after was only the final extinction of a flickering light, like the train of a long, heavy robe that sweeps behind a form that has already vanished. And after that—the open road.





## CHAPTER III

## THE HAREM IN EGYPT

To the uninitiated the very word "harem" speaks of wanton dances, of music and perfume, of excitement, ecstasy and satisfied desire. This is the harem of the imagination. But what of the reality? And the slave, what of her? What was her life as I saw it in every Egyptian harem, the same in the smallest as in the greatest? She was a poor, simple, primitive creature, and rarely was she beautiful. Her clothing was puritanic in its simplicity, and offered no sexual lure, for in every harem there was some woman whose determined will and sharp eyes saw to it that the slaves' appearance should be dull and unattractive. If the Lord of the harem, the bey or pasha were unmarried, his mother or a near relative governed the whole community, either personally, or in alliance with the *bash-kalfa*—the chief slave. When an impulse cannot be suppressed or uprooted it must be weakened until it can be controlled; at all costs the master must be guarded against loving—or at least against marrying—a slave. And if the mother herself had been a slave, her aspirations for her son's marriage were all the higher.

If he were already married discipline was maintained by his wife's virulent jealousy. All the slaves I have seen looked like responsible, capable servant-girls. They wore long-sleeved cotton overalls—*entari*—fastening close round the neck and reaching to the ground. *Entari* might be clean and practical, but they were not seductive. Only at receptions and





On feast-days were silken garments to be seen. The slave was not a toy, designed for wanton luxury, rather was she a creature bound to fulfil prescribed tasks in the course of her daily service. She was really a maidservant with no power to give notice. The richer the family, the more slaves they owned. In a harem the slightest action was termed "a service," a correct form was ordained for everything—a strictly guarded ceremonial which preserved the tradition of the harem.

All was irrevocably determined: how coffee should be carried in, poured out and served; how hand-towels should be folded and set ready for use; how garments and underlinen should be wrapped in cloths—whether they were to be put by in a cupboard or laid out on a table, ready for wear. Even a glass of water must be presented according to rule. Long hours were spent in this kind of service, and hundreds of slaves could be employed before any real work was done, for their time was passed in attention to minute details. The slaves did not clean any of the rooms, or at any rate only the master's bedchamber. European servants were employed for such work. Men-servants—*farrâshi*—who had been born in the harem, kept the great reception halls in order, and eunuchs took care that they never caught sight of a woman.

There were handmaids—*sofradjî-kalfa*—who laid the table and waited at meals; others again—*kahwedjî-kalfa*—prepared and served coffee; still others—*chamashirdjî-kalfa*—were body slaves, concerned only with personal service. The hanum-effendi had most to fear from the latter class of slaves. Their domain was the bath and dressing-





room and the master's bed-chamber, where the atmosphere was at once the most insidious and the least reserved. If the hanum-effendi had been a slave herself, especially if she had been a *chamashirdji-kalfa*, she knew from her own experience how prudent and suspicious she must be and would choose her body-servants with the utmost discretion. One might win their goodwill with gifts, and thus command fidelity, or one might rule them by fear, but in neither case could their devotion be trusted. If the master's sensual interest was roused, the creature of his hand would certainly meet him with fearful protests, which only served to cover her flattered compliance. For maidenhood was the only foundation of the slave's dreams of power; it was her one asset, and loss of maidenhood might bring honour or ruin with it. No doubt the girl was safest if the hanum-effendi herself undertook all services to her lord and master, if, impelled by love and care for his comfort, she alone presided over his dressing, while the slaves need only run hither and thither at her word. But only erstwhile slaves acted thus—these and a few humble wives. If the hanum was of noble birth she had her proper pride, and took no action that might lay bare her feelings. But if anything untoward happened in the intimacy of the master's private room, she would use all possible means of interference—as a last resource she might ruin or even kill the offender.

One of the other slaves was certain to turn informer; if not loyalty, then jealousy and envy would drive her to speak. For the innocent ambition that lurked in every slave's unconscious mind was to become a hanum-effendi through Allah's grace





and the favour of her master. Once in that high position she would know very well how to deal with the slave-girls, and would not fear the malice of her past companions. Ambition always thinks too lightly of danger, but dangers grew like rank weeds within the harem walls. The pasha or bey knew nothing of his own harem, for he was only its figure-head. He was not aware of the currents and counter-currents of woman's rule, nor did he recognize its ghastly results. The calm of a perfectly regulated establishment surrounded him when he entered the harem; he sensed the orderly home atmosphere where countless slaves went about their business more like good spirits than like individuals. The hanum-effendi's happy smile of welcome made the prison-house, whose peace was guarded by eunuchs, seem like an Island of the Blest. He basked in the limelight and enjoyed the perfectly set stage that made all the false interpretations of Mohammed's commandments seem wise. No complaints and troubles came to his ear. Indeed, it would have helped little had he known of such things, for he could not give the slaves shelter and protection; he could only increase their danger. His rights, formulated long ago by religious law, allowed him free access to any of the slaves in his property, whether he had bought them himself or whether he had inherited or received them as a gift. Again according to religious law, the children of these slaves were counted legitimate: they were not inferior to the children of the lawful wives, but had an identical right to names and titles, and inherited property in the same way. But religious tradition accorded to all slaves the right to refuse





their master's advances. They must go willingly to his chamber, and never must they be overpowered and forced into compliance. Finally all attempts to procure abortion were strictly forbidden. Thus ran the law.

But in what harem was the law respected? In what harem did the rulers behave as religion ordained? Even if the pasha had acted in good faith when he had his will of the slave, and had honestly weighed his responsibilities and his rights (and how seldom did this happen), still his good intentions could not long protect her from the common fate of slaves. He had his passing pleasure, but danger was the slave-girl's portion—a danger which increased immeasurably each time she enjoyed her master's favour. Always some female form (the *valide-hanum*—the pasha's mother—the hanum-effendi, or the mighty *bash-kalfa*) was watching near by, and intended no good to the helpless creature. In terror the poor slave counted the days and months as they passed. If she had conceived she was constantly obsessed by the fear lest someone should notice her condition. Still she had to perform her daily work as humbly and patiently as ever, and must feign indifference to suspicious and threatening glances; hardest of all, she must confide in no one.

Only by the rarest chance had she a loyal friend. The slaves called one another *bemshirem*—my sister—and indeed they were sisters in that they shared a uniformly monotonous life, they were moreover sisters in renunciation, sisters in adversity. But they were sisters with the same ambitions, with the same envious thoughts and the same weaknesses.





Often fear led them to betray one another. For a cruel and uncanny terror lurked beneath the quiet of the harem, it could be felt in the low voices and silent footsteps, in spite of the pleasing shapes that met the eye. Women's eyes followed the slave through the long tormenting day. And when at last the day was over and night fell, when even wounded beasts can hide themselves in the shadows, fresh miseries awaited the slave. For even in the night she was not alone. Most of the rooms in the great overcrowded harem served as reception-rooms, and many slaves had to sleep in one bedroom. Always the company had been cunningly chosen. Rival players had shuffled and dealt out the slaves like so many cards—the slaves of the mistress's hand—the slaves of the master's. Carefully considered and distributed as they were, the slaves could count on certain denunciation and betrayal. In addition to these precautionary measures there was yet another scheming power; the sharp eyes of the *basb-kalfa* looked everywhere and saw everything.

New torments were in store for any girl whose fears were realized, for she was dismissed from service and banished to her chamber during the time that she was "unclean," according to religious custom. So that if the slave discovered that she was pregnant, terror drove her to conceal her condition. Perhaps a kindly eunuch would provide her with the pigeon's blood she required. But eunuchs were not slaves; they might be dismissed from service; besides they were usually timid. Perhaps the little European dressmaker who made up any materials that the slaves had received as presents might help





in her need. And how many tears and terrors were implicit in this "perhaps"; this trembling anticipation of how and when the storm would break. For she knew that something would happen—everyone had heard of such affairs. What availed all her deception and concealment? The day would soon come when she could hide her secret no longer. Would it not be wiser to go straight to the Master and let him know the truth? But what claim had the slave on her lord? She had always served and feared him as a master, and his sudden brutal conquest of her body had not brought him closer to her as a man. Such transient passion as was roused by intimate services rendered in the harem involved no obligations. It had been a sensual whim, and such it remained. When a woman has served her master throughout his toilet, and has carefully arranged the coverlets over him as he lies in bed, if one evening he draws her down on the bed beside him, she scarcely recognizes the gesture as a seduction: it is the natural conclusion to the service that went before. For the slave who was entirely without experience of physical love such services must be especially provocative of troubled longing. Obscurely she hoped to be wooed and won. So when she was drawn into bed as carelessly as a handkerchief that the master needed before going to sleep, she suffered a sort of sentimental violation, as much from her master's indifference as from the unexpectedness of her bridal. Moreover, her owner was not humanly closer to her after the event than he had been before. Could she now go to him with confidence? She had served him often since the fatal night and had seen no change in his behaviour to





her. He took the clothing she offered him with the same demeanour, was just as patient or impatient as before, and not by a single glance did he show her that he knew who was serving him. Suppose she overcame her shyness and sought him out. . . What next? What could he do? The master was not an integral part of his harem, and had never understood the intricacies of its structure and function. He had seen only a smooth surface that deceitfully covered the shoals beneath, and that had been enough for him. The harem was only a workshop where his physical balance could be readjusted—the place where he slept and bathed, dressed and undressed, where sometimes he took his meals, and where he could satisfy his bodily desires whenever he pleased.

But the hanum-effendi on the contrary had been bred in the harem, for a pasha rarely married a European woman. She had grown up here as a free hanum, or she had been introduced to the life as a young slave. She was conversant with all its manners and customs, and well she knew the magic formula: "The Master must hear nothing of this; he must not be disturbed." It was chiefly to preserve his peace that the harem existed. The pasha was to be lulled to rest as soon as he stepped inside the house where everyone was bent on his service, and where the whole great home-community was organized for his pleasure. All her life long each slave waited on his coming, or on his going; all her wishes, hopes and fears were centred round him and his weal and woe. Once inside the harem he could lay aside every burden and strip off every artifice; there was no more need for him to act a part or to practise deception, he could be himself





without fear of criticism. His way of life was superior to that imposed on the harem only in so far as he had possibilities of contact with the world outside. But centuries had not changed the harem and its atmosphere of satisfied desire. Its influence was so reactionary that even the most carefully dressed pasha might as well have lived in the garlic-laden air of Mohammed's clay huts. Even though he might wear perfectly fitting suits cut by an English master-tailor, he could not always control his longing for the comfort of loose slippers when he was once inside the harem.

Within those walls he might do anything. He might sit cross-legged and take off the tarboosh that made his head so hot, though such behaviour was strictly forbidden outside. He could take his food how he pleased and belch as much as he desired; here he could lie relaxed after the meal and let his wife or his slave massage the soles of his feet. Finally he could curse all Europeans here, could mock all *à la franka* customs and shout and rage as he pleased. In short, the harem offered him a sanctuary from the world, in which he was at once a free man and a supreme power. His word was a law, rich in blessing, and he himself was above reproach, a wise man, and omnipotent Lord—or so he thought. Accordingly he held his head high under the brilliant tarboosh when he left the harem amid deep obeisances, soothed and refreshed by his toilet. He had a good conceit of himself and felt ready to take up the formal life which he spent in the *selamlık*. [NOTE.—The *selamlık* was a part of the house, or, in some cases, a separate building, reserved for the master of the harem.] In the *selamlık*





he adopted European standards. The pasha was like any business man who undertakes to direct two companies. The first concern—the harem—was his by inheritance; he had been forced to take over the second—the *selamlık*—so as to keep pace with modern progress. But the hanum-effendi was not harassed by the claims of two worlds. The few European customs that had found their way into the harem in the course of years were not burdensome. They were superficial things: Paris models, fashions in permanent-waving, elegant lingerie and all the feminine paraphernalia belonging to the art of fascination. The only knowledge of Europe she desired was a knowledge of European fashion.

The hanum herself was unchanged, except that nowadays she was prepared to adopt European devices in her lifework of ministering to her master's comfort. She was not yet ripe for freedom—thus much was made plain in the gracious condescension she showed to European women in the course of ordinary conversation. She regarded her own lack of spirit and dignity as strength, and secretly she felt herself superior to any Western woman. And a knowledge of the power she wielded in the harem confirmed her feelings. In the course of centuries Mohammed's commandments had been modified to serve selfish ends, and his high standards of piety survived only in the rigidity of outward forms. Pangs of conscience were seldom felt in the harem, and if a woman tried to take her moral bearings in this confusing labyrinth she had to give up the attempt in the face of overwhelming odds. There were always agreeable people ready to ease the troubled conscience at such times, and to pervert and





disrupt the issue anew. The sheik in his mantle and white turban, often swathed over a green foundation as proof of his direct descent from Mohammed, gave the sophisticated harem point of view an illusion of religious truth. The recitation of prayers five times a day, even though they might be repeated with an absent mind, confirmed the worshippers in their proud belief that they were the congregation of the faithful, and that, in God's eyes, the worst Mohammedan is better than the best Christian. Besides, the individual conscience had already rotted away, squeezed to death by relentless stupid formalities. Outward appearance triumphed and broke the spirit under manifold burdens.

All possible kinds of concealment and deception throve in the harem, as they do in any closed institution, whether it is a harem, a cloister or a brothel. The harem, like these others, rested on a firm and proven foundation of self-interest. The creatures who supported it were trained and paid to be unscrupulous, and always they were watched by their fellows; while all the threads of intrigue met in the hands of the hanum-effendi. I have often wondered that jewels could still sparkle on the hands of such women.

Each harem was a little world of its own. The slave who was pregnant with her master's child knew this well enough. She had heard and seen such horrors in her time that she no longer believed in happy endings or straightforward solutions for trouble. If she confided in the master he would only hand over the responsibility to the hanum-effendi, whose duty it was to guard his peace. And then? The hanum-effendi had children of her own, and





these were enough for her. Why should she share with others possessions that she could keep to herself? By her condition the slave had roused a twofold hatred in the hanum—a wife's and a mother's. If the master dared not consult with his wife, he confided in the *bash-kalfa*, who was usually the creature and tool of the hanum. And the *bash-kalfa* found ways and means of informing her mistress, though she feared the master too much to go to her directly; as chief slave, she must not forfeit her mistress's favour and confidence. In some rare cases the pasha recognized the claims of religion and humanity, but even then it was usual for him to act a coward's part. In order to spare himself unpleasant scenes and reproaches he would arrange for a sheik to come secretly and marry him to the girl. The hanum-effendi might be reconciled to her husband's second marriage if she were already tired of love and intrigue, and if soul-destroying sameness and monotony had made her indifferent or even kindly. Nay she might encourage it if, having no children of her own, she feared no disadvantage from the match. In these rare cases the hanum's action was determined more by a selfish wish to have a companion—perhaps even a confederate in her boredom, than by sympathy for her husband. A sterile woman might welcome the second wife who could vicariously satisfy her deep unconscious longing for children. The individual slave was not entitled to consideration in the harem. It must be a mere chance if the hanum-effendi kept the master's favour to herself, when a sudden sensual whim sufficed to direct his attention to another quarter. This knowledge was enough to





create a peculiar mental attitude in her. She must adopt fresh standards and recognize that influence, power and ambition were the important things in her life. It was of more value to be the pasha's counsellor and confidant than to be his beloved wife. The beloved wife! The idea of true love had been entirely displaced, it could not thrive in the atmosphere of the harem. It may have been different centuries ago, when primitive impulses were too strong to be denied, and there were still standards of honour even in murder. But knife and fork have long been introduced into the harem; the women do not loll on soft couches any longer; outwardly they are reconciled to the discomfort of hard European chairs, though they cannot now relax into their old alluring attitudes. They are confined and hedged in, laced into tight corsets and tight shoes. And all the time they veer between the principles they inherited from their forefathers and those they have adopted from Western civilization; they hesitate between the past and the future. Only a peculiar kind of brain-cell, purged of what we would call reason, could comprehend the crazy jumble of religious forms and customs, of ceremonies, prohibitions and sins, and could bring all of them to order. True love could not exist in so close and destroying an atmosphere. To be sure love is derived from passion, and it was passion that conceived the idea of the harem, without thought of the consequences. But the modern harem was a deceitful institution, whence passion had long since fled, and where love and all that speaks of love was a menace greatly to be feared. The slave trembled when the master showed her special favour, for his casual





love usually brought her into the dirty hands of an unskilful and treacherous midwife, and often it ended in invalidism and death. And when, in happier cases, her physical health was not shattered, she herself became an evil, hardened creature, prepared to avenge her wrongs however she could.

It has often seemed strange to me that there was no guarantee that the slaves were all Mohammedans. Only occasionally did anyone know from what place or class, or even from what family, they had come. The trader that furnished them to the harem had simply acquired them through the usual agents who supplied him with girls, so that he was not likely to know anything about their origin. Often indeed they were children, too young to give a clear account of themselves; some could neither read nor write, and others spoke a language that nobody understood. Many slaves were sold when they were in a state of primitive ignorance and had yet to be trained in the elementary ideas of cleanliness and good manners. After the sale price of the slave had been agreed upon, the trader gave the owner the bill of sale on which a girl's name was written, but the name might be altered later to suit the master's or mistress's taste. The price of a slave varied between four hundred and a thousand Egyptian pounds, according to the girl's age and appearance. Children were cheap and grown girls were more expensive, because they gave less trouble than the little ones and could be used for service in a shorter time.

Long ago children used to be acquired by the bigger and wealthier harems, so that a natural increase of well-trained slaves was ensured. Later,





when all the intricate luxury of the harem had been established, department by department, it was usual to buy only grown girls. A *valdide-hanum* of royal rank maintained a number of children whose only duty in the harem was to light cigarettes for Her Highness. (A woman dentist came to examine the children's mouths and teeth every month.) Their whole lives passed in unremitting concentration on the gestures of a woman's hand. When the ring-covered hand motioned for a cigarette it must be well lit and quickly supplied, or the culprit would be punished by having the lighted end held against her lips. Womanly tenderness and good nature were little in evidence in the harem, and only very rarely did a hanum show any human sympathy to the women who were delivered into her hand. Pride, despotism and the imperious habit that flourishes in a slave-community created a megalomanaic self-consciousness in her, which was further confirmed by the deep obeisances of her servants and the flattering euphony of ceremonial language.

Each slave received a fixed monthly salary as soon as she entered the harem and could spend it as she pleased. This salary, or *alaik*, began at one pound a month for the children and rose according to the nature and the years of service. An efficient trustworthy slave received between five and fifteen pounds as her monthly wage, and a chief slave would receive from twenty to one hundred pounds. In the time of Ismail Pasha all wages were much higher, and in Abdul Hamid's harem a *kalfa* actually received anything up to three hundred pounds a month.

The slave's owner was pledged to satisfy all her





needs. In course of time this arbitrary obligation had been modified by economic conditions until it was represented by an annual issue of a certain number of garments as well as a quantity of underlinen. Naturally the number and quality of the clothes varied according to the wealth of the harem. The following garments were provided in the yearly issue of an ordinary harem: one black silk *charshaf*, a silk coat and a mantilla that was often draped over the clothes for greater comfort, and a veil to complete the outfit. In Egypt the veil was white and the eyes were left uncovered, whereas in Turkey a closely woven black silk cloth covered the whole face. During calls or drives abroad the whole person was veiled in a long black silk mantle—the *faradje*. Then there was a little hat like a toque, the *botos*, which was generally made of gaily coloured artificial flowers, and which was covered by a white veil. A thin white face-veil that left the eyes free was attached to the *botos*. Neither *faradje* nor *botos* must ever be worn in the streets. The wardrobe further contained two silk robes to be worn when callers were received and six washing frocks for wear about the house. In addition there were underlinen, shoes and stockings. The slave might increase her wardrobe to a countless number of garments if she was popular and clever at dressmaking. She used her monthly salary only to buy perfume, cosmetics, powder and bonbons. Among all the cosmetics the most important was *surm*. It was a fine powder made with antimony, and was applied on a needle carefully drawn between the half-closed eyelids, and was alleged to light a provoking fire in the eyes. Perfume and rouge were not superficial things to the





slave. They were rather the hope of her very soul, for she might one day bewitch the master's heart by means of their magic. Under the sharp eyes of the hanum-effendi the layers of harmonious tints and concealing powder were strictly limited, for the mistress reserved for her own use that extra bit that meant luxury. But fortune sometimes favoured the slaves; by a lucky chance they might even be permitted to escort the pasha without other attendants. Then, although they escaped the mistress's stern eye only for a few short hours, every hand sought confidently for the transforming colours. Every slave knew only too well that men are capricious. Perhaps desire might stir in the master's heart; perhaps this very hour might mean kismet, might bring success. And so they forgot what they had heard and seen, perhaps they disregarded their own personal experience. Memories of cruel and fearful things were left behind in the harem, and for a short time they enjoyed an imaginary freedom. When the master saw the slaves court his approval with their exaggerated make-up he was touched to thankfulness that he brought one ray of hope to these patient serving-women's souls. But gratitude has always been a shameless deceiver—at best it shines with a pale moonlit gleam and must vanish away before the first ray of the sun.

There was something infinitely touching in these slaves. The master took his toll from the many young lives simply that he might enjoy unruffled ease throughout the long years. He took their very lives in his hand so that he might be certain that not a single creature could desert him. With a pathetic naïveté the slaves felt that the perpetual nature of





their service was a mark of its honourable distinction. Because they could not be sent away, they believed they were not servants. For to them a servant was someone who might be dismissed from service. Women who had been Ismail Pasha's slaves came at the beginning of every month to the personal cashier's office of his grandson, the Khedive Abbas Hilmi. They might have been married ten years or more to ministers or court officials, but they arrived in their elegant equipages with self-conscious punctuality, for, thanks to their former slavery, they were entitled to the *alaik* to the end of their lives. So golden memories of their past majesty held an important place during their years of freedom.

In Ismail Pasha's time the harem did not exist only to further the owner's selfish business interests. There was gold in abundance even though it had been raised with difficulty, or borrowed on the nation's credit, and always life was stirring in the royal harem. No one dreamed of exploiting the woman in an economic sense. It was ordained by religious law that the owner must give every slave a dowry at her marriage (usually the sum was equivalent to her purchase money,) and accordingly the wedding depended on the master's will. But the financial difficulties of recent years brought about a strange abuse, and it became usual to postpone the wedding for so long that the slave might almost be a grandmother before she was allowed to marry. Then as a newly married wife she must immediately take on the rôle suitable to her age and experience, and play the part of counsellor and motherly friend to her husband. She introduced all the customs she





had learnt in the harem into her new home, while her husband left everything in her hands and took pride in her *savoir-faire*. And since the husband shared the reflected splendour of his wife's former greatness, men of high rank, ministers, pashas and beys were much flattered if they were offered a slave from a noble harem. They knew that their houses would win additional respect on account of the marriage, and if the slave was "descended" from a very influential, or even a royal harem, there was good reason to hope for other desirable things besides a wife—perhaps an order, a promotion or a title.

The slave must first be asked whether she agreed to the marriage, but the inquiry was an empty form, for she had never seen or spoken to her suitor. By proposing to give a slave in marriage the owner conferred a high distinction on her. The gesture signified that he wished to reward her long years of faithful service and give her a chance to lead her own life while there was yet time. And if the opportunity came late, still it presented the alluring prospect of becoming a hanum-effendi, even though the realization of this long-cherished dream never quite satisfied the slave's original desires. For she had left her youth behind in the harem and she brought to her new husband only the forms and ceremonies to which that youth had been sacrificed.

All these ceremonial gifts were frail links in an endless chain that ran through every harem—a chain of worn men and faded hopes, faint souls and wasted powers. And when at length the slave earned her freedom, it was useless, for freedom is not an emergency exit from life, but rather a door





leading to more vital existence. "We do not usually marry off our slaves until they are no longer capable of child-bearing," runs the cruel dictum of the harem. I have seldom heard more despicable words, and behind them one can feel the owner's unhealthy self-esteem. "No true believer may marry any of my wives after my death," was the saying of Mohammed from which the inhuman tradition arose. Even if the lord of the harem had sexual intercourse with a slave without afterwards marrying her, still he considered that a reflection of his majesty had lighted on her, and according to the standards of his megalomania his own person would suffer a double desecration if, after he had once made her happy, she should bear a child to another mortal. So the harem wasted these women's lives, choking them slowly but surely with trifling duties that were often futile and always teasing. It transformed blooming, healthy young things into vacant, inert machines, without giving them a single vital experience to compensate for their useless sacrifice. Perhaps a trinket might lie hidden away in a wardrobe, a secret gift that must be concealed as closely as its origin. Sometimes, indeed, such tokens were given quite openly, especially if the master was a passionate man whose violent desires robbed him of self-control and made him forget that doors are made to shut. Discovery was a misfortune, but some sensational events were needed to break the monotony of life. A hanum with whom I was acquainted told me that she had once chanced to witness the wrong done her. She had no doubt that infidelity had occurred repeatedly, but she had not seen anything with her own eyes until this day. Then she came upon her





husband and the slave in an attitude that could not be misinterpreted. I knew the slave myself; she was a nice little thing, not prettier than her companions and not really more attractive than her mistress. (Men were not pampered in the harem; they must take what it had to offer, what "came to hand" at the moment.) When the hanum saw her husband embracing the girl she took the only reasonable course—she turned on her heel and left the room, for she had not expected to make so barefaced an interruption. And the mistress did not avenge herself too violently on the offender, for the passionate episode had no direct consequence, and besides, certain economic considerations stayed her hand. It is not only the traditional German *Hausfrau* who cherishes a passion for accumulating stores of useless household linen, many hanums who had once been slaves had a similar mania for collecting. Perhaps it was because they had spent so many years in folding and setting in order, in cleaning and in making inventories, that such interests ruled their lives. At any rate the guilty slave was simply doomed to sew endless seams in fine white gossamer and shape it into mosquito-curtains. She was condemned to solitary confinement in her room, and there she worked for weeks and months on end, always sewing, sewing. One mosquito-net after another had to be completed, for the hanum-effendi tried the poor prisoner's patience mercilessly. Often she snatched the material furiously out of the girl's hands, for all the seams were crooked and badly sewn to her revengeful eyes. They were unpicked and sewn again, only to be unpicked and sewn again once more. And when the misty folds that had been





made with such labour hung protectingly round the master's bed, did no insistent voice interrupt his sleep? Did not every single stitch in the endless seams remind him of his cowardice and of the responsibilities he had shirked? Or was the autocrat's sleep so carefully guarded that no whisper of conscience could rouse him? For as Master he was too august to be the object of his wife's revenge. It was not exceptional to hear of such affairs in any harem. And since the slave had no rights whatever it was she who must bear the full measure of unjust punishment for the master's caprice.

My attitude towards my own slaves was utterly unconventional. Despite their respectful gestures and deep obeisances I remained a disconcerting freak of nature to all these poor creatures of the harem. I let them speak to me as one human being to another, but their humanity had long been frozen, and they had no great opinion of me in their hearts, I sank in my slaves' estimation as soon as I permitted one to sit in my presence, or if I thanked another for the things she brought me. In their opinion nobility could not exist apart from intimidation, and fear was the halo that shone about the great as proof of their greatness. One conferred a favour on a slave by allowing her to kiss one's hand, for it was customary to let their lips touch only the hem of the garment. Nevertheless the barrier thus raised between the slave and her mistress was only a formal assurance of the difference in their social status. Privacy and intimacy were not possible in the harem, for custom and established religious usage required that there should be no secret about the most personal matters. The information obtained





about such things was regularly used for the advancement of personal ends or for the vexation of a rival. For instance, a charming little sixteen-year-old hanum, who had not yet lost her sense of humour, had to share her position with a rival before the first year of her marriage had passed. As she had much time on her hands and a scalp that could stand hard treatment, she had her hair washed day in and day out for months. Different slaves must rub her hair dry every day, so that the whole harem should know that as a result of the repeated washings prescribed by Islamic tradition, the mistress's auburn tresses had grown curly. The news was borne to the rival whom the Pasha had chosen, more because he was charmed by her youth than because he felt any affection for her. Thus by dint of frequent shampoos, with patience aided by a good head of hair, the hanum controlled her master's desires to an almost miraculous extent. She need only persist in washing her head.

Such rumours did not rest inside the harem; nothing remained behind the harem walls for long. The slaves told the eunuchs, and the eunuchs told other eunuchs, and these talked to other slaves, who in their turn would tell their mistresses. There was an endless round of gossip.

Thus everyone knew about everything inside the harem, and the eunuchs forged links with the world outside—one might call them foreign news reporters. They lived their lives outside as well as inside the harem. In my day they were not slaves as they once had been; they were engaged or dismissed like servants, and they themselves had the right to leave





if they were not satisfied. The eunuch had an almost symbolic function which has to be considered only in connection with the wealthier harems. He had no definite work, but a hundred duties fell to his lot. He would accompany the hanums and their slaves on shopping expeditions, so as to bargain and pay for their purchases. On railway journeys he was responsible for the tickets; he stowed the muffled women and their countless bundles into compartments; he quieted the children; he was driven hither and thither and lost his head almost as completely as the *kalfas*, who were utterly at a loss as soon as they ventured outside the harem. Only in the performance of daily tasks which were clearly defined and regularly practised were the slaves efficient. They had never learned to think and act for themselves, and the eunuch must be there to entrain and disentrain them, to lift them in and out of the carriage like so many pieces of luggage. He sat on the box with the driver during carriage excursions and transmitted instructions from those who were inside. Women's wishes were fulfilled only through his good offices. Some princesses might be more decided, for a measure of independence was assured to them by their rank and fortune. One energetic princess expressed her will by means of a long gold hat-pin which she stuck into the coachman's seat whenever he drove more or less quickly than she desired. I do not remember whether the golden prick was given also as a signal to stop. At any rate she must have been generous for she never lacked a coachman.

Eunuchs were variously paid even in the same harem, and in addition they received their clothes.





In high-class harems they wore silk-lined frock-coats, patent leather shoes and spotless underlinen—naturally the outfit included a tarboosh. There is a misapprehension that eunuchs were always fat, but a fat eunuch was rather the exception. Most of them were slim with slender hands and feet, while their physique was determined by their nationality. A negro from the Sudan would have a broad face, broad shoulders and flesh lips, and would grow fat as his age increased. But many Berber eunuchs were handsome, with refined faces and slender figures. A eunuch's face might be strangely expressive. His psyche was always incredibly intricate, for in it were associated the most heterogeneous elements that were at once contradictory and ill-defined. There were feelings peculiar to his physical state that were almost impossible to control, moods of impotent male desire that could never be satisfied, but still they must be reconciled with others of womanly gentleness, or of effeminacy or cowardice. The eunuch had acquired most of the feminine failings that were emphasized by life in the harem. Together with his new status he had gained peculiar traits that could never be transmitted, but proximity to women had burdened him as if with a woman's inheritance. His was a sensitive spirit, timid and easily frightened, and he would often faint at the sight of blood. He loved fine clothes; he was vain, fanciful and easily annoyed; he was usually lazy and given to day-dreaming. He had little physical endurance and was acutely susceptible to heat and cold, while every illness made his superstitious spirit tremble; he was like other men only in his fear of death. Thus he was allied to all that was



weakest in woman, yet he nursed vain masculine desires within him.

Long centuries of the same physical mass-adjustment seems to have established a definite eunuchmentality—a new sex of the sexless. Immediately after castration the patient took his place in the limited circle that was forced on him by his altered needs. In modern times it was indeed a narrow circle, and no longer afforded such opportunities for development as the eunuch had enjoyed in past ages, for he had suffered a spiritual castration as well as a physical operation. The peaceful way of life in the modern harem had taken his manhood from him long ago. In the old days eunuchs retained a residuum of virility. They had revolted against spiritual neutrality; they had remained obdurate, and had preserved a masculine strength of character in spite of the physical violation they had suffered.

Under the Osman dynasty eunuchs often wielded the sword with a powerful hand and proved themselves courageous and skilful generals and conquerors. Others brought cities into subjection or met their death on the battle-field. They demeaned themselves with manly integrity when appointed to the high office of Grand Vizier or Counsellor of State. Wealthy sultans have even betrothed their daughters to eunuchs, for there were some who could do more than fight for their native country and ravage foreign lands; they knew how to make princesses happy. Many eunuchs had their own harems, even if their social status did not force them to maintain the establishment as a symbolic duty, for there were atypical eunuchs who could still woo





Woman and satisfy her longings. The eunuch-harems of old times were perfectly organized and notably free from murderous intrigue. Cultivated women are still alive to-day who have once been the chosen companions of eunuchs, and who have lived many years with them in an incomplete marriage relation that gave them freedom and happiness. Perhaps they look back from their present marriage state and make regretful comparisons with the past.

When a eunuch had a platonic relation with a woman his devotion knew no bounds. He was able to comprehend her woman's nature, for his was a kindred spirit. In fact he lived the woman's life with her and shared her sorrows and desires. Often he was the only one who witnessed her outbursts of anger and despair and gave sympathy in her hour of need. For it was the eunuch who must break bad news to the women or inform them of difficult commands. Why should the lord of the harem involve himself in unpleasant explanations and painful situations? It was better that the eunuch should brave the first storm and let the master wait until the atmosphere had cleared before he looked into the harem. All the mightiest men held this to be the wisest policy even though they were rulers of Egypt. The grandfather of Abbas Hilmi, Ismail Pasha himself, for all the power of his kingly state and all his fabulous wealth, was none too brave when he must face a woman's tears. He could not summon up courage to tell his wife that he had exercised his masculine prerogative and had taken a second wife. His chief eunuch had to bear the evil tidings, and the first result of the communication was that the princess, who was seated at the toilet table, hurled her gold





and diamond brush at the rich Venetian glass mirror. After a little time she controlled herself enough to say, "Bring my sister here and let me embrace her." Perhaps it was because of her long years of slavery that at a time of mental stress she used the words *bemshirem*, "my sister." They spoke of the obedience that befits a slave, and perhaps of the religious conception of the slave's relation to her master; chiefly they bore witness to the depth of her love for her husband. Hidden in a woman's soul lies an unknown capacity for love, and she does not fully discover her power until she has been wounded by the object of her love. Woman's love thrives in the midst of sorrow: it is as though love were ambitious and longed to prove its strength, or again it seems that tender pride can transmute the bitterest pain into love. A man understands nothing of this alchemy, nothing of its precipitating causes, nothing of its fulfilment. He can only interpret the results of sacrifices according to his personal experience as a man, and after the event he can utter sophisms that reflect pleasantly on his power and influence or on his right of choice. He forgets that woman is love's victim, and that all her life is pledged to love's service. She must guard love's fair name since she in her turn derives all her strength and wisdom from love.

But none of these strange and confusing issues troubled Ismail Pasha. He was delighted that his two loves had embraced each other and had accepted the sisterly relation that tradition allotted to superseded hanums. Two smiling faces would welcome him to the harem now, and for this he had to thank the courageous eunuch.





In those days a servant would gladly run personal risks in order to serve his master. Ismail Pasha had achieved marvels of extravagance in a prodigal age. He was the last cavalier of the harem, the last pasha that used the institution to its full capacity. He recognized no material considerations, and would have drained the Nile waters flask by flask, if by doing so he could have tapped fresh supplies of gold. And fate had blessed him with such stores of wealth that the dowry fixed by Mohammed for each concubine was only a check on his generosity. He had no mind for limitations, and gave as free a rein to his passion as he did to his imagination and his love of pomp. His harem was a model harem that had never been exploited, but was founded fairly and squarely on pomp and extravagance, generosity and passion. His slaves were not used until they were old enough to be grandmothers. As soon as he had chosen a girl for his pleasure her purpose had been accomplished, so far as he was concerned, and straightway arrangements were made for her marriage with some minister or pasha. She received a royal dowry, and took with her a kilo of brilliants and jewelry as a memento of her service. Moreover, she was still entitled to the monthly salary she had drawn during her slavery, and she brought orders and distinctions to her legitimate husband. In those days, and in such happy circumstances, a slave could rejoice in her new life. She was still young, the splendour of the harem surrounded her like a halo, she impressed her husband with the regal manner she had acquired and which she introduced into her new home. She was something precious that Allah in his inestimable good-





ness had vouchsafed to a humble mortal. I can only hope that these women did not make things too easy for pasha or bey, and that they avenged beforehand the wrongs their sisters had to suffer in a later, more cruel age.

I believe that legitimate or illegitimate polygamy, with its consequent burden of children, is only practicable in two types of economic conditions. There must be either enormous wealth or absolute poverty.

Of these, the first state requires no discussion. The Egyptian fellaheen—or countrymen—with their many wives and children, present life under the second condition. All of them work. The more dependents a fellah had, the more land was rented to him, and he relied on the number of hands he could employ. The cattle seemed to understand that even youth and weakness is not exempt from the hard labour of the fields. The strongest oxen let children drive them with a goad, and lay patiently on the ground when the little ones wanted to mount them. Tiny children and great cattle kept watch over one another. But the harem was not founded so that little children might drive oxen. It originated from man's desire for sensual and material luxury, from his longing for mastery, and from his polygamous desires that, burdened as they were with the languor of the East, must be spared all competition and strife. Everything was to be had for the taking, and the pains of hunger could be stilled at any time. Sometimes a man ate because he was hungry; sometimes his appetite was stimulated by the tempting appearance of the dish. The quality of megalomania was evident in his self-consciousness.



He was the source of all pleasure, and on his erotic caprice hung the happiness of all these subject women. On all sides he had proof of his virility. Women were not individuals to him, they were there to satisfy his desire. The harem was one body with many members—hanums and *kalfas*—all dependent on another. And this relation of many women to one man, sometimes a prospective relation, sometimes one that had been already established, constituted an intimate, a shameless league of individuals who shared one instinctive desire. There could be no love secrets, for no one hid anything from another, and each watched the other shrewdly. There was just one key to all these palaces of pleasure. The hanums gave orders and the *kalfas* obeyed them: the one had the right to command and the other to obey.

But command and obedience were only outward show. Neither could be taken seriously when once it was remembered that exclusive sexual intimacy did not exist in the harem, that nothing belonged to one person alone; fundamentally there could be no first place. The wife's child was legitimate, so was the slave's; moreover, the slave might become a hanum overnight. It was thus to establish and protect their exclusive rights that the women grew so hard and cruel. If a slave were promoted to a hanum's state, the whole harem became a veritable babel, and the shortest visit in such a topsy-turvy *ménage* was enough to exhaust all one's energy. One must be ready to appraise these crazy values justly and bring out every reserve of strength so as to protect oneself from the loud, coarse voices and the aggressive ugliness of the surroundings.





The most beautiful flowers were carelessly crammed into cheap imitations of Chinese vases, where they lost all their colour and perfume. Rare pieces of Sèvres porcelain filled with faded or dusty artificial flowers mourned on the miraculously chiselled marble overmantels, while crudely carved table legs rubbed holes in the Aubusson carpets. On the walls hung endless rows of mirrors, adorned with cut glass—and fixed between their wearisome surfaces were chandeliers without their candles, and with many gaps among their crystal drops. Amidst antique damask curtains were hangings of coarse stiff material, straight from a wholesale stores. Sofas and divans, on which the inhabitants liked to sit cross-legged, consisted of tightly stuffed quilted satin cushions laid across wooden pediments. There were no soft billowy couches in the whole harem.

In fact the traditional harem appointments were completely unæsthetic. The surroundings were uncomfortable and unattractive—in a word they were unpleasing. And they were impersonal also: each harem was like every other that had similar financial resources. The same excess of senseless imitation wares stood everywhere as a witness of poor taste. The word “cosy” meant nothing to women who had been brought up in a harem. Even if European decorators were employed and had imported the most costly furniture, all the pieces seemed to present another face here, like royal personages travelling incognito. One could not believe that they belonged to their new surroundings and their new owners. Indeed some such effect was inevitable when no loving consideration had



been given to the purchases, and when things were simply ordered and delivered. And the conversations that enlivened the hanum's receptions were well suited to such an environment, for they were not concerned with pretty things. Everything was pleasant, if slightly misleading, so long as the guests prattled away in the flowery court language that the occasion demanded, for then conversation was chiefly composed of a stream of benedictions, although it meant little and established no vital contact between the speakers. But when coffee had been served with the usual ceremony, the real conversation began, and once outside the prescribed limits, one could hear the most startling and secret things. For example: Ayesha Hanum had vainly desired a child for ten years; only after this period of patient waiting did she follow her old servant's counsel. Two magic trees stood close together in a holy place, and Ayesha had squeezed herself in and out of the narrow space between them until the cure succeeded, and everyone noticed her changing form. And now Ayesha had a lovely baby—Mâshallah! In another harem a eunuch had taken only five minutes to cure some children who lay sick with typhus fever. Using a certain ink he wrote a few lines from the Koran on a scrap of paper and then put it into a glass of water. The children were dosed with the ink and water mixture, and were instantly cured. Praise be to Allah!

Incredible superstitions were firmly believed. Anyone who wished to quench a flame of love in the master's heart and senses would say the appropriate prayers and charms over the bones of certain animals, and then stow the fragments away in his





pillow, whence they would work the desired magic. And if success did not come along this bony path, there were more powerful means. Humble beasts were sacrificed to the delusion; even great camels were buried alive, while the name of God was used to sanctify the deed. Potions were brewed, garments were ordered and consecrated for certain purposes; and a host of rites based on utter delusions were trusted and practised in the greatest palace as well as in the smallest cottage.

Then the hostess recounted the case of Leila Hanum. The outraged husband had brought her back to her family on the night of the wedding. He missed something. The hanums were horrified. All of them held the same opinion, that old custom must be observed, and that the guests must somehow wile away the time until the proud mother of the bride should carry the marriage sheets through the ranks of assembled hanums and let the little red stains on them bear witness to her daughter's lost maidenhood. That is how things ought to be. Allah is great! But the affair of Leila Hanum impressed me. It was not easy to lose anything that the harem world valued so highly, and the bigger the harem, the easier to keep watch. No hanum might go out alone; if she went in the carriage at least one slave accompanied her and a eunuch sat with the coachman. Leila Hanum must have had an accomplice over and above her lover. Perhaps she had paid an official visit to the dressmaker, and somehow arranged to dismiss her slave; perhaps the slave was in the secret too. In any case the eunuch must have waited in the outer room. Such things were not easy to manage, and there was no doubt





that Leila had showed spirit and discretion. Perhaps too she was lucky that her husband had refused her and sent her home.

Even slaves were not allowed to go out alone. And if they were permitted to make an excursion, other slaves and eunuchs always accompanied them, and the course that was usually prescribed was the circuit of the narrow streets of the adjacent bazaar, or *muski*. The women were freer in the smaller harems, where ceremony was limited by limited means. If there were no servants available, the slaves must do their own shopping and take the children out walking. In the wealthy harems the slaves took their exercise in gardens which were set apart for them, and accompanied their mistress on her drives and visits. For the slave was never regarded as a servant; in the eyes of religion she was an integral part of the harem, or, more accurately, a family possession. Slavery had produced a hybrid individual, part-confidante and part-retainer, at once a piece of goods and a servant. At receptions and all kinds of ceremonies and feast-days the number of slaves was a measure of the harem's wealth, position and inherited tradition.

Egyptians loved ceremonial occasions more than any other people. No others could decorate and illuminate so brilliantly, or create so vivid and insistent an atmosphere of jollity. But a high price had to be paid for a single one of these illusory thousand-and-one nights. For it was not only the princes and millionaires who indulged this passion for pomp and show, families of modest means must compete in such social affairs. The glorious Egyptian sunshine banished care. Insha'allah. God is great! And





the hope of a good cotton harvest gave deceitful encouragement, and enticed the host with promises of a fortune quickly made. The man who was only a humble bey to-day might be a pasha covered with orders before the morrow. Everything was possible in the land of the pyramids and much could be bought at a price. A fortune was dissipated when a wedding with its accompanying festival was celebrated. The wedding took place in the house of the bride and the feast in the house of the bridegroom. Into these two nights were crammed pleasures enough to last a lifetime. I shall never forget one of these weddings, for in its course I lived through the most contradictory experiences and received the strangest gift of my whole life. The bride was a pasha's thirteen-year-old daughter. She had pleurisy, but still the wedding was to take place on the appointed day, for the doctor declared that there was no immediate danger. It was almost impossible to postpone a marriage ceremony, at any rate such an action would have involved inconceivable material losses, quite apart from the accepted belief that a postponed wedding betokened misfortune. In noble Mohammedan circles a wedding was not a simple affair as it is in Europe, where strewn flowers, a pathway of carpets and the playing of organ music is considered sufficient ceremony. In Egypt the best theatrical artists must be engaged: Arabian singers, dancers, variety performers and Indian fakirs—in short, any entertainers of special fame who demand specially high fees. Nothing was considered too expensive, and many families have been ruined by a single day's festivity. Huge sums were spent, so as to include in one wedding feast





all manner of diversions which might have lasted for a period of months. The projected ceremony was the liveliest subject of conversation in the harems for weeks ahead. Fresh rumours of the attractions that the host was preparing for his guests spread like wild-fire every day, for no place in the world could compete with a harem in prompt news service.

It was eight o'clock in the evening in Musturut Palace when my first lady-in-waiting, dear, faithful Hermeline, announced that it was time to dress. I closed the Bechstein piano regretfully and followed her into the toilet chamber, where innumerable hands busied themselves with me. I was standing on a gold-embroidered cloth lest my train touch the ground: the yashmak was cunningly fastened to the *botos*, then the mantle covered me altogether—and so I set out to the wedding of a child.

Pressed into the corner of the carriage I began to reflect . . . how will the child's life develop, will she be happy? Her betrothal was exceptional, for she knew the suitor who was to marry her. They had played together and seen one another every day; and they were already betrothed when the time came for her to veil her little face for the first time and to be a woman in spite of her child's years. Both of them were children. In his eighteen years' life he had not had more experience than she with her thirteen summers. They must live their lives together henceforward—not only their playtime. These preliminary conditions were far more favourable than usual, when the wife was unveiled for the first time before the stranger who must be her master. She had never spoken to him before; she may have





peeped at him through the barred windows of the harem, but that was all. Who could know her anxious longing as she watched for the unknown lover? who could say how many secret dreams, hitherto dim or repressed, were ready to crown him as the man of her choice? For the stranger was not only her future husband, he was the beginning and the end of her individual life. Her own life . . . there was no such thing as her "own" life. At home she had obeyed her parents' will and had submitted to the rules and regulations of the parental harem. After that she must bow to her husband's will and to the laws of her own harem. Only the man who willed, only the law-maker had changed. The confining walls, the locked doors, the barred windows were just as forbidding in her new home and oppressed her just as much there as they had in her father's house. Would she love her husband? She was ready to love him, the good intention was there; but is good intention enough? Is love a matter of trade, or a purpose to be fulfilled? Is it no longer a miraculous revelation, a glorious gift suddenly offered to two souls and two bodies before they have expected or prepared for it—a gift that they seize because for the first time they recognize the tragic loneliness of an incomplete existence? Has love nothing to do with completion, inspiration and union? Is it no longer the strongest, most compelling force in the whole world? Has love grown so weak that it cannot break this chain of convention, or are men no more worthy of it?

A brilliant light shone into the carriage: there were illuminated paths, flags, music, men ranged motionless in long rows. At last the carriage went





foot's pace, for just ahead of us a camel had been sacrificed in my honour; his throat was cut and his flesh divided among the poor. I shut my eyes. Now the Khedive's hymn, and we were at the gate. I stepped out, eunuchs led me up the strip of red carpet to the entrance of the harem. It was a sea of women's faces. I could hardly believe that the veiled shape that stood so still could be my own. Zealous hands took my mantle and veil away, a mirror set in precious stones was held up before my face and in it I saw a painted picture. Slaves supported me on each side and almost carried me up the wide stair, through two close rows of deeply bowing women; other slaves held out my train. All was still as death as a sign of the greatest respect. Not a whisper could be heard except for the rustle of silk skirts as the women bowed themselves to the ground. At the top of the stairs the bride's and bridegroom's mothers stood to receive me, and with them the children's nurse—the *dada hanum*. She was no servant, but the representative of maternal authority in the harem, and was second in precedence only to the mother. All the high-born guests were crowded together behind this first rank. In spite of my remonstrances they kissed the hem of my robe and uttered the usual speeches of welcome, thanksgiving and benediction. Then my retinue passed under a mass of flower festoons, and through crowded ante-rooms, into a great reception-hall, where a single armchair was standing, covered with embroidered cashmere shawls, and a hundred silk cushions lay beside the walls. When I had seated myself coffee was served and the brightly coloured wave of whispering women that followed us broke





and drifted into groups, while each hanum sank down on a cushion. Members of the family stood beside my chair. The *kahwedji-kalfa* approached, wearing a velvet scarf embroidered with gold and jewels laid over her left shoulder. In her hand was a round tray on which stood the coffee-pot and the delicate little cups in their diamond-studded holders. A second slave poured out the coffee, another received the cup and walked with little mincing steps to one of the hanums; then, standing before her with downcast eyes, she offered the cup. All the kohl-pencilled eyes were fixed on me, for according to etiquette I had to swallow the first mouthful.

And so we drank coffee, the first coffee of many, for the ceremony was repeated at the arrival of each guest of honour. Then I asked to see the bride. They would call her, but I insisted on going myself to the little queen of the festival, and accordingly I was led into the room where she sat in state like a lifeless idol on the raised dais. Her stiff satin robe was heavy with gold embroidery; a veil, held in place by a gold crown, draped her form. Four rich unset jewels shone from forehead, chin and cheeks and her face was painted like a doll's. A fine pencilled line joined the eyebrows and made the whole expression seem set. Huge brilliants hung in her ears and she was loaded with a multitude of rings, bracelets and necklaces. The little hanum sat solemn and mute, like an idol for all to see. Then, catching sight of me, she rose to her feet and walked towards me. It was hard for me to keep back my tears, for the pretty child in all her finery touched my heart, and I held her in my arms in spite of her pomp. Then





I led her back to her seat, for she was so weak that she could scarcely stand, although she hid her pain behind a steady smile, like a little heroine. Crowds of guests filed past the raised dais murmuring the proper blessings and charms against the evil eye; they examined the bride critically and enviously took stock of her jewels. The anxious *dada* slipped in and out to look after her darling, and when the procession halted for a minute she took her chance to give the precious child some refreshment. New guests came up almost before the weary little creature had swallowed her lemonade, and she must sit still and smile again. I could bear it no more and turned away, closing my eyes to the pitiful picture of the little hanum. I felt my eyes burning—Allah, these are tears and I must not weep—I must not. I said the three words again and again under my breath. Then I forced my eyes to open and I gazed fixedly at the lights of the giant candelabra; not an eyelash must move, for I had touched them with Indian ink. Royalty must not weep, at any rate not black tears. My fears were soon at rest. Perhaps the tears themselves were ashamed that I had such a reason to hold them back.

The wedding gifts were admired. Mâshallah! (Superstition permits only this one exclamation of admiration, which signifies: "May God protect it from envious eyes.") Masses of presents were set out on a long table for inspection, and near by on a second table were the gifts the *dada hanum* had received. (The *dada* was not a slave if she had once been the child's wet-nurse.) The wedding-day of her nursling was the *dada's* day of honour; it was the well-merited end of her long unselfish service.





if there were no other children in the house, the *dada* accompanied the bride and filled an honourable and responsible station in the new home. There again she continued to devote her life to her darling's welfare.

The bridal bed glittered in the middle of another, an empty room. It was a blaze of silver, with shining precious stones at head and foot, a fit place for dreams of fairyland. Sparkling flowers lay expectant in their leafy festoons. The bridal shift was laid out on the satin coverlet. This bed would know the dreams and hopes and experience of one night only—the bridal night. Afterwards it would be put by, stored in a forgotten place of honour; and there it would stand, aimlessly and uselessly in exile. It had no further significance. Never again would man and wife rest in its embrace or seek its splendid protection. On no night henceforward could they take shelter in its silvery brightness, a heavy white bedspread would be the only lodger. The bed existed merely as a symbol of wealth, as an interesting exhibit in the wedding feast. It had not sufficient power to take the place of the easily movable satin mattresses that can be spread now here and now there, and whose nomad nature will not submit to the stability of any bed. Chance happenings and unforeseen alterations made little oases of diversion in the changeless monotony of harem life, and the women joyfully seized the opportunity of changing their sleeping places whenever this simple distraction offered. Every harem contained rooms filled with pillows and mattresses and bed coverings, so that a night's lodging could always be provided for any number of welcome guests.





There were heavy wooden chests as well, which contained enough embroidered linen sheets to rival the abundance of an Eastern bazaar. Wide mantles stitched with gold, little slippers of all sizes ornamented with pearls, gossamer veils for the head—all had been bought in readiness for the guests that were so eagerly welcomed. And besides this, a salon in the harem had been changed into an exhibition room for house linen. Mountains of dazzling white hand-worked embroidery, with stitches fine enough to ruin any eyes, lay on the tables and chairs. Even the bath-towels were tinted with pink, pale blue or yellow and had gold and silver embroidery at either end. A pile of white prayer-mats lay ready for the little hanum's devotions, the white ground adorned with soft colours whose delicate shades would make a fitter couch for a dreamer than for a sinner who must make her confession.

New visitors continually streamed into the harem. Among them were many European women who examined us hanums inquisitively and stared at our jewelry as if they were at a show. Immediately I felt myself one of the hanums. I did not regret the life I had left behind if my countrywomen could repay such generous hospitality with tactless staring. Formal guests are always invited to weddings of such importance: members of the European embassies, representatives of the diplomatic corps, anyone in fact who is specially interested in Mohammedan festivities. Eunuchs were ready to accompany the European ladies who wanted to see the harem. The men stayed in the *selamlık* or overflowed into the garden, which had been converted into a gigantic tent in honour of the occasion. It had been com-





pletely covered with a roof of embroideries upheld by tall poles. Countless lamps and crystal chandeliers hung from the roof of the tent. The ground was covered with carpets, and little smoking tables stood beside the low divans. The master of the house and his male relatives stood to receive the guests, while a troop of menservants carried round refreshments : lemonade, coffee, bonbons and ice-cream. The European guests were served with champagne.

All the windows and balconies of the harem that overlooked the garden were closely barred, and from outside no eye could see through the finely carved wooden patterns and the ivory decorations ; but from inside there was a clear view. At last the hanums crowded together round the windows and balconies, for the entertainment was beginning in the covered garden of the *selamlık*. The performers followed one another rapidly : variety artists, Arabian actors, Arabian singers, fakirs, jugglers and moving pictures were presented without the shortest interval between the turns. I sat on a wide balcony surrounded by many hanums, all of them concerned with my comfort. If by chance I moved my hand as I peeped through the lattice a lighted cigarette was laid between my fingers, and almost before I could turn my head a tray of refreshments was handed to me. But all the attentions were so kindly and affectionately given that I never found them burdensome. I know of no hospitality that can compare with the hospitality of the East ; there is no forced courtesy ; all proceeds from a real desire to give. Every guest is treated as a member of the family.

There was a sudden commotion, for the bride-





groom's mother was announcing the bridal procession. The hanums rustled back into the reception-rooms, and servants closed the doors of the room in which the bride had held her court. There was a moment of great tension. The hanums had ranged themselves in two long rows, for the bride would pass between these living walls that stretched through all the rooms of the harem. There was a breathless pause. The slaves who had accompanied the visiting hanums had handed little sacks filled with gold pieces to their mistresses, and now the slaves and maidservants of the house handed round great sheaves of corn among the guests.

Then the double doors swung open—silence reigned—the bride appeared. First she stood motionless, then stepped slowly forward with tiny steps. The veil fluttered over her jewels, the sparkling crown weighed down her head—a heavy burden—the long train dragged after her. A multitude of long golden threads were attached to the crown, and streamed down to the ground. The *dada* and the slaves of the house walked backwards before the bride, all the while uttering blessings and scattering gold and ears of corn. The bride herself walked slowly, like a statue newly awakened to life. At last the assembly stirred again. The hanums bowed down and threw gold pieces at the bride's little feet; they strewed corn, and those who stood nearest to her plucked at her shining gold threads with trembling hands, for each thread was said to bring good luck.

The past lived again. Brides had dressed like this and made this same procession for centuries. Long ago quivering hands had snatched at the golden threads that fell over the veil—to-day other hands





34 stretched out to touch another bride's streamers. They were supposed to bring luck, so each woman must have one; perhaps it would give her her heart's desire. And all the time the bride moved forward slowly—she seemed an image in her stiff and glittering array. Her feet trod down the ears of corn, her path was strewn with gold and her sisters bowed before her on every side. Poor sisters in captivity and suffering! The same benedictions echoed from all their painted lips and one smile rested on all the mouths. Only their eyes spoke, telling how their dreams had been denied them. And so the bride passed. At last the long train disappeared. The women remembered that they were gathered for a joyful occasion; they breathed again. All regrets and yearnings over lost hopes that had brought tears to their eyes were repressed once more, and the equable smile of everyday life reappeared. The charm was broken. The hanums laughed and joked, they rustled their finery and exchanged observations about the bride. And behind the closed doors the *dada* held the little maiden in her arms, speaking comfortable words in a voice that had often brought solace before. Perhaps the faithful nurse was now telling her child the last fairy tale that she would ever believe.

Then arose fresh excitement, for the dancers were coming. They began to stretch and twist themselves to the monotonous music, while their eyes were fixed on an invisible goal. Was the goal longing or passion? Or was it only a desire for gold pieces? The rhythm grew shorter and more emphatic. A shudder ran through the bare bodies, as with a serpentine gesture each dancer stretched her head





towards a member of the audience: thus she made her earnest request for gold. The hanums, carried away by their enthusiasm, stuck wet coins on the dancers' foreheads, cheeks and chins until the set, painted eyes stared strangely out of the golden faces, and when there was no space for another piece of gold, they scattered money at the dancers' feet. With little shrill cries, without letting fall a single coin from their golden masks, the dancers picked it up. Then they passed out, and the balconies filled again. Hundreds of women crowded together, exchanging comments and pressing against the dividing bars while all peered into the tent below. Sometimes an inquisitive male eye lingered on the carved partitions, but the gratings jealously guarded the secret of the harem.

There was nothing to be seen through the lattice-work, except for an occasional sparkle of light from a diamond. But a roving guest had caught sight of the stone. Perhaps he was an "unbeliever" who dreamed of a white sweetly scented hand, whose caresses were made languid by the weight of jewels. It was a tall slender figure with a frock-coat covered with orders that drifted towards the balcony, as if the lattice were a net that drew him thither. The knowledge that unseen women were watching him made him dizzy, and he went so near to the balcony that he could hear a low laugh. A Turkish aristocrat was keeping his eye on the European; he approached him quietly, and with a friendly smile he began to speak. While they were talking together the two men walked away from the balcony, and from behind the lattice women's eyes followed them as they went.



As if by magic a banquet appeared in the largest reception-room of the harem. Big round silver salvers inscribed with gold were set on carved wooden stands to serve as tables; all the glasses had silver covers. Women took their places at every table and slaves entered carrying a crowd of little covered plates. Something must be sipped or tasted from every dish, just as when children play at tea-parties. Waiting-women brought chiselled jugs with long spouts, and little basins; they poured sweet scented rose-water over the guests' fingertips and dried them on finely worked cloths. The tables were carried away and coffee was served, the slaves standing motionless while they held the trays of gleaming coffee utensils. Then the hostess prayed the assembled hanums to give countenance to an old custom and let the bridegroom come in person to express his heartfelt thanks to all the guests who had honoured him by their presence at the wedding. The ladies made the usual courteous reply. And now came the greatest of all their excitements. They found something to alter in the most perfect toilet: fingers sparkling with rings smoothed down the rich silk robes and made sure that the *botos* was set at an elegant angle, diamond brocade was made to hang more attractively, collars were straightened, and each woman looked critically at her neighbour's. Then the expectant hanums took their places in long rows.

Eunuchs led the bridegroom out of the *selamlık* into the harem, where he was received in breathless silence. He stood for a minute in confusion, dazzled by the crowds of beautiful women and bewildered by the gaze of so many eyes. Then he bowed to the





ground, and in the obeisance he did homage to all the beauty assembled before him. He expressed his gratitude, too, that for once in his life, on his wedding-day, he was privileged to see the hidden women unveiled. His eyes passed from one face to another, as if he would gaze his fill on what had hitherto been hidden and forbidden. Each mouth smiled encouragement to him, all eyes shone for him in that thrilling minute. For it was his wedding-day. Perhaps he would find in the eyes of his little bride a glance that would remind him of the eyes of some woman that he now looked at for the first time.

The hostess led her son up to me, while a slave stepped forward with the coffee. The bridegroom's hand trembled as he passed me the first little cup of fragrant coffee, although he moved with assured elegance. Every woman wanted to attract his notice and speak to him; all these looks, words and smiles were meant for him—the bridegroom of another! His slim black *stamboulin* was surrounded by a bewildering feminine circle of colour, perfume and shining jewels. The tarboosh flared like a flame. A wave of heat closed round the young man, and all that is seductive and delicious enveloped his senses as with a veil.

Coffee was finished. Yet another deep reverence . . . and we returned to the balcony, while the entertainment proceeded in the *selamlık*.

And then I had the greatest surprise of my life. A hanum, the wife of a minister, approached me with a deep reverence. "Your Highness is endowed with all the earthly gifts that the Beloved of Allah could desire, so that your servant had to seek long





Before she found a gift that was worthy to express her veneration and admiration—she brings you her dearest treasure, which henceforward shall belong to Your Highness.” All were silent around me, but their eyes were eloquent, and they seemed already to know the nature of the gift.

The Hanum disappeared after she had spoken, and when she returned she led a little child by the hand. For the first time in my life I did not know what to do, for the five-year-old child beside her was her own daughter. The mother gave me a royal gift, but royal gifts may be oppressive. I was altogether helpless and taken aback. The child saved the situation. She threw herself on the ground at my feet in her fiery red velvet frock, and clutched the hem of my train with baby hands. Then I lifted the little creature in my arms, and kissed her instead of speaking. But kisses cannot last for ever. I knew that I must make a formal speech or do something definite—perhaps I ought to give some pledge or assurance. But the rare gift had caught me unawares and my imagination was paralysed by the strangeness of the situation. I felt the little warm body in my arms. Was this to be my child? my child? have I gone mad? Do they make presents of children here? Children that have been conceived and born—children that are pledges of love. And why to me? Who knows me? Who has any idea of how I feel and think, and who I am? Who is it that trusts my humanity to this superhuman extent and is convinced that I shall give this little stranger the loving protection I have never had a chance to give a child of my own? What seer has gazed into my heart and seen there an empty place, carefully





warded and hidden from the curious? How could anyone suspect that a lonely longing soul hid behind a smiling face? How could it be seen through sparkling jewels and deceitful rouge, in the midst of a noisy wedding feast? The woman that sits here, an object of admiration and reverence, is only she who wears the Khedive's crown. No one knows my heart. The gift is not for me. . . . Coming to this conclusion I regained my self-control; nevertheless I held the child more tightly in my arms, for old longings stirred in the innermost depths of my being.

The episode had taken only a few seconds, but it seemed to me to have lasted an eternity. I looked round smiling, and saw that all the hanutns, as well as the mother of the child, had wet eyes. Then I set the little girl carefully on the ground, rose up and embraced her mother. There are feelings that are too deep for words.

The whole harem seemed already to know about the gift, and everyone wanted to see the child. Māshallah, the little one is lucky! But even this sensation was soon forgotten, and the excitement died down as if it had never been. We gazed again at the mass of gold-laced uniforms in the *selamlik*, at flame-red waves of tarbooshes, at fire-eating fakirs, at the glistening screen where two American film stars kissed under the fruit trees. Nothing had changed, except that a child sat on a silk cushion beside my chair and gazed at me with great dark eyes.

My "motherhood" had started even at the wedding feast, and wherever I turned the little girl was carried after me. My escort informed me





But the child's *dada* with two attendant slaves and a eunuch were waiting in the harem with their baggage in order to drive home with me later. By that time nothing could astonish me, and I gave orders that someone should telephone to Musturut Palace so that a room might be prepared for "my child." More dancers entered, and kindled the same enthusiasm as before. The audience spat on more gold pieces so as to stick them on the girls' faces, and again money was scattered on the ground. Then the hanums made way for a guest of honour whom the hostess presented to me. She was a Russian Grand Duchess who had heard that I was present and wished to meet me. First we drank the necessary coffee (I had lost count of the cups I had already drunk) and then the hanums withdrew so that we might be undisturbed. The harem atmosphere must exercise some kind of suggestion, for the Grand Duchess immediately began our more intimate conversation with a compliment: "*Comme vous êtes jolie, Altesse!*" "*C'est mon seul défaut, Altesse Impériale.*" She seemed amused as she looked at me, and I knew that she was curious and would have liked to ask questions that the courtesy of the old régime did not allow. She looked round her, but said only, "*Comme c'est intéressant.*" "*Oui, on vient de me faire cadeau d'un enfant.*" Although she had certainly thought that everything was possible in the harem, she was as horrified now as I had been a few moments before. But I had already accustomed myself to the astonishing situation, and spoke of it as something obvious, an everyday occurrence. My eyes sought the child, who immediately sat down at my feet





again. "Mais à qui est cet enfant?" "Maintenant c'est mon enfant,—il y a une heure c'était l'enfant d'un ministre." It was fortunate that she was a Grand Duchess, otherwise she should have fallen off her chair. Perhaps Russian ministers are also exceptional people, although I do not know whether they treat their children so casually. I went on smoking calmly, but the Grand Duchess was dumb. The silence disconcerted me; it might tell her too much, for we knew the same world and shared the same ideals. Then we smiled at one another, for a smile does not compromise anyone. But while we smiled her eyes looked searchingly at me and I knew that I could not deceive her; she felt that I was not at home in the harem. Our farewell was warmer than our greeting had been.

The sky began to glow red. A leaden heaviness oppressed me and suddenly I felt so weary that I could have cried. Was this sunrise, and a new day?

The Grand Duchess had gone away and once more I was surrounded by the sea of perfumed women in their finery. Their outward womanliness only increased my consciousness of the difference between us.

Since the bride and bridegroom knew each other already, an old traditional ceremony that is still occasionally repeated in the harem was omitted at this wedding. The bride's face and all her body should be wrapped in a long veil, which is carefully knotted. Then she waits alone in a room and the bridegroom is sent in to her. Outside the locked door a eunuch repeats the *Bismillah*—a prayer somewhat corresponding to our Lord's Prayer; and the bridegroom must manage to untie all the knots





200 I see his wife's face for the first time before the prayer is ended. Often it is agreed that the veil shall be left unknotted, or women's nimbler hands help the bridegroom with his task. But this would happen only when the bride was beautiful.

The rising sun gave forth a heat that is never felt outside Egypt. The radiant conquering light put to flight all my formal phrases and figures of speech, and banished my deceptively agreeable smile. I seemed to be in the sultry overcrowded harem rooms no longer. Perhaps I had travelled to a great dark forest, where ferns that doves had once sown stretched out the curled tips of their leaves in the coolness of dawn, and tall harebells bloomed on a carpet of moss. I seemed to stand on a mountain-side, gazing at the valley below; or again, I saw a little yellow sailing boat on a wide sea, where blue waves crept up the sandy shores. Or I might have stood under trees laden with flowers that hid the sky with their magic perfumed branches. I might have been anywhere but where I really was.

Everyone noticed my changed expression with concern. I tried to soothe the hanums, for they could not have understood. I assured them that I was well and happy, and that I should never forget their delightful festival. They replied with low bows and I signified my thanks with the usual smile. Then I was half led and half supported down the stair, and cloaked and veiled again like a priceless doll. As I leaned back in the corner of the coupé the farewell benediction rang in my ears: *Allah örmurla versin*—"God grant you many lives." No, one was enough for me.

Two carriages had set out from Musturut Palace





to the wedding feast. But just after sunrise four carriages returned and rolled up the entrance drive. A child had been married and I had become a mother.

When I saw my husband on the day after that unforgettable wedding, he had already heard of his "fatherhood." Both of us were troubled, and I felt guilty as well. Since I had had no experience with gifts of children, I left him to handle the delicate situation without offending the powerful parents. He must gently convey the idea that a child is too precious to be squandered away, even as a gift. I had never suspected that such a little person could be so great a burden, but I endured tortures in the next few days. The child was brought in with the breakfast things, this child with whom I had no intimate bond, because I wanted to find none. I must not burden her with my growing affection, because if I yielded to it and adopted her I should only break down her most sacred family ties. The lively memory of a heartless maternal nature that was beyond my comprehension admonished me and darkened the beginning of every new day. It has always been hard for me to cross the frontier between the realm of dreams and that of the conscious demands of the day. First I have to get in touch with reality and put an end to the witchcraft of the night; then I exhort the reasonable part of me to bestir itself, while I promise my second self—the ego of my dreams and phantasies—that it shall resume its glorious mastery when darkness falls next evening. Ever since I have been able to think, I have had a feeling that there are two individuals living in my body, and that there was





and between them. They struggle and hate and strive to destroy one another, and yet each is dependent on the other. Each goes his own way and they meet only in the great oases of love and sorrow; these are all that they can enjoy or endure in unity.

But now I was plunged into each new day without the slightest preparation. I heard neither the last word of my dream nor the first word of reality, and my ego did not recognize the clearly defined relationships between them.

After breakfast I had been used to let my hands wander over the keys of the great Bechstein for as long as my daily engagements would allow, and to sink a part of my surplus energy in a sonorous sea of music. But now, when I sat at the shining black pianoforte in the music room, the child was close beside me on the dais, sitting on the *dada's* knee. When I walked in the garden where I had planted every bush and flower, someone led her skipping behind me. Allah shield us from precious gifts! This state of affairs lasted for several days, then again the child solved the problem. She refused her food and could not sleep, for she cried all night and grew quite ill with longing for the mother who had given her away. So at last the same two carriages drove away from Musturut with the child and her bag and baggage, and the mother took back the little one she had wanted to sacrifice to her grandiose delusions. I hope that the child never comprehended the whole significance of the strange transaction.

Even maternal instincts had special peculiarities in the harem, and pure motherly feeling was rare. Usually the mother's love for her child showed the





and vacillation that characterized the man's relation to his wife. Most of the slaves were Circassians, who were by nature inclined to be physically as well as mentally hard, and whose dominant characteristic was ambition. Husband and children had more significance and value as evidence of a fulfilled ambition than they had as husband and children *per se*. The slaves were proud to be able to produce offspring for their owner, and took credit to themselves for their labour, despite the fact that they bore children with the ease of primitive people. Motherhood gave them a new self-esteem and tended to establish their social position, for sometimes it averted a precipitate separation from the master, or even kept him from marrying again without due reflection. The hanum would actually revenge herself on her innocent children if the pasha neglected her, and came only late at night to sleep in the harem, leaving it early in the morning without seeing his wife. For then her little ones were worthless pledges that did not justify the hopes she had set on them. When a marriage was thus unhappy the whole harem assumed that the master had taken a mistress in the European fashion, and indeed this was a real menace. If he distributed his favours within the harem walls the progress of the affair was constantly under observation. Everything happened under the patronage, so to speak, of the hanum-effendi, whose efficient management would certainly interfere in time to prevent a final interchange of parts. Moreover, infidelity within the harem was permitted by religious law; although it brought personal humiliation to the deserted wife, still it was not associated with social degradation.





Everything took place in her rightful territory, in an enclosed space where she was free to fight and to command. But she was powerless if the master let his sensual fancy range over a wider field, for she was denied access to the world outside and had no knowledge of it. A closely bolted door separated the *baremlie* and the *selamlie*, and from the moment when the master crossed the threshold he could not be watched and recalled. He was at liberty.

As a matter of fact he was entitled to a very limited freedom. Islamic law gave him sexual rights only over his wives and his slaves. But the lures of the external world were much more bewildering and intoxicating than the familiar ones. Within the harem only primitive pleasures were at his disposal, and always there was the horrid chance that an unrestrained whim might saddle him with another legitimate child. Caprices do not lead a man far astray if he treats them as customary conveniences. But outside the walls lay that enticing world of the senses in which he must conquer before he could either give or take love. In that world it was not enough for him to stretch out a possessive hand and add another trivial experience to his store; he had to woo and wait, to fight and conquer his prize. Or perhaps he need only pay for it. But even then the purchase money was a sacrifice, and forged a different sort of link with the object of his love. At any rate he had acknowledged how much his desire was worth and he himself had done something in order to achieve it. The women of the harem had been so disciplined by their strict service that they had lost their sensual charm and knew





nothing of erotic love. They were too simple ever to have found the dark entrance to the tortuous fiery path that leads to the grove of sensual bliss. It needs more skill to become a *grande amoureuse* than it does to bear children—this latter work is not a specialized occupation. But the senses must be exquisitely specialized and the woman needs great gifts of intuition if she is to keep the love she has inspired both free and steadfast, and if it is to signify at once the height of pleasure, release and yearning; if, moreover, her most generous gift is always to bear with it the promise of a further increase; and finally if she is to be at home in a world of perplexing and mysterious events. This implies a beneficent sovereignty which can command every nuance of pleasure, and whose ecstasy of submission has its origin in immeasurable vitality. If the lord of the harem met with one woman in the world outside who was thus predestined for passion, he was saved, and his whole harem with him, for his pampered senses could never again adjust themselves to the dull mediocrity of the harem atmosphere. He felt oppressed by his retinue of undifferentiated women. If his earlier desire had once stamped one of them for his own, he never permitted a quite objective attitude to develop between them again. And the atmosphere of reluctance in the harem, reinforced by his own distaste, united to raise a barrier between them.

At last the hanum-effendi realized that her children had failed her. The fact that she had children might have sufficed to obviate a danger coming from within the harem, but it had no power to combat the menace of unknown forces which operated in





another world than her own. The united forces of the harem could not break this witchcraft, for it had no point of contact with the unknown phenomenon. In the harem the possibilities of sensual pleasure were limited to the definite sexual act. All varieties of supplementary and secondary erotic pleasure were forbidden by religion. Many customs and usages had been freed from the religious ban, but the main love-issues remained as primitive as ever, and their simple erotism had something solid in it that was not calculated to intoxicate the senses.

If the pasha fell victim to the wiles of an unbeliever, evil days were in store for everyone in the harem. His wife had been used to punish the offending slave in previous crises, but in this case she could avenge herself only on her children. Accordingly, whenever the lord of the harem loved a European mistress his hanum-effendi sought out new ways of tormenting the children. She vented her rage on them by prohibiting all their walks and drives, and was irrational enough to punish them simply because they no longer protected her from danger. One boy was actually pushed out of a window into the garden below. Was this the result of mental suffering? Is it usual for a deserted woman's love to break out in unnatural cruelty to her own children?

The hanum was not conscious of any bond of union between herself and her little ones. They were presents she had once made to her husband, and now that they were useless and valueless she intended to destroy them in order to punish him. She had had no childhood herself, and the idea of





"mother" was foreign to her. One memory prevailed over all her other impressions: she had been sold into slavery. This knowledge did nothing to encourage the development of benign motherhood in her. The slave-mothers had not experienced motherly devotion themselves, they did not even know any tradition of such feeling, and nothing helped them to estimate its value. The child came into the world spiritually as well as physically naked; he was there in fact, but his presence did not bear witness to any mysterious bond between mother and child. There was no knowledge of proper educational methods or of child-psychology. The slave-children had to be strong indeed in order to stand the treatment they received. From the first moment of their lives they were delivered into the hands of eunuchs, and puzzled old slave-brains had to think what best to do if they were sick or needed special care or counsel. Every anxiety gave the signal for the flood-gate of superstition to be opened.

In early days no doctor was allowed to enter the harem—he belonged to the prohibited sex. Later he might pay his visit, but there were many reservations and conditions that were unfavourable for any sick person. Information about the patient's complaints and symptoms was conveyed to the doctor by a eunuch; obviously the story was coloured by the opinions of the interpreter, who from the very beginning had trusted his own knowledge more than the physician's skill. Later, when fanaticism was less violent and European medicine was given a measure of recognition, the doctor was allowed to examine his patients personally in some





## HAREM LIFE

CSL

of more progressive harems. But the hanum or *Kalifa* was closely veiled and covered, and only the affected part was exposed. And even when a doctor had been consulted, the slaves continued to employ their own bungling methods of treatment, and their results did not do much credit to the physician in charge. If the patient's condition was unchanged the amateurs never mentioned their assistance, but if she recovered they attributed the good result to a magic potion for which they were responsible.

The care and education of children were on exactly the same level. If a European governess was employed the mother wanted to prove her authority by intervening in matters about which she understood nothing. She altered the time-table and deleted what to her mind seemed unnecessary, notwithstanding the fact that, if she had once been a slave, she could read and write only very indifferently. If the lord of the harem understood more than his wife and discussed matters personally with the governess, her position would soon be made untenable. She would be slighted and tormented until she left the house, and the same thing would happen to her successors, until the master took no more interest in them, and the children were taught nothing at all. If it was difficult to prove that an employee was inefficient, and still the hanum intended to get rid of her, it would be rumoured that she had expressed some criticism of the Mohammedan faith, and the accusation could never be categorically denied or explained away. This was always a great help. In any case it was humiliating to be instructed in the unpopular European fashion, and the pure religious motives that were used to





general unscrupulousness and injustice increased the employer's feeling of moral superiority.

In general, boys had an easier time than girls. In ordinary harems they were sent to school, and in aristocratic harems they either had a tutor at home or were educated in Europe. But there was no question of good systematic education even for boys, and the European tutor's task was made more difficult whenever this was possible, for at bottom he was not thought good enough to teach any little Moslem. The Christian and his point of view were always under suspicion, and there was anxiety lest his scientific objectivity invade the realm of religion and of traditional thought which ought to be kept unexplored and unexplained. Thus the children were driven this way and that by conflicting European and Mohammedan influences, and their different teachers used diametrically opposite educational methods as well as teaching the bewildered pupils quite different subjects. They had to learn to think and work along two different lines, the one European and the other Mohammedan. Education was seldom taken seriously, for it was a foreign importation, and secretly it was despised as nonsense. Even the princes who had been to school in Europe gave evidence of very defective and incomplete education at the end of their studies. Abbas Hilmi could never understand my love of reading. Often he used to tease me: "Toi, avec tes livres." Once he glanced into a book and read a few words: "Nietzsche . . . qui était cet animal?" To-day the erstwhile Khedive of Egypt is a banker and his erstwhile Hanum-Effendi is an author. And which is the happier life? Who can say?



There were a few exceptions, the more delightful for their rareness, as, for instance, the Prince-poet Haidar. He could often be seen driving through the hot Cairo streets, comfortably reclining in his cab with his feet up on the back seat. One hand held a great green sun-umbrella over his red tarboosh, an open book lay in the other, while beside him and under him were mountains of books. The cabman—*arabadji*—had to drive this travelling library round for hours, always going at the same steady pace. The Prince could not be disturbed by visitors or telephone messages while he was making these reading excursions, and they were in no way inferior to any other journey in search of instruction and relaxation. But I believe that the gentle poet made these pilgrimages of reading partly because he must have peace. His poetic flowers of speech were not strong enough weapons to defend him against an aggressive hanum in his hour of need. Once when I met him in London with Abbas Hilmi he said, "Il faut être bon pour les gros—they sont tellement faibles . . ." A few days later I was able to demonstrate my goodwill towards the stronger sex. A well-known tailor presented his patterns and price list, but received no order from the Prince because the prices were too high. During the course of the day he asked the Khedive to lend him some money, and I supported the request with a sympathetic smile and a few laughing words about weakness in general. The poet rewarded my understanding by calling one evening in the very suit he had ordered and taking me out to dine. I think the weak ones have their way made easy for them.

A woman who described herself as "weak" once





came on a visit to the Palace of Musturut. She was a married woman who had fallen in love with a pasha—a pretty English girl who, sitting among the flowers of her villa garden, had dreamed of high position and had let the glitter of the pasha's insignia outshine her husband's modest gifts. She wanted a divorce so that she could marry the pasha. "Very well, get your divorce," I advised. And then I learned the reason of all her hesitation. She had not the courage to discuss marriage with the pasha, for if he did not share her wishes she felt she could not face a definite refusal. She was too weak to bear it. But how could I take a hand in her love affair? I was supposed to ask the Khedive to intervene on her behalf. She declared that she was even ready to believe in Mohammed. The situation might have been comic, but I did not find it so. "I am ready to believe . . ." Yes—she was ready for anything. . . .

Sacrifice, suffering, self-denial—a woman never counts the cost when she is in love, but when love is gone every sorrow becomes a heavy burden. And here lay the tragedy of the harem. It was the husband only who had the right of divorce. He could set himself free a first, second and third time, although he could not follow the same procedure every time. After the two earlier divorces he might marry his wife again without further ceremony, but after the third separation the wife must marry another husband, who must then desert her in his turn. If the woman still wished to marry her first husband, he could take her then in God's name. The third divorce was laden with warnings and penalties for the husband. He was warned not





to utter the ceremonial words of divorce without due reflection, and if he had spoken them he must pay the penalty before they could be unsaid. But there was seldom a punishment for such crimes. The thoughtless husband came to an understanding, usually to a financial understanding, with some man or other (blind men were preferred) and the temporary marriage and subsequent divorce became a farce. Sometimes it happened otherwise. If there were a rival in the case who really desired the divorced woman and she agreed to go to him, then her punishment was also her reward, and she never returned to her first husband.

Before Mohammed's time the Arab's divorce formula ran thus: "Let thy back be for me as the back of my mother"—in other words, "You are dead as far as I am concerned." Even when the man had come to a satisfactory understanding with his wife after the first and second separations, if he chanced to speak these decisive words every form of intercourse with her, whether social or physical, must cease henceforward. But although Mohammed himself dissolved the marriage of Kais and Berida after the wife had confessed that she no longer loved her husband, in these latter days the woman has no religious right to institute divorce proceedings. It has long been forgotten that Mohammed had regarded love as the only stable basis for marriage. New caliphs and sultans had established new values and interpretations of the old law, and each fresh dynasty and priesthood made further modifications, until the foundation of religion was like a worn carpet, full of holes and threadbare patches.





But what usually happens if a woman wants to be divorced from her husband? She tries to force his hand, and she needs a strong will, perseverance, courage and a certain assured position if she hopes to succeed. But actually, one of these poor simple women had no alternative but to ask a sheik to intercede for her, and he would proceed to enquire whether the husband neglected or ill-treated his wife, and whether he was addicted to drink. In order to determine whether the man were a drunkard it was customary to make him stand beside the sheik and repeat an intricate passage from the Koran that bristles with consonants and is peculiarly difficult to pronounce; certainly a man in his cups could not hope to repeat it without mistakes. The passage is commonly called "the Drunkards' surah" on account of this usage. But a sheik was not always at hand when the husband was drunk. And even if he had pronounced the words incorrectly enough to establish the charge of intoxication, the storm generally ended in religious admonitions and threats. For it was better for a woman to have a bad husband than no husband at all.

Manhood was accorded an absolute importance. Women of the higher classes might find shelter and protection in the meddling of their relations, but for them, too, a marriage was a marriage. It was nature that laid the foundation of woman's patience by imposing a long pregnancy of nine months upon her, and since then everyone has insisted she shall be patient through all the troubles and sorrows of life. But it is only the man who feels the effects of his wife's patience and who reaps the full blessing of forbearance. So thought a pretty young hanum





whose husband intended her to feel the torments of hell even during her earthly life. She was nineteen years old and had two children, but she had had no experience of life and needed as much protection as any child. Still her eyes glowed with an unquenchable desire for freedom. She had no help, for not a soul understood how much she suffered, or appreciated her strong will and the courage of her despair. Finally, when prayers, entreaties and explanations had proved futile, she left her husband and children, and sought refuge and freedom in a house of ill-fame in Alexandria. After that her husband agreed to the separation.

Princesses sometimes took laudanum to end their troubles. Cruel misunderstanding forced them to seek such paths to death before the family lawyer would reconcile himself to the idea of divorce, and before he could be prevailed on to acknowledge and respond to their desperate need. But monetary compensation played a part in these high circles and sometimes enabled the husband to see that his wife's desire for divorce was not unjustified and that separation was necessary. The wife of a pasha wanted to sever her marriage bond for she and her husband had nothing in common with one another, but the pasha would not hear of divorce. Still she would not give way. And when he saw that she remained true to her purpose the pasha informed her that he would grant her wish on one condition: she must deny her God in the presence of two sheiks. Then he would be forced to let her go, for no Moslem can remain married to a blasphemer.

Did the man not reflect for one minute what a





terrible mental conflict he roused in his wife, or was she such a stranger to him that after years of married life he did not even know whether she was a true believer? Perhaps her faith was so deep that it could not be expressed in obedience to formal laws and observances. She had only to say the simple words: "I do not believe in God," in the presence of witnesses, and then she would be free. Perhaps the words meant that she could be true to her inner self and live her own life for ever after. Must truth be bought with a lie? Perhaps it was God Himself Who at last gave her hope of deliverance, and the words she must speak were empty forms for One Who reads the depths of the soul.

Can any love, however fading, have such cruel effects? A love that understands all things and wishes well to everyone could never take refuge behind God and use His name as a menace. I know that the wife had a troubled sympathy even for her husband's importunate request. I know still more, that she loved him even when she left him; nevertheless she had to go. A hard fate commands that certain souls shall not seek only their own happiness and fulfilment. Such souls are so wide and deep that self-interest cannot satisfy them—they must give and give all the time, whatever they suffer or lose. These are souls that do not belong only to the bodies that clothe them, for the personal world of men confines them too much. They belong to all and to everyone. Nothing is strange or indifferent to them, they offer a resting-place for every feeling and every sorrow. The thoughts, hopes and desires that flit through the universe like so many flames come to rest in these rare spirits. And the soul of



this woman was one of them. If the husband had attempted to understand her he could never have made the proposal that she should deny her God, but if he had understood her she would never have left him.

She did not say the fatal words, nevertheless she was free as far as could be seen. Free externally, for inwardly such souls remain bound to every emotional experience. They know no past—that is at once their glory and their torment. From the unquenchable stream of feeling comes the power that enables them to bear all sorrows and resist all strife. The passage of time does them no injury. The Past lives on into the Present, wherein the Future lies hidden.

But psychic conflict was out of place in the harem. Even a European, whom everyone had thought to be an independent woman and had liked on account of her individuality, became quite another being after marrying a Mohammedan. She was judged then according to traditional standards, and was required to become a certain accepted type of person as well as to adopt a new religion and new surroundings. Her neighbours tried to uproot just what they had previously admired in her. Perhaps they did it unconsciously; perhaps, also, they did it because in their deluded fanaticism they felt for the first time that she was worth their trouble, while in their hearts they still felt that she was a stranger and wanted to make her all their own.

It is obvious that a woman who had grown up in a harem would have a very different attitude towards Islam from that of a European convert. The harem-bred woman accepted without question





forms and customs that had always been constituent parts of her life and surroundings. She never sought to investigate or explore anything. She said prayers that she did not understand and did things whose origin and significance she never recognized—she was one of a number of automata who were just as thoughtless as she was. Dead letters and meaningless words were enough for them. They all prayed together, but most of them understood nothing of the prayers they rattled off. Their lips moved, but the content of the significant words was meaningless to them. For those who had not studied Old Arabic, who spoke Turkish and not even modern Arabic, and for others who had neither desire nor opportunity to understand the meaning of the words even in a translation, the Koran remained for ever a book with seven seals, whose ornate gold cover must be carefully enveloped in green cloths (green was the Prophet's own colour), for veneration did not allow them to touch the cover with a naked hand. But had not the contents a better claim to veneration than the cover? Everyone seemed to have forgotten the words of the seventeenth surah of the Koran: "Ye need not follow that ye comprehend not. The ears, the countenance, and the heart must account for these things."

The European convert was met by repulses and refusals whenever she asked a question or tried to penetrate a mystery. She was regarded as an enemy who had invaded the holy land, and she could look for no kind consideration or assistance—only for boundless mistrust. All her words and enquiries were suspected of being ironic and critical, and it





was never believed that the motive of her investigation was a desire to understand the Koran rightly. For the others had never known this active desire. They had been ready-made Mohammedans at their very birth, predestined by Allah to belief, and their divine inherited right to believe was reckoned as a virtue even at that early age. If a man is a virtuous believer from the beginning he need not understand much about his belief; at most he must master what is necessary to refuse it to others. And this was learned thoroughly, as I have experienced. I should never have thought that so ordinary an event could make such shattering revelations. When I first became a Mohammedan I realized what a mixture of inferiority, uncleanness and crudeness I had been before. If I had been one of a primitive race I should have accepted the many instructions and expositions patiently, for they would have established order in my personal life. But my ancestors lived on in me, and these were no obscure predecessors, but men who had left an inheritance that I consciously carry on with pride. It was not that the narrow-minded influences of noble birth had nurtured overweening pride in me. It was a purely emotional process in which I felt I must answer for all those who still breathed in me, because they could not live again themselves. I must shield and guard the spirit within me that was their spirit, for they had entrusted it to my care. Blood is blood—and perhaps one blood is as good as another—but it takes on faults and virtues in the course of its interminable circulation that become more clearly defined with every heart-beat. When I looked back into the far past I remembered only a free untrammelled will. What was the





When did I first submit to a censor? I had to order my life not by religion but by a multitude of customs and empty forms that were not worth the wear and tear of brain cells that I needed to deal with more important matters.

With my urgent desire to pursue the study of Old Arabic I had conjured up a new difficulty. A sheik or an Arabian scholar was out of the question, because my teacher must have intimate knowledge of some language that I knew myself. I was lucky enough to choose a man who fulfilled all these demands, Professor Hess von Wyss. I still think with delight of my days of study and can never forget the experience his lessons gave me. A marvellous new world was revealed to me in my writing-room at Musturut, and, thanks to my teacher, it was so real that I felt at ease in it. Even the declensions of the Old Arabic grammar lost their terrors. Outside the sun shone. Red roses bloomed round the windows in an abundance of life, and stretched their long thick stems towards the sun. Wild jasmine twined round the smooth slender trunks of the palm-trees, playfully seeking its freedom in the air. Wide beds of many coloured poppies quivered under the hot breeze. Light and perfume permeated everything. The voice of the muezzin gave the call to prayer from a minaret near by, broke away from the magnetic attraction of the hot earth and soared up into the radiant sky. *Allahu akbar*—"God is great."

Long rows of bookshelves stood in the shadows of the room, and the Koran lay on the writing-table. The parchment pages lay open, a gold border framing their delicate lettering.





My teacher's inspiring words guided me through Mecca and Medina, through deserts and oases. He led me safely back to the primal source and strength of Islam, showing me all the milestones and partings of the ways, explaining all the passes and bridges. One human being spoke to another.

Then one day I was informed that the mantle and veil which covered my body and hair did not satisfy the letter of the law: I must have gloves as well when I met my teacher, for I ought not to give him my naked hand.

Must I hide my hand? My teacher knew more of me than my hand—he knew my soul. So oppression closed in on me, trying to subdue my emotions and to drive me along a narrow path that had nothing to do with the law of God and religion. Senseless regulations hampered me on every side, always I was coerced and cast down until I learned that rigid formality could seek to deaden the most living spirit. Then at last I understood what was happening. I knew they were trying to change my whole nature, and that I had delivered myself not into the power of true believers, but to a sect of hard men who had inherited the faith and then had distorted and discredited it, and who interpreted and explained its mysteries as their petty human weaknesses dictated. Then I looked at my new world with seeing eyes, and not until I belonged to it did I understand that I had made a mistake. I had underestimated the strength of outward forms and supposed they were in harmony with their content. I had never appreciated that they were heavy useless weights, which threatened to crush the freedom of the individual. After a while I found





myself situated as was that other woman who had to deny her God in order to set her soul at liberty.

There followed a long chain of insignificant events wearisome in their very insignificance. On the most beautiful days I felt it as a portent which threatened every sudden impulse and spontaneous wish. Finally it culminated in a ridiculous episode futile enough to prove that anything is possible in this world, and that malicious gossip can shatter the trust of a lifetime and destroy all that has been loved most dearly and felt most poignantly.

This malicious gossip originated with a peroxide blonde hanum who came to Musturut, flitting on tight high-heeled shoes from Turkish lessons to classes in ceremonial deportment. Her husband was in exile, and after his banishment she became a governess in Constantinople; although her own education was above the average, her intelligence was below it. She thought that I was the cause of her misfortunes, and hated me accordingly.

Then there was an Italian woman, an artist, who often came to Musturut. She conjured up spirits when she was not painting, and we collaborated with her. Spirits, being sexless, are not excluded from the harem. But not the wildest sexuality could have caused such delirium as did these spirits. One of them was in love with me, and from the other world he fixed all his dreams and desires upon me. He was gallant and seductive, and called me his *Brina Maga* in his exaggerated Italian way. And the "dark Sorceress" drank lemonade scented with violet and rose while she read his outpourings, a perpetual cigarette in her hand. Spiritualistic marvels attract everyone, and they were specially potent





194  
in the harem. The white face of the teacher of deportment grew pale under the powder, and the pupils of the artist's eyes were as big as hazel-nuts. As for me, I have always been fascinated by anything to do with conjuring and mystery, and with the secrets of the present and the future. There are worse things in life than to be betrayed and deceived, but the price of betrayal must not be greater than the value of the lie. Now it happened that three women used to sit at a great table in Musturut, intent upon "spiritual" matters. Then, one day, the tight little shoes came trotting to me in a whirl of emotion, bearing the most thrilling news. The pretty blonde hanum had a spirit of her own at last! There was evidence in writing from a famous sheik who had lived more than a century ago. For a second I felt a distaste for this religious system, where even a dead sheik is still a sheik. But this sheik, as he developed under the idle hands of the hanum, passed my comprehension; all the more because "he" wrote in Persian, and my own knowledge of Persian literature was limited to the beautiful Shirin, to the tolerant King Khosroes and especially to the master-lover Ferhad, and even then only in translation. But in one respect I was delighted. The hanum had something to do at last and could no longer find time to stare at my hands for hours on end while I played Bach. Perhaps the Persian sheik was well-disposed to me.

But it soon appeared that the spirit-conjurer was not well-disposed to me herself, and that the poor innocent sheik was only her cat's-paw. Every day she secretly sent an abstract of the sheik's testimony to Abbas Hilmi. The burden of the messages was





that her Highness the Djavidan Hanum-Effendi was conspiring against the life of her husband the Effendina, and that she was supported in her designs by certain European officials. Yes, it was sometimes quite gay in the harem! But people had not always developed the right appreciation for spiritualistic entertainments, or perhaps they had already lost it. Moreover one could not estimate the consequences of these ghostly factors in the harem.

One day I found that the medium's fairy-tale had spread all over the palace, embroidered and exaggerated by the expectant women in their hours of boredom. It was no longer a playful rumour that served to wile away the time. It became an irrefutable and precise piece of written evidence, revealed by the immaculate spirit of a holy Persian sheik who had died a hundred years before. When I entered the hanum's room on the evening of that eventful day she was petrified with terror. She expected an avenging justice, but I had come only to give her the money for her railway fare. By degrees the spirit's documents, as revealed to the pretty hanum and copied by her hand, were forgotten. Everything was explained and interpreted and discussed. But something within me had turned to stone. I do not know how I felt in those days, and even now, when I think of it consciously, I cannot express my thoughts. One thing I know, my husband never believed the contents of this scribble. But the outward form was there with all its consequences, and for once I valued the outward form more highly than its content. Outward forms! In the harem they celebrated the triumph of convention. Ritual was so strong





that white-headed religious rulers bowed before it, and to placate it they made the faith a secondary consideration. A prince looked at his daughter with more than fatherly favour, and she bore him a child. A difficult situation arose. The daughter was a free hanum, she was neither the prince's slave nor yet his wife, so that the child was illegitimate. The main problem therefore was to contrive for its legitimacy. The criminal affair had to be adapted somehow to fit religious precept, so that its living proof could take his destined place in society. The priestly counsellors agreed among themselves that the father must be betrothed to his daughter, so that the child of his child might become his legitimate offspring. A quick business—to become father and grandfather at once. It was the princely position that made this an exceptional case. It did not say much for the father's integrity or for the ideals of religion, and it did little to establish the dignity of the princely status among the people. On this last point, however, there is more to be said.

As for "Princely status." The phrase is full of burdensome import. If a boy passes the years of his childhood, adolescence and education under the preferential ægis of "princely status" his eyes may be so dazzled by his own splendour that their vision is dimmed and he loses the way to the greatest status of all—human status. The word status denotes a terminus, not a point of departure, because it is connected with what has been already achieved.

The dual education of the Mohammedan princes was not calculated to give good results, for their European studies tended to be curtailed and made intellectually poorer by adaptation to the "Tarboosh





Psychology." The master knew that in the long run the prince he was teaching would not wear a hat, so he scarcely felt responsible for the pupil and did not take the European part of his psyche seriously, and of the other, the tarboosh-psyche, the master knew nothing. The boy was one of many Asiatic lads who passed through his hands. Influences and shades of opinion cannot be changed continually without being seriously harmed. Hat and clothes do not alter a man's appearance only; they are not things of secondary, superficial importance; they exercise a far-reaching influence; they lead to the thoughts and habits and ways of life that had themselves determined the origin of the clothing. Everyone must decide for himself which outward form he will adopt, or else his whole life will be a masquerade and he will have no clothes of his own. But these boys wavered to and fro, now towards the hat and now to the tarboosh. They did not reach the heart of the western world, yet they broke the traditional ties that bound them to their own original culture. If they maintained merely an appearance of tradition it soon became a hypocritical, hollow pretence. Gestures and deceptive super-structures replaced the meaning that was lacking; it was a life without its primary colours and without its primitive purity. It is certain that many good customs and many rare gifts were lost through the perpetual change from *à la turka* to *à la franka*.

Boys were sent to Europe while they were still children. But the knowledge that they were outsiders on account of their Moslem birth was soon drilled into them, and by the time they were sent





to school they had already developed a defensive reticence and mistrust. At school they pretended to learn things that they secretly detested; they had been forced to concede thus much to modern progress, but they had no curiosity for the deeper sources of knowledge that might be opened for them. With their education they adopted new manners, and the free meeting of the sexes in Europe gave them the comfortable assurance that they could give free rein to their impulses.

The harem was a live concern in Europe. There were fewer restrictions there than in the country of its origin, where it had long become an effete institution, and where all its resources were exploited to meet the expenses it incurred. The obvious worthlessness of the harem cannot be denied. A crowd of women living together do not make a home even if the master's caprice has conferred the status of Hanum-Effendi on one of them. She was never chosen to be the pasha's wife or companion; she attained her position simply because she happened to be one of the group destined to satisfy his desire. It was a mere chance that she was chosen; usually it could scarcely be called a choice, but only the result of a whim.

The harem was the home of compromise. Nothing and nobody was quite true to type. The slave was neither a servant nor a member of the family, but at least she served her original purpose—she satisfied desire. If the master entangled himself with her he must have felt much as a married man does when he flirts with his own maidservant behind his wife's back. But a woman who must remain in service all her life without ever having an opportunity to





give notice is not specially kindly treated, and if I were a man I should not allow myself any degrading sexual intimacy with a creature that was perpetually ordered about by my wife. I should not even be enticed by the alluring thought that any chance child would automatically be made legitimate. All the people and all the feelings in the harem were only half themselves. I do not speak of the eunuchs alone. The music of their lives was played in half bars, and the numbed, silent pauses could not give it full value.

Everything was displaced and distorted. A slave could not remain a slave at heart if she shared with the wife an equal chance of being embraced by the lustful pasha—she had lost the necessary “slave-consciousness.” As for the mistress, she lost the vital instincts of a wife and mother with the unpleasant but certain knowledge that the slave might become Hanum-Effendi, just as she had herself done—by a chance, and that even the children she had borne her husband did not seal her exclusive right to him. One did not speak of “my husband” or “my wife” in the harem, only of the “Pasha” and the “Hanum-Effendi.” And these titles did not imply any close personal relation, they simply stated a definite social status.

A peculiar kind of man was bred in the harem. The secluded and restricted life the women led gave them a distaste for the ordinary details of household management. But it was not rare for a pasha to take a great interest in the kitchen and the garden, the laundry and the ironing-room. Men became “house proud,” and the smallest details were significant to them. Perhaps the





attitude resulted from a deep-rooted mistrust of women, or perhaps it was determined by a childhood spent in the atmosphere of the harem with women on every side.

Dangers could come only from undue association with the outside world, through the visits of dress-makers and *modistes*, hairdressers and manicurists. The last-mentioned were scarcely tolerated in any harem. The pasha would have been glad if the hanum had asked him personally for every reel of cotton; if the eunuchs received any commission they must mention it to the master, for he liked to have continual information from all persons concerned. If governesses or teachers of music and modern languages visited the harem, the pasha made it his business to meet them frequently, so that he could dismiss them if their personality did not please him. Even when there was no active suspicion, the hanum always felt that a close watch was kept on her and on her lightest wishes, and that if she showed special affection to an employee, whether slave, eunuch or European, her favourite would be placed under yet stricter observation. Everything that came into her hands had already been examined and a toll had been taken. If she had materials, laces or ribbons on approval, it was noted down in someone's memory even before she saw them. Her personal right to them had thus been destroyed and her simplest wishes were robbed of spontaneity. Everything was taken seriously; there was no facility and playfulness in life and nothing was left to chance. There was a solemnly stated significance for every action. A man cannot realize how oppressive this is, for he has a more





Concrete understanding of material things. I have never met a man who will pore for hours over patterns of material, and who must have sweetly smelling flowers about him and a cup of well-made tea in his hand before he can make up his mind about the cut and style of the suit he is choosing. But everything concerned with women's dress, with its nuances of harmony and decoration, of concealment and adjustment, is of essential importance to her; it is the most significant part of her life and gives her the poise she requires; material, colour, style are not merely clothes to her, but from them are developed images, illusions and harmonies that have a definite purpose.

Dress is a magical factor in a woman's life; its seductiveness is her great secret. A woman who dresses in her husband's presence simply puts on her clothes. If I were a man I should draw the obvious conclusions from this observation and make the toilet of the woman I loved a secret rite. Pianists cannot endure an audience to hear their practising; artists do not welcome spectators while they paint, and one cannot look over an author's shoulder while he is writing. There is something secret about creation that seeks to elude observation. But secrets were forbidden in the harem, where every little thing had to be discussed and explained. It was wise to impress each trifling event on one's memory, for even a passing word or the exact time of a visit might later be invested with decisive importance.

But the harem had a magic attraction for those who remained outside its walls. All Europeans dream of travel in the East, and long to look into





the closed world of veiled women. And this thirst for knowledge is turned to good account by many dragomans and guides. They lead their innocent charges through pseudo-harems where dark-eyed fat Armenian women tricked out in Turkish finery play the part of jealously guarded hanums. Presumably the cinematograph corporations went to the same kind of place to make their psychological studies for films that purport to present an authentic cultural environment. But other travellers, whose dreams rise from something more than sensual curiosity, have a sure instinct to shield themselves from such gross deceptions. One can recognize these seekers after truth by their habit of stopping suddenly in their walk as if overcome with delight, and standing motionless while their longing eyes try to penetrate the half-hidden obscurity of some closed harem carriage in which they catch a glimpse of a white veil. Sometimes one might see a man's figure for months on end standing at the same bend in the road, or leaning over the balustrade of the same hotel terrace. One would have missed something if he had been absent. His face became familiar, and made the route more interesting: one waited to see it again. Perhaps it decided what cloak should be worn or what flowers should be carried during the drive. One such blonde countenance followed me through a whole winter until I felt it belonged to me. I knew that there were thoughts of possession behind the high forehead, for there was a look of longing in the blue eyes. He must know who I was. On all the official reception days at the Abdin Palace he used to stand in the same place on the terrace of a hotel that lay





on my route. I came to know each feature on his strange face, I even knew the words that his closed lips desired to speak.

Princesses wore transparent veils, and sometimes it might happen that the heavy diamond pins that fastened the gossamer material to the *botos* might slip down. Or flowers might fall out of an idle hand, especially when a pampered Hanum-Effendi who was not used to do a hand's turn for herself let down the carriage window, because the heavy perfume of tuberose grew oppressive in the little space that was already half-filled with cushions. But the carriage always rolled by to its destination, and no man can be content with a silent dream for the whole of his life. The next winter a dark-skinned lad with curly hair was standing on the well-known spot. Round his neck hung an array of necklaces whose brilliant turquoise blue colour kept off the power of the evil eye. One day I met the boy in the narrow winding streets of a great bazaar where we used to go from shop to shop, buying things that we did not need or even want, things that were later stowed away into cupboards as rubbish, where even the memory of their aim in life—an afternoon's diversion—was forgotten. Several hanums were with me. Our black *charshafs* rustled into one shop after another where we smoked and drank coffee, and then, just before going away, we made a hasty purchase as the necessary acknowledgment for the hospitality we had received. Veils could be lifted on entering the shop, but they must be let fall before returning to the street; the uniformity of costume and the automatic movement of the hands stretching after the veils made us seem





like. But there was no similarity that a pair of dark boyish eyes could not pierce. The little vendor of necklaces stood at the shop door. He gazed at me, seized all the chains he wore round his neck with an impulsive gesture and silently offered them to me. This was no proffer of goods for sale, but a mute gift of allegiance. I had to take the necklaces. Then a false embarrassment came over me and I held out a piece of gold, but he motioned my hand and the money away. "Even if I am poor, still I am not so poor that I may not allow myself a pleasure."

A little street Arab said these words that I shall never forget, and his admiration was as precious as any I have received. In my mind the memory of the man whose eyes had longingly followed my carriage for months is bound up with the necklace-seller who took his place on the terrace and who gave me all his store of blue beads—the protection against the evil eye.

And as there is a mysterious bond between the memory of that stranger's face and the street vendor, between the silent and the spoken homage, it is possible that the magic threads of the guardian necklaces lead further still. The silk folds of the canopy of my bed were held together by one of these chains. I scarcely know what moved me to give the simple blue beads a place that lay so near my dreams—perhaps it was because their colour was in perfect harmony with the blue ensemble of my bedroom. Some people believe that if inanimate objects are permeated with a strong intention they can really ward off evil. Who can say that this very chain did not break the power of the evil eye in the following emergency?





Strange characters and curious lives came together in the harem. All the maids who waited at table in my palace were Europeans, as were the lady's maids. I was specially pleased with a certain new lady's maid. The quality of her service was unique, she could create comfort by a gesture and move about quite noiselessly; she seemed to know by instinct what was wanted—almost what would be wanted in the future. One day I was told when I returned from a drive that Gabrielle, the lady's maid, had played the piano during my absence. As I love playing the piano myself, I cannot treat it as a sin in others, so I was quite unmoved by this so-called lack of respect. But I called her and asked where she had learnt to play. In a convent—she was a Catholic and had the Papal blessing hanging over her bed. She owned that Bach was her favourite composer, and I did not think the worse of her for this confession. But her companions did not like her. They complained that she would have nothing to do with them, that she pressed herself forward and liked doing only personal services, and that every evening she would stay up late so as to help me undress. She gave only eye-service, they said. Still I kept her with me, but since I knew that she could play Bach I looked at her with other eyes. Not that I felt suspicious, it only seemed to me that service could not be her customary occupation: her behaviour was altogether too subtle and thoughtful. There was nothing mechanical about her service; it was rather intuition than routine that told her what to do, and the result was surprising. She seemed to predict one's needs rather than to wait on them. Nothing could disturb her calm or





hasten her deliberate movements. She was what pampered ladies call "a treasure," that is, a servant that imperceptibly gains the upper hand of a weak mistress. "I could never get on without her," a hysterical woman will say of such a lady's maid. But there were new complaints—underlinen and pieces of material could not be found, at last a little gold mirror set with rubies was missing. I comforted the agitated servants, assuring them that the things would be found some time. Although they all disliked Gabrielle they shared my opinion that she was not concerned in the thefts. She had wonderful references, almost too good to be true. Madame la Marquise declared that she was a paragon of virtue; Madame la Vicomtesse assured me that she had loved her like a sister; Madame la Baronne witnessed in glowing words that she was a unique treasure. And each of them gave the same reason for parting with her, that Gabrielle would not leave France on account of her old mother, and that they had been forced to go abroad. At last the mother had died and Gabrielle had come to Egypt. One day I sent my first lady-in-waiting, my dear Hermeline, to Alexandria, and Gabrielle was to spend the night in her bedroom which opened into my dressing-room, close to my bedroom. That evening Gabrielle helped me to undress and covered me up in bed as if I had been a baby; she set the mosquito curtains in order and put the night-light in its place. Then she said in a low voice that she herself did not intend to lie down, but would have a cup of black coffee in her room, and wait there for any orders I might want to give during the night. I was so sleepy that





My crazy proposal seemed touching, and I was barely wakeful enough to say, "You really must lie down." Then I went to sleep and dreamed that I was in a dark palm-grove. It was so dark that I felt my way along from one tree trunk to another. Suddenly there was a gleam of light; two lights flared up and came nearer to me; but they were not lamps, they were eyes—I woke up. Two evil eyes were bent on me from above the bed—it was Gabrielle. She apologized for disturbing me, she thought I had called. I was sleepy no longer; there was nothing suspicious in her coming, but I felt that she was lying. If her expression had not been so malicious I should not have roused myself, but she had awakened my interest. She was not a lady's maid any longer, but a problem.

The next day I received a request. A letter from an unknown man who told me his troubles and prayed me to pay his travelling expenses to Europe, or to give him employment. If anyone asks for money I pay no attention to superficial considerations and go to the heart of the matter: a man is in need of help. I was at the toilet-table when I read the letter, and Gabrielle was busy beside one of the cupboards. Suddenly I heard her gentle voice: "He is a talented man, but very unfortunate. I know him myself. Your Highness ought to see him, then Your Highness would realize what kind of man he is." I cannot help being flattered if anyone appeals to my intuitive knowledge of character. Covering myself with my cloak and veil I went to the garden door, while Gabrielle followed me, full of delight. The man that I had to sum up was small and pale—I had no other intuition about





him. I felt humiliated that none of his genius was revealed to me, but the pleasure in my attendant's face led me to give him a considerable sum. My psychological intuition should not bring disappointment to anyone but myself.

A few days later a key that could not be found led to startling discoveries. Gabrielle had been the last to have it, and, as she was out, someone went to her room and looked in the chest of drawers. The key was not there, but instead there lay the gold mirror and many other things. Among them was a bundle of love letters from an imprudent priest addressed to "*ma mère*." But no infamy was denoted by the title, for Gabrielle had been a Mother Superior in her convent before she became so perfect a lady's maid. Then there were letters of thanks for linen cloths and covers already received, and a list of articles that were urgently needed—all for the good of the convent. When the "Reverend Mother" came home she did not lose her composure and her gentle voice never faltered. She simply unpinned the Papal blessing from the wall, took the case of love letters and respectfully intimated that she had received instructions to move on. I was amused by her imperturbable impudence so I did not hinder her departure, and she continued her strange life. When we made enquiries about her later we found that she had disappeared from the face of the earth—she could be traced only as far as the door of a convent. As for the pale genius whom I had "analysed" by the garden door, he was soon afterwards denounced by the police as an anarchist and deported to his own country.





love events that have no end. They allow the imagination to contrive stranger phantasies than can be fulfilled. What if the blue chain of beads had not guarded my bed against the evil eye? My thoughts turn from Gabrielle to a wiser woman, a genuine Mother Superior of a convent in Alexandria who often visited me. "Altesse, Dieu vous a évité la responsabilité du baptême," she rallied me with a smile, and with these words she granted me the most spiritual and the most diplomatic of all dispensations—at once religious and human—it was a dispensation even for superstition.

It is not superstition in the most palpably stupid sense that declares that some things may be potent for good. It is a belief in the efficacy of strong wishes. Things that are given with such an intention are only the symbolic replicas of the wishes themselves; they present something concrete to the memory, and through their concrete form they retain their vital purpose and their association with the giver. These gifts are no longer insignificant objects, they are emotional systems that may surround one and re-echo the past in the present. They can give colour to grey hours; they banish indifference and the heavy silence of vacant days; they strengthen the expectation of strange new adventures that will lend a magical glamour and a fantastic charm to life. They abolish the limits of possibility, they open new worlds that can never be fully explored, and to which we fly with a natural impulse of self-preservation when cold reason and the logic of hard facts freeze the soul. The other, the hard and rugged positive life, has nothing in common with the life of imagination.





It chisels the cliffs and digs deeper precipices, fashions new nerves, muscles and brains and drives the body ever forward. Only slaves and labourers are bounded by this actual life. Poverty and the uncertainty of the morrow's fortunes drive them on. They strain their sinews under heavy burdens to fill their bellies with food, to keep a roof overhead and to warm and clothe their impoverished bodies. My dream-world is more beautiful. Always it gives without taking anything, gives to all that need gifts. It lends to everyday matters the witchcraft of the fairy tale; dreams are the only refuge that is proof against torpor.

There were no dreams in the harem. It was watched over by the impersonal, intangible form of tradition. No claims were made on the individual woman because she held no individual position; always the strength of her personality was undermined and burdened with restrictions and instructions. The individual conscience died under the weight of prohibition. Conscience does not develop when there is no choice except to follow the narrow peaceful path of what is not forbidden. To be strong and self-sufficient one must have roamed at large in a trackless wilderness, for danger increases strength. For a conscience thus established and proven there are no more forbidden or permitted paths—only the false ways and the true. In order to enter this state of enlightenment one must prove oneself worthy by sacrifice and self-denial, for the gateway to such perfect poise opens only to those who have sacrificed their human pleasures, but never their souls.





## CHAPTER IV

## IF I HAD BEEN A PASHA

If I had been a pasha all the slaves should have ended their wretched lives as maidens. I have never been able to understand how a man with even the most elementary power of distinguishing intelligent love from purely sensual passion could bring himself to take their meek and willing virginity. Even if we expect passionate delight from our sensual appetite, the object of an intelligent love must be far more highly esteemed than the object of mere passion. If no deep feelings stir in the beloved woman at least she can give the lover his own love again and let this give an appearance of the lacking reciprocal feeling. One can always find one's own love satisfying and delightful, even on the rebound. But with sensual love it is not so simple. Feelings can be more easily deceived than physical needs, and it is not a simple matter to appease erotic desire, for it seeks its satisfaction in renewed appetite, and feeds upon its own hunger. Caprice must be alluring for its own sake, if capriciousness is to remain delightful. In the modern harem external conventions are sharply defined, but the original object—polygamous seduction and acquiescence—is missing, because the women concerned do not conceive of their vocation as a service of pleasure, but only as a menial task. If their Lord's passing fancy lights on them, it is like a Sunday tip to a maidservant.

If I had been a pasha I should never have accepted

MMS





the casual form of relation with women that had been determined by an earlier taste. I should not have let my manhood be given away, even by a family that chose for me in order to protect me. Such a gift would have lost all its meaning if I had once been conscious that it was only the tenderness of mother or wife that gave it. The care that took my weaknesses for granted and pandered to them would have seemed a hampering burden to me when I was in the presence of the chosen slave. I should not have thought so pootly of my intelligence as to allow it to follow meekly in appointed paths. I should not have entrusted the coming generation to chance women who could cast off their slavery only by bearing me children. Strong plants are set in open ground, and I could never understand why a long line of Osman sultans should have chosen to raise heirs to the throne from slavish blood. No other dynasty has ever been bred from so many different races. The child-bearing women were Circassian, Georgian, Venetian, Greek, Bulgarian or Armenian, but never Turkish. Parallel with this indiscriminate stream of women from all countries, the male line of the greatest Osman sultans and generals ran directly from its original sources. On the one hand there was the blood of foreign slaves in the harem which produced the royal heirs, and on the other hand a conquering and despotic Turkey perpetually supplied male strength for the Osman Empire.

In Egypt, too, wives were usually chosen from among the slaves. Their demands were easy to satisfy, and their personalities were submissive.





The former lord and master, who now became the husband, continued to set the standard for their needs and to give them satisfaction. Freedom was not regarded as a matter of course but as an exception among women; accordingly free birth came to be very highly esteemed, and every pasha knew that a free-born wife, even if she were only two generations removed from slavery, would consider herself his equal, and that he could not take the same liberties with her as he would with a slave. It follows, therefore, that for material considerations alone, the slave-marriages were regarded as more satisfactory. The reactionary influence of ancient Byzantium could still be felt in the sensual splendour of the sultan's harem, whereas in an Egyptian harem there was nothing to recall the age of the Pharaohs except the mania for building which was taken over with the country, and which was manifest only in the conquering males. Even the proximity of the desert, with its strong, unveiled women, did not exercise a contagious influence.

The dynasty of the Khedives, and consequently of all princely harems, was of Turkish origin, but with the migration to Egypt there was a falling off in the splendour of the harem. The hordes of slaves and eunuchs were much diminished. Once in the country of the Nile the victors had sense enough to realize the need for limitation. Looking from a distance at the original Turkish harem and its embarrassed financial state, they drew their own conclusions. But a harem organized on a basis of practical considerations is no longer a harem; calculation of costs cannot stimulate the senses, while, on the other hand, the most limited number





of slaves is enough to destroy the peace of a real home.

I often wonder what would have happened if all the men together had had one woman's knowledge of women. There would have been no harem, for the man would have realized that under all circumstances he was the dupe and that he was robbing himself of the most beautiful things in life. For the régime of the harem was bankrupt of real emotion and did not even give the compensation of a sensual equivalent in any sense of the word. For sensuality must be rightly fostered, and it is inconceivable how much both of quality and quantity it can swallow and assimilate, absorb and eliminate, in order to fit itself for further activity. For sensuality thrives on the lust which it enkindles and upon its own flaming desires; it takes all ardours to itself, and every gleaming spark of passion. With unfailing instinct it draws to itself everything that will assure its own blazing triumph. It takes toll of music, colours and scents; it robs voices of unspoken words; it tears from the innermost depths of a turbulent heart the secret of its burning blood; it buries itself in other souls, where it gropes and searches till at length it finds a wild desire like its own which can be at one with itself. It steals, robs and plunders with watchful, lustful heart; its booty is its life, its very existence. And finally it spreads out this brightly coloured realm of sense like an ample cloak of voluptuous experience for the elect. This is my idea of a rich sensuality, and if I had been a pasha I should have been satisfied with nothing less.

But this kind of living sensuality was not to be





found in any harem—it would have been stifled at its first breath in that dull and empty atmosphere. It was seldom required that a harem should be made the abode of pleasure. All its regulations had the effect systematically of lowering the dignity of woman, whereas it is obvious that if a woman is to be a living factor at all her dignity must be preserved. If she is guarded, or even kept in confinement, that is, in my opinion, no derogation of her dignity, for masculine jealousy is a proof of love. But the harem was not a place of confinement for one woman, or even for a group of women. Its object was far more practical; it was there to ensure that there should be enough *cabinets particuliers* in a man's restaurant of the senses where he could receive adequate service. Only the man's senses were considered, not the woman's—or only such of the woman's as echoed his desire. The sensitive despot was conscious of this indifferent and unsatisfactory state of affairs, and the harem hung often, so to speak, like a weight about his neck. But there it was, associated with and inspired by religion and her traditional institution—the law of legitimacy. The master of the harem was always hastening on to his own bankruptcy, like a man who continues to sacrifice his already exhausted financial resources to the object of his past prodigality ever after she has lost all personal attraction for him. The harem meant the certain destruction of all personality: the “I” was submerged in the “we.” “We” meant veiled women, their forms hidden by cloaks and *charshafs*, their hair covered by head cloths. “We” meant barred windows, lowered blinds, closed carriages, locked doors and





guarded gates. "We" meant the victims of lying, deception and subterfuge. In this "we" lay the insignificance of each individual, and the owner and lord of all this insignificance was also a loser. No man can with impunity make the souls of women into a warehouse for his own caprice and convenience, an ever ready and amenable *buen-retiro* where he takes only his needs and his demands.

The harem failed in every way. Educationally it was useless, for its atmosphere was harmful to a child's mind. Sexual love had become ambitious self-advancement and motherly love had become a means of self-defence against a rival woman. The last vestige of voluptuousness had been wrung out of the cotton frocks of the slaves without leaving them the usefulness of maidservants in its place. The eunuchs stood yawning at doorways through which no fiery enterprise would ever again seek to force its way in defiance of death. The guarding itself was a farce, for it was itself only a castrated security. What had once been the sweet-smelling abode of stimulated desires, of murderous intrigues, and of the machinations of resolute and revengeful women had now become a respectably anaemic harem, from which there was nothing to expect either of good or bad, for it had lost its charm. It fluctuated between puny sins and religious fanaticism, between formality and mere obtuseness, while it tamely approached its end.

If I had been a pasha I should gladly have sacrificed the three horse-hair plumes that indicated my rank if this sacrifice had led to the final overthrow of all man-misleading harems.





## CHAPTER V

## LEAVES FROM A HAREM DIARY

A leather box stands before me. As I unlock it, it springs open, released. The silk compartments open, and a crackling sound goes up like a sigh from among the letters, diaries and photographs that have been imprisoned for so long. My hand is unsteady. A subtle tactile sensibility tells my fingertips beforehand what bitter associations will come to life if they touch these carefully stored papers. No, I do not want to read their message; the living experience has been distorted by being written down. An undue stress is laid on little happenings, on places and material things, and the vivid light thrown on certain hours and days makes it seem that this episode or that had an individual significance when it was really part of a sequence or course of events.

The vital essence of memory has a very different nature from this, and is bound to no outward form. It is not revived when we read old letters and glance at faded photographs, for it is always with us as a part of the present. It lives on so long as we live. It weaves a pattern in the heavy brocade of the soul and threads its gleaming filament among the elemental warp and woof. If the pattern and the threads fade with time, it does not mean that they are quite obliterated, but that the soul has taken them to itself, and has thus assured them a longer life.

The box stands before me, but the contents live



in my heart. The notes, the letters and photographs were only the expression of an experience, of a wish or a longing, and now they are empty shells robbed of their meaning—whatever value they were destined to have for me I incorporated in myself at the time. My hand need not take up yellowing paper or fading photographs of well-known features to bring them back to life, for they are not dead. They are a part of me, existing only because of me. I need not shut my eyes to see the past more clearly, for they can still see what they saw long ago. They store it in the light of memory and can make it live anew at any moment. At times a veil is laid over some sleeping memory, but a wish to relive the episode and to experience its sensations once more is enough to endow it with the physical nearness of the present.

All is quiet now as I write. It scarcely seems that I am writing, but rather that my hand sets the thoughts down on paper independently of my will, as if it drew a thread out of the hidden network of my memory and must always trace it and spin it yet further. I sit still and see where my own writing leads me. . . . Into a clear transparent light where a delicious perfume lies on the air. Orange-trees are bathed in the light of the full moon. I feel a hand in mine, and so we pass up the lighted path, You and I. Everything is as it was then—and as it still is. Tell me how it could ever be that our paths could separate, as the moonlit garden path divides here by the deep round well? Do our wicker chairs still stand by the beehives, or is nothing that belonged to us left in the garden? Surely our longings and our ardours linger there; or have we taken everything





Will you only to lose it later under other skies? Do you hear the flowers falling from the trees? How light they are, their only heaviness is their perfume.

I am not tired. I could go on for ever like this, through the bewitching scent and the clear moonlight. Are You vexed with me, or are You glad that our ways had to part? Or have You forgotten what I meant to You? But I must always believe that when You look back on Your country, my picture, too, will rise in Your mind's eye, just as You saw me in those old days—just as You loved to see me. You can never become a stranger to me. If You came into the room this minute I would not ask how You had spent all these years, but simply, "What have you done to-day?" just as I used to ask when we had been parted only for a day. You will never read this, for You do not read books. But is this a book?

The words are written down indeed, and one line, one page follows another. But a door within me has been opened, it is as if a warm stream of memory overflows its limits and floods into the present. I do not know how to write a book, I only know how to dream and feel and remember. Can You do this too, or will You have none of it? Was it hard for You to go Your own way and sometimes to hear voices from the past? I have never asked You such a question before. Perhaps when we were together we both thought that we knew one another, and there was no need to ask. Perhaps I only ask to-day because I know there can be no answer. I am not sure, but it may be so. We can never know how such thoughts come to us. They change with every breath, with every heart-beat, with every





word, and if we see them as a long, even chain of circumstance we must rearrange and impose a fixed form on them. And then we belie them. But we must not deceive ourselves; we must bear our fate.

At first I felt it only dimly, as if it were far away, just as one hears a distant sound and wonders if it is a voice. Then my inner voice grew clearer, its message was for me, but I did not know yet what was required of me. Again the voice, speaking night and day through every act and feeling. I was ready, I listened, but what did it want of me? It wanted all—my life. It forced me to hurt others and to hurt myself, it made me speak hard words, and gave me strength to break loose from human friendship and from all I loved most until I threw off all pretence and all restraint.

Then Freedom took me in her arms and kissed the pain of sacrifice away, and left a memory where the kiss had branded my soul. There we still stood together, You and I—linked in the same bond that had once united us, for souls know nothing of parting. Whatever the soul has once made its own remains its lasting and changeless possession. The soul respects its own convictions and the values it recognizes are independent of human titles, troubles and partings. The laws of a material world cannot affect them. There is no past in the soul, no valueless gifts or worthless thoughts—whatever has lived once, lives for ever. In the soul it is always now.

I am listening to my own heart while I lie far away from You in the casket of the silent night. It matters little where or how You live—You have given me all that matters to me. If I were to die now the part of You that lives in me would go with me.





Have You put other things in the place made empty by my loving theft? Or was there never an empty place, since such thefts are gifts as well? Then there would be a part of me in Your heart, and You would know it. Yet it might have been otherwise. Perhaps what I took was not really part of You, but the deceiving product of my own wish. If this were true, then I have never known You, never taken or received anything from You—and what I feel in myself as You is not You, but myself. The casket of night closes round me and all is still. I hear faint musical tones, scarcely clear enough to be called a melody.

Does the melody depend on clearness, on the power to distinguish what it is, why I hear it and whether I hear it? Perhaps there are dreams that are their own fulfilment. Perhaps I was alone from the beginning; I was the only person to give and to take. I gave myself and took myself; I moved in a circle and thought I had made a long journey; I suffered for those I never knew, for those who were closed against me. Gifts have been given me, and happiness, and no one has given me anything. I sorrow and rejoice in myself alone: I have been blessed only in myself. If that were so, it would lie in my power to find my own happiness and hold it fast. Or does happiness change as soon as I touch it? Will it not be taken from me? Am I endowed with knowledge for which I must pay a penalty of renunciation? Or with qualities that demand sacrifice? Have I asked for these things? Could they find no other place but in my brooding heart? Everything is confused again and no door is open. It is as if I were shutting myself off from myself. The silence





has become heavy. Suddenly I feel that I am alone, not only now, this night, but always.

Always! Have I not always been alone? Will this night never come to an end? It holds me captive and forces my eyes to follow the lines as they go on. It is only to enliven the monotony of its own silence that it plays so cruelly with my thoughts. Why does nobody take the pen out of my hand, take me in his arms and kiss me into peace? Was there ever anyone whose kiss was powerful enough for that, or is there anyone who can give such kisses now? Would even this kiss lose its power as it touched my lips? Or would it be only my own kiss? No communion with another person, ever. . . . But even if I knew that this were true . . . what then? What could I change? What could I conceal or deny? Nothing. . . .

Again the door opens. My blood is hot and my skin burns. The night is no longer lonely. We are together in the room, my soul and my body. A new possibility arises, that my soul and body have loved only each other. And that the man I thought I loved was nothing but the bond of union between myself and myself. The man I loved? . . . Who was he?

No figure appears at the magic question—Have I never spoken words of love, never whispered bewildering confessions? Have I never lain in possessing arms? Have I never been one with the heart-beat of another? Do I not know longing and fainting, dissolution and the sinking into groundless depths? Yes, I have felt all, experienced all. I feel and experience it still as if it were happening at the present time. Who is the object of my love? What is his stature, what are his eyes, his hair, his mouth





and his features? What is written in them? How did he come to me? What was his hold on me that I must spend myself for him? If he has once been, how can he not be now? Or was he never there in his own being—was he only an instrument, another power of my own?

Flames meet together over me. I am wrapped round in a red glow. No name comes to my lips, and no face bends over them. It is no longer dark—it glows and enchants. This is no human wooing, it is the elemental bewitchment—the urgent source of life—it is love itself.

Will my hand never cease to write? Who guides and leads it on? What drives it to reveal the most secret things in these unguarded words? To what power have I delivered myself up, that I lay bare my soul without reticence or shame? Who has doomed me to this torment? Truth! My hand writes the word as if under compulsion. It stands there and looks at me with blazing eyes. The great glow that surrounded me now shines out from this word. Slowly the red blaze dies down. It is night and I am cold. Have I dreamed while I was yet awake? Outside, in the cradle of the dark, did a dream start up when the black sky troubled it, and did it seek refuge in a soul because the air was cold? . . . Or have I conjured up things that ought to rest undisturbed? How did the night begin? The leather box.

It still stands there and I have not touched the letters—but a picture has fallen out of it. I gaze at it for a long time. It is as I have always known, the soul does not relinquish its possessions—nothing can fade away. And so we, too, You and I,





Go again along the same way that we have travelled before.

Doors are opened, and through them lies the broad road to past events. Come inside with me, and behind the walls of time You will find a part of Your life again. The first picture that I see is a woman with a baby in her arms. She holds the bottle it is taking, and a man stands near her. Both of them are watching how the milk disappears as the baby drinks its fill. I am the woman and You are the man. The tiny creature almost makes a family of us. We look at one another and smile, and as we smile the baby's hunger is satisfied. It is a stranger's baby that I hold in my arms, but in this moment it belongs to me because its life, its hunger and its welfare have been entrusted to my care. It is mine because of its helplessness and abandonment—and because I love it. I love it with instinctive mother love and with all the pervading love of humanity. It is not a stranger's child, but a child that has suffered injustice.

PALAIS MONTAZAH, 1912. DURING THE  
TURKO-BULGARIAN WAR

The Khedive had sent his private yacht, the *Mahrussa*, to Kavala a few days before, giving the captain orders to take on board as many refugees as the ship could carry, without distinction of race or creed, and to bring them to the Ras-el-Tin Palace in Alexandria. We were then staying at Montazah. Every morning we travelled to Ras-el-Tin in the little private train which the Khedive drove himself, and as soon as we had arrived each of us set to work.





CSL

## LEAVES FROM A HAREM DIARY 195

We prepared everything for the reception of the refugees in the wings of the palace that were not generally used, and made separate quarters for the men and women. After years the closed, useless galleries had a reason for living again. Hundreds of beds and mattresses turned the palace into an asylum. A few rooms were specially prepared for the babies. Long tables were set end to end and divided by partitions; here the infants could be washed and dressed and fed. Servants were brought from all the other palaces. Every day great piles of packing-cases arrived, for all the tradesmen in Cairo and Alexandria who had heard of the Khedive's great relief scheme began of their own accord to send whatever goods they could: provisions, material, clothing, underlinen, shoes, stockings, tobacco, cigarettes and many other articles. The palace looked like a warehouse. Everything had to be brought to order, sorted and delivered to the appropriate department.

The Khedive was indefatigable. He supervised everything personally and let nothing happen without his knowledge. His clear vision and practical aptitude provided help and advice for everyone, and his brilliant red tarboosh appeared everywhere. If the *farrāshi* were slow and clumsy in opening the packing-cases he would take the tools out of their hands, extract the nails and tear off the lids, for he had great manual dexterity. I sent him a little box containing all manner of silver tools that I had had made specially for him, and he always used them. In the intervals of the work of organization the Khedive gave what audiences were necessary, and if callers came the adjutants ran to find their ruler. Now there





are hundreds of rooms, passages, courtyards and stairs in Ras-el-Tin. I could never find my way about the labyrinth and I loved it because it was always a *terra incognita*. When the adjutant at last found the Khedive he used not to look very fit to give an audience. He ran up the steps that led to his private suite so quickly that the adjutant could scarcely keep pace with him. Then Frederick, the English valet, hastened to make him tidy and to pass him what he needed.

We met together for lunch at twelve o'clock. A little folding-table was laid wherever we decided to have our meal, and a Berber waited on us. I wore a thin crêpe-de-chine cloak over my clothes and covered my hair with a veil, so that anyone might see me. . . . It is so nice to eat with You, and nobody else can peel oranges so beautifully. . . . There was much to discuss; I required condensed milk, feeding-bottles and talcum powder for the babies' ward. But even if I asked for a hundred things, the Khedive would keep all my requests in his unfailing memory. If we had not seen one another for a few hours his expression often took me by surprise. He was very handsome. Usually his big, grey-blue eyes were keen and the drooping curve of the eyelids was expressive of distrust. But how the whole face changed when he smiled! It became more charming, winning and beguiling than any other face I have ever seen. The most attractive feature of all was the mouth—the virile mouth of a child. When I told him about it he laughed like a child, and called me *mon enfant*, while I gave him the baby-name *mon poupon*. Sometimes we really behaved like children. We played hide-and-seek with the dogs we both





and chased one another through the drawing-rooms and the long galleries; we supped up our coffee merrily although it should have been taken with ceremony; and we spat our cherry stones through the window into space—they only fell in our own garden at the feet of our horrified body-guard. In brief, we loved one another.

But I intend to write about things that have nothing to do with love but only with hate and war, poverty and flight. How many refugees can be taken aboard the *Mabrussa* after all? And what will happen to those that are left behind in Kavala? When the Empress Eugénie gave the *Mabrussa* to Ismail Pasha, Abbas Hilmi's grandfather, she certainly had no idea that a crowd of poor refugees would walk up its costly inlaid companion-ways. To satisfy Ismail's love of pomp the silver banisters had been made to represent rows of flowers. How many delightful cruises we have made together on the yacht!

After lunch we returned to work. I had to sort the children's clothing. Good little Hermeline, my lady's maid, and Maikki Junelius, who superintended my Swedish exercises, were my best helpers. All three of us worked like slaves. "What a healthy life, your Royal Highness," laughed Maikki, "this is the way to keep slim!" In spite of this enticing prospect I was glad when the Khedive sent for me so that we could eat our afternoon *dondurma* together. Most of all we enjoyed Turkish ice made with sweetened cream, and it was served for us that day. Then a telegram was delivered: "Two thousand refugees are on board, the *Mabrussa* is returning." I felt ashamed that I was eating ice.



I thought continually of the refugees that evening, while the train took us back to Montazah. And when I lay in my great rose-coloured silk bed, while Hermeline drew the lace mosquito curtains round me and carefully tucked them under the mattress so that no midges could come in—then I hated myself.

The *Mabrussa* arrived yesterday. Was it really yesterday? Can one see so much misery in so short a time? We stood on the wide marble terrace at Ras-el-Tin and looked out to sea. The smooth surface shone in the sunshine, then a ship rose up against the clear sky—it was the *Mabrussa*. She sailed slowly into the harbour, and in spite of the distance we heard a sound that seemed to be the murmur of men's voices. It seemed as if the approaching yacht bore a burden of grief. At last we could hear clearly: hundreds of voices were united in a wailing lament, as if the refugees were borne towards us on a wave of sorrow. It flooded the sunny shores, then, rolling upwards, buried itself in the hearts of us who could give solace and help. My heart grew as fearful and dark as the wave itself. Where is your hand? Beloved, we will help them! It was only then that I saw I was alone. The Khedive had disappeared.

A ragged, evil-smelling mob streamed across the sunny gangway and up the marble pavement that led to the palace. Men? Refugees are men no longer! They are hunted, hounded, harassed creatures, whom cruel injustice has robbed of their manhood, almost of their miserable existence. Poverty and distress forced their way into the palace where the





peace of well-guarded royalty had always reigned. The lament filled my ears and roused in me hate and detestation for the guilty creatures who had aided and abetted such barbarity.

Then I passed into one of the rooms. The women showed me bundles that were stiff with dirt. From the midst of these came whimpering noises. Who has a right to torture children? What project or aim can be justified in the face of a hungry child? I had to raise a barrier between my automatic actions and my emotions, else I should have fainted. I will help: I must help. Often I unwrapped a baby that looked almost like a piece of raw meat. The mothers had been wandering and fleeing for weeks and months, and the babies had had to lie in their dirt. Even on the relief ship the fear of death was strong among the women; they never relaxed their cramped arms, as if they could not make up their minds to put down the babies that had been saved. Horror was still so near that they were scarcely conscious of their deliverance. The mother had to press the baby close to her before she could convince her troubled mind that she still possessed it. Sometimes a woman would hand me a pistol or dagger together with the child—perhaps she had saved its life with these weapons. A ghastly game, when one life can be saved only when another is threatened or taken. Two women went raving mad. So long as they had been hunted like animals they clung to the single idea of escape. But now that they were safe, memories rose before them whose horror had been increased by the long repression.

To help was harder than one might think. All difficulties would have disappeared if only the poor





creatures could have read my thoughts. We met the greatest opposition in the bath-rooms. Here my best servants were in charge of affairs. They were girls from the Polish village of Adampol near Constantinople, and all spoke Turkish fluently. But the women had heard that they were not Mohammedans, and some refused their help in undressing and washing. Most of the refugees, however, were so weak and weary that they could not do a hand's turn for themselves. It was absolutely necessary that their filthy rags should be taken off as soon as possible and that they should be bathed and dressed in clean clothes so that they might rest at last. I went in to them, and many of the women who knew that I was the Hanum-Effendi handed over their children to me. I turned to those that seemed the most composed and said: "My servants are all Mohammedans, for all of them believe in God!" With that their consciences were eased, and mine was not troubled. Maikki and Hermeline exploited my presence in the room to speed up the work. Great bundles of clothes the poor women had been wearing were carried away to be burnt. The bath-rooms emptied and filled again—it seemed as if no work were finished but that there was always more to be done. But it was not only in our department that there was a press of work. The chief physician, Dr. Kautzky Bey, had the hardest task of all and the greatest responsibility. With the help of the other court physicians he examined every single refugee. There were many sick and wounded, and others with frightful burns. These unhappy women had witnessed and suffered all the outrages and cowardly crimes that come in the wake of war.





The Khedive was working among the men, but he came between whiles to spend a few minutes with me. It was an unaccustomed sight for him to see me with a baby in my arms. Children have always touched his heart. Once when we were travelling a long line of children were ranged on the station platform, and as our private train stopped hundreds of shrill children's voices called out: *Effendimiz chok yashai* "Long Live our Lord!" The Khedive was so much moved that he could scarcely find a word to greet the pashas who bowed round his carriage-window. You were often tender-hearted. . . . When evening came we had done all that lay in our power, and we sat in the train that carried us home. The lights gleamed out from Ras-el-Tin. You were an engine driver again! You would not leave your engine for anything, not even to embrace me.

Work went steadily on in Ras-el-Tin, and the expression I had seen on all the refugees' faces in the first few days slowly disappeared. A common fate had robbed them of all separate individuality and the same stamp was on them all. But differing habits and interests were set free again as fresh contact with life was established. All were refugees, but now the good or better-class families separated themselves from those of the lower classes. Can the dividing line vanish only in times of horror and distress? Do men feel that they are brothers only when they are miserable and walk in fear of death? Is there no union between one mother and another that makes every child her child? Can love be bound? Do we carry our feelings round with us as if they





were shut up in a family medicine chest, so that only those who sleep under one roof or in one bed or who share the same name have any right to them? What sort of feelings are they if we can count them over beforehand, pay them down and dispense them? Why is it that their power is exerted only for "us" and "ours," and that their reactions depend on ownership or on arbitrary chance association?

Surely this adjustment to life is pregnant with vengeance. The exclusive, separatist attitude leads to world catastrophes, and herein lies the reason why men feel strangers to one another. They are strangers; then comes a clearer separation—the frontier line—and with it, hostility. If ideals can be expressed only in terms of limitation, separation and isolation, they are no longer valuable. They are then merely egotistical and self-interested feelings that belong exclusively to one group, as a shadow belongs to the body that casts it—and they extend no further than a shadow. Are fear and death the only powers that can free mankind from these restricting shadows? Is there no other remedy? What am I doing in this palace and what do I intend to do? All the help that I try to give only succeeds because it is reinforced by power, by a unique position and by wealth. And these are just the things that I should like to forget; they weigh me down. I do not want to bestow largesse from a lofty position; I had rather sacrifice my heart and soul for any single individual who might gain a spark of new hope from them. I will lay open my own human spirit on which all have a claim, for all other spirits are akin to mine. I do not know of any good, bad or indifferent souls. I only know that





may be happy or unhappy, and that a happy soul can grow sad and a sad soul happy. I understand all of them because I love them. This is the only commonwealth that I will recognize. Beloved, are we not far from one another to-day?

Of all the blessings that I have received, the dearest were those that were given me at Ras-el-Tin, for I was an integral part of the cause for gratitude. I had not conjured up these blessings with a gesture, but had earned them with simple human service. A baby was born, a little girl, and the parents came to ask if I would permit them to give her my name, Djavidan. Permit! All the children here are mine, even without the outward token of the name. Little Djavidan, if only one of my wishes for you is granted, you will be happy no matter whither your life leads you.

Most of the refugees were Mohammedans, but there were Christians and Jews among them. I took care that race and religion secured no preference, and that here, under my influence, no woman should think herself better entitled to freedom and protection than another. Sewing-machines and materials were issued in the women's quarters, and many of the mothers made clothes for themselves and their children, and shirts for their husbands. Life took hold of them again, and new wishes and hopes expressed themselves. The few who still had family ties and obligations were the first to think of departure. Others who had been severed from all they had known, and who had no homes left to them, considered the possibility of staying in the palace. But they all knew that the shelter offered by Ras-el-Tin had no time limit.





The Khedive was in close touch with his men. His simple easy grace won all hearts, and he soon knew each man's life story. Although his manner obliterated social distinctions I believe there were many of the Turks who could forget the past horrors of those days of terror simply because they could now speak in person to the Khedive of Egypt. I am glad that they loved him.

I stood at the window and looked down into the garden where the Khedive was walking among some men who were smoking. I had not realized so clearly until that minute that he was not a smoker, perhaps because in other circumstances due respect would prohibit smoking in his presence—even when he himself urged his guests to smoke many refused to do so. Nevertheless he had arranged that the men should have a daily allowance of cigarettes and tobacco, and the simple souls were smoking in his presence, perhaps as an act of grateful homage. He did not seem in the least offended, but laughed and talked and charmed everyone in the garden with the peculiar, appealing delightfulness of his nature. He need not exert himself, for he could captivate anyone by a word or a smile. The word "charm" seems to have been coined for him. Why were there hours in which this delightful spirit was withdrawn, so that I did not know that I could feel it?

We travelled back to Cairo. Whenever we went to Montazah, in the autumn or winter, it was only for a short visit (the naming of the seasons makes me smile when I think of the eternal sun in Egypt). The winter palace is in Cairo, El-Kahira, "the





triumphant." This time we went in the interests of the refugees. They had been rescued and sheltered in a well-organized, stable society. Everything that external help could do had been done; inner assistance could come only from themselves. Perhaps new thoughts and hopes had entered their hearts in the peaceful seclusion of Ras-el-Tin. Certainly the lamenting voices were quiet, and fear and horror had faded away.

The Khedive had a long list of all the names to which he had added marginal notes for future reference: information of all sorts, possibilities for making a living and railway connections, anything that had to do with the refugees' new life. Many names were written on the piece of paper, and Fate had laid all those men, all those souls, in one man's hand.

The Khedive often came to visit me in the harem-compartment during the journey, and I had to push away many books to make room for him by my side. The train went more slowly through the big stations and the Khedive sat at the window of his saloon coach, for the waiting crowds were delighted to see their Effendina, even if only for a moment as he passed by. He worked with his adjutants during the journey—personal correspondence, begging letters and instructions. Finally the next day's work at the Abdin Palace was arranged, for once in Cairo state audiences and business would begin again. When I saw the red light of the sinking sun I wished that the train might never reach its destination, for after our arrival we should be mere creatures of ceremony, constrained by environment and burdened by responsibility. A circle is drawn



round our existence and we must live within it. If only the train would grow smaller and shorter until it was a single coach, and we were alone in it. Everything except ourselves must fade away, and with it shall go everything that used to be before You knew me, and I knew You. Let only that which is, remain, that which has come into being through us. Tell me, where would You like to go? What destination do You choose? What shall we do there together? Shall we again be only two people who must touch one another to find themselves? Or will it be quite different there?

The glowing sun has set, and left no light behind. It is night, and the train travels into the darkness. I hear Your voice—"What are you thinking of, *mon enfant*? we are just arriving." And so the concealing veil must cover my face again. First the Khedive and his retinue leave the train; his little white carriage is drawn up beside the platform, and he and his adjutants drive off to the Kubbeh Palace. Then all eyes are cast down, and I step out, accompanied by my women. My car drives us to the Palace of Musturut.

### THE PALACE OF MUSTURUT

Each time that I return from a journey and the carriage turns in at the gate, drives through the garden and stops by the steps of the brightly lighted palace, a strange longing comes over me, like the anticipation of a miracle. As I pass into the broad hall and take in the accustomed surroundings at a glance, my only feeling is that I am at home. But when I walk through the rooms the two feelings





change and change again at every step. Almost all the things I see seem to present mental obstacles that must be overcome before I can go further, only to encounter other difficulties with which I must come to terms. I cannot breathe in an environment that is indifferent to me, and I find no rest in one that is my own creation, interwoven and emotionally bound up with my life. Experience with all its manifold intricacy—incomplete, unsolved, contradictory—hovers unforgotten in my mind between the present and the past; its unchanged vitality gives such power to the past that it seems to dim the radiance of the present. My life is like the wandering of a man who must keep looking back while he goes forward because the urge to go further is derived from what has gone before. The spirits of the past do not call me back, they would come with me and remain alive until I have carried them through the past, the present and the future to reach their goal.

What sort of men are those that can begin a "new life"? Have they had no earlier life? Have they no life of their own at all? Are their souls like slates that can be washed clean? Or is there no need of cleaning because they can retain no marks? Perhaps the writing of life survives only on thought tablets whose nature is so receptive that it absorbs and incorporates everything that it has once perceived. Will the writing go on for ever? And can anyone bear all the records intact to the very end?

I am at home again and pass through all the rooms. Who says that objects are inanimate? Among the cushions there lies a rosy dream interwoven with gold. When I put on this cloak early one evening,





I did not know that something in me would change under its soft flowing drapery. I simply chose it because the colour suited my mood.

We were sitting by a fireside in the Vosges mountains, and I was looking into the flames. I did not need to look at You, for You were in me. Then You began to speak. I did not know the voice, it had no connection with me, and seemed strange to both of us. It told an ordinary tale—a man had been unfaithful to a woman and he felt he must explain everything to her. Did he guess what he had destroyed by so doing? Did a feeling of guilt oppress him so that he had to put it into words at last, and make a full confession so as to be at ease again. . . . Nothing happened—the fire burned on. You held my hand in Yours; You were Yourself again. I could not help smiling. For You the story was over with the telling, but for me it was only beginning. Once there has been a beginning there is no end for me.

Again the furniture speaks. The shining black piano catches the light of a yellow shaded reading-lamp. Am I not mad to torment myself and brood over past happenings when I have the chance to drown them in a flood of harmony, whose waves would tear off their veil of reality and expose their nakedness. . . . But what sort of life is it when music is not an end in itself, but a weapon of defence or a means of white-washing the soul? Who is the enemy from whom I must hide? Is it myself?

There have been nights when I have cried myself to sleep in the dark because I wanted to deny a part of my soul. Misery drove me out of bed and I laid my hot forehead on the smooth black wood of





an piano. The silent strings spoke to me. "Take care, you are going astray. Fate has given you a great longing that no one human being can ever satisfy."

I will see nothing more, hear nothing, think nothing. Perhaps this coming night will be mercifully uneventful. I open my bedroom door, my eye catches sight of a ring on my hand. The sapphire with Your seal.

I waked up—there was a satin smoothness under my hand and a sweet scent all round me. Again the first morning greeting from my garden—roses from the Sudan. Tell me, why have You never given me flowers? Because I have so many flowers already? But flowers that You gave me would be quite different from others.

The Khedive was giving audience that day in the Abdin Palace. He did not expect me until noon, but I was there earlier and waited in the little writing-room next to his audience chamber. The glass door between the two rooms was covered by green silk curtains. I had pricked many little holes in the material so that I could see all the people whom the Khedive received. A bronze horse stood on the Empire writing-table, and when I tapped with it on the table it meant that I was impatient. Formerly I used to tap often, especially when the people who came had nothing much to say. One could not make interesting studies of people whose clothes and errands were so much alike; perhaps some of them were not so dull as they seemed, but the palace was not an ideal place for originality. How many coffee ceremonies have I seen through the little holes!





After lunch we used to make a tour of all the rooms, and often we had a fire lighted in the counsel chamber. The long green covered table which took up all the centre of the room did not add to its comfort, but it was out of sight when we sat by the fire. How many things there were that I remember chiefly because I tried not to see them. . . . But there were others that I loved. I think of the narrow passage that led to an adjacent wing, to a blue room with a window opening on to a garden filled with red flowering shrubs.

I stayed there once for a few weeks. Everything was different then. If I did not see You for an hour I could scarcely breathe, and when You came back I ran to meet You quickly, with a beating heart. If we were together in Abdin, and You had finished all Your business before evening, the carriage would drive into the courtyard and we would get in—the Khedive and his adjutant. I fancied myself in the uniform, and each time I wore it You were surprised at how different I looked. As the carriage drove through the great gate the mounted guard encircled it. The password rang out—an open road lay before us. Soldiers riding on white horses had stopped all the trams and carriages so that we need never slacken our speed. The Khedive of Egypt sat beside me and I was in his service, responsible for his safety. It was no longer a woman who sat beside You, with my uniform I had taken over another attitude. I do not think that You have ever had another adjutant who would have been readier to give his life for You.

Why must I see the past so clearly to-day? I often sat by the fireside and waited for You as I do now.





But is not the waiting changed? Perhaps when one has waited too long there is nothing left to hope for, all expectation has failed. I am sitting by the fire to-day without ties, alone. Has it to come to this? I was considerate of Your life, could You not leave my life to me? Do you remember what You once said to me in Dalaman? I had been wandering for hours over the hills and through the woods beside the lake. When we met at last You asked whether I had noticed that they were putting up telegraph posts, but I had seen nothing except the wonder of the flowers. Then You said, "You never see anything." . . . We saw different things then, as we do to-day, and still it is only when my inner vision is idle that I can comprehend external things. Different things are significant to each of us and our worlds lie far apart. But we used to meet—in some part of our spirits, and the radiance of that meeting still throws a light on the path that each of us travels alone. Something within me grows stronger, as if it will tear away a part of me. It is a force that brings me nothing but infinite longing—I know not for what. I long for a thousand nameless things that have no set form and no defined nature. Words cannot describe them, for I feel them in silence, like the memory of a prayer that has never been uttered but only felt. Sometimes I should like to tell You what I am like . . . but I do not know much about myself—certainly not enough for me to explain myself to You. You have always felt that there was something strange in me that You did not understand, something that lay beyond our comprehension. Perhaps things would be different if You could understand without words.





22  
But I am Your wife and You are my husband. Some people want to understand everything, believing that they have a right to impose a system even on the emotions; they want to know the nature of the ground on which they build their emotional life. But their desire to investigate the foundation of their feelings is an urge for a safe position and has nothing in common with love—only with thought. Love is unthinking and knows nothing of compromise or fear. When the time comes to give oneself up to its waves all life-belts are left behind, for there is no real abandonment where precautions are taken. . . .

If my thoughts were to linger on the green table and its ink-wells and pens and pencils, what would be the result of the ministers' deliberations? . . . My God! Will the audience last for ever to-day. The fire will not burn up . . . strange that a fire can give a feeling of cold. I look down into the courtyard. The great lamps over the palace gate are being lighted. You come in—You are surprised that I am still here. Was I really here? And You? You were not here either, although You have given audience and conversed and fulfilled your obligations. But perhaps it does not seem this way to you.

I succeeded in getting permission to go with the Khedive to the opening of the Assuan Dam. The tarboosh fitted my head firmly; I had tested it by making deep ceremonial bows. But even if it fell off it would not have mattered, for my hair was cut short. The only thing that I disliked was my high stiff collar. The frock-coat was padded on the





shoulders, the toes of the patent-leather shoes were stuffed with paper, and, thanks to my piano practice, my hands looked like genuine men's hands. Any woman of discrimination might have fallen in love with me—with this conviction I began to feel I was really a man, and I could not resist the temptation to perfume my handkerchief. All my men's outfit was packed in one suit-case—I had never travelled with so little luggage before. The station was in gala array when we left Cairo, and crowds watched the Khedive as he stood surrounded by his ministers and officers. The step of the royal train was so high that Frederick, the valet, who was in our secret, gave me a discreet push from behind as I climbed in.

After the train started I went into the Khedive's carriage. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw me, for he was not used to such a smart private secretary. We were as happy as children. I practised my ceremonial bows and stood before him with folded arms. If he said a caressing word—not to the secretary, but to me—I made a deep bow before I gave my real answer. "Tu ne devrais jamais parler, mon enfant." No, I would not speak, I would rather be thought a dumb secretary than a eunuch. Men would think that I was awed into silence, and a bow could always take the place of a spoken answer; it is easily done, and strengthens Your position as well as mine. Only Thurneysen Pasha, our chief equerry, Dr. Kautsky Bey and Frederick knew who I was. There was no danger of discovery on the first day, but later perhaps their help might be needed.

We reached Luxor in the morning and were met by music, flags and crowds of men, while the sun





stone over all. The launches were moored by the quay, one for the Khedive and his retinue, another for the Duke of Connaught, and a third for the ministers. And now a dream of sunshine began. We were introduced to a new sun. The launches sailed upstream, all the villages and hamlets were decorated and the inhabitants crowded together on the river-banks. The Khedive sat on deck, with field-glasses always in his hand. I stood beside him with my eyes half-shut, gazing at the sunlit surface before us—the Nile. I watched it wandering through fleecy white cotton fields, through lush green clover meadows and waving corn. It sends the sweet sap into fruit-trees and fills roots and seeds with its strength; but, for itself, it lies still and smooth between its muddy banks—a type of complete abundance and of everlasting sustenance.

On the banks I saw blindfold oxen pace in slow circles as they turned the creaking *sakia* that irrigated the fields. Men and beasts lived together in mean, low clay huts thatched with maize-straw. And the Nile fed rich and poor alike. Its wealth created all the splendour and pomp of royal palaces, clothed beautiful women in jewels and satisfied men's lust for gold. In the past it had been Lord of misery and hunger; it had fed or starved the people, watered the land or left it barren. But now we were approaching the dam that assured the country a constant, invariable food-supply.

My dark uniform had grown intolerably hot and I longed to unfasten it, but a secretary must learn to sweat with a good grace in the presence of his ruler, for near me stood the Khedive of Egypt, the sovereign of Nubia, the Sudan, Kordofan and Dar





For. All the burning red flags that were displayed on the dark soil of the river banks waved for him, and the crowds watched his ship as long as their eyes could follow it, until the wide river carried it away. The stream on which we were borne flowed through his land—the eternal Nile belonged to him. I took his hand and kissed it and raised it to my forehead. The Khedive looked at me in astonishment. I only whispered: *Effendimiz chok yasha!* “Long live our Lord!” He understood me. The other adjutants who stood farther off thought the new secretary was thanking the Khedive for a favour. Effendina, why am I not a man, that I might serve You and Your Country!

We cast anchor at sunset, for the slumber of the Nile must not be disturbed. Torches and Chinese lanterns shone from the banks and tents had been erected for the great reception that was prepared for the Khedive. He and his retinue left the launch and made for the shore, followed by the ministers. The Khedive took his place in a great tent, surrounded by high officials, dignitaries, pashas, beys and white-bearded sheiks—there he sat, holding a long water pipe in his hand. It was only a symbolic ceremony, however, for he never smoked. If he spoke or asked questions of his companions the tone of the answering voices was muted as if they spoke from a distance. The sheiks with their white swathed turbans, the flickering torchlight, the uncanny silence made everything seem unreal, like some strange, dim picture. When we came out of the tent the river was covered with countless brilliantly lighted sailing boats; they glided by the launch until late at night, while their coloured





lights made narrow glowing pathways on the still water.

If a child is born at night on the banks of the Nile, the father still observes an ancient custom of Upper Egypt. He sails up the silent river in his boat, calling "A boy is born—what shall he be called?" The words travel through the dark and enter the riverside huts. Someone who is still awake hears the call, and a name echoes up the Nile. The night, the river and a stranger's voice have named the child.

A few people had enquired who I was, for any new face excited curiosity. Nobody in the Khedive's immediate circle asked any questions, but the Duke of Connaught's daughter had seen me from the English launch and wanted Thurneyssen Pasha to tell her who the young Turk might be. I became more self-conscious and felt the same thrill of vanity that a man must feel when he attracts a noble lady. There was no humility in my eye when I looked over at the other launch, for even a ~~secretary~~ secretary is a man and princesses are beautiful sometimes.

The Khedive was receiving a minister on board. I stood motionless behind my master, with hands correctly folded across my coat. The conversation was a long one, and suddenly the Khedive turned his head towards me: "Mon amour, est-ce que tu n'es pas fatigué?" I was horrified and pretended to be deaf, dumb and blind at once. My face was like a mask, but still I saw a stupefied expression in the minister's eyes. My features must guard the Khedive's good name, and they hardened at the command of my will. The Khedive went on speaking; his question had fallen into space. Perhaps the





minister thought that his senses had deceived him.

Karnak, by moonlight. . . . Here I felt that not only my overcoat but I myself was ridiculous. The everlasting stones stood in ranks, and the light of the full moon made them clear as day. Man has no part in them. He loses the sense of what he is seeing because the forces around him will have no intercourse with him. His admiration is out of place. It is as if the gaze that seeks for understanding in these graven stones is turned aside by a hostile defensive layer that hides them and their meaning. Moon, stones and sand unite together in one corporate being, one impenetrable whole. It is the living vision of an indestructible death. I sat on one of the flat stones, and heard one past age calling to another. How impudent it would be to feign understanding here, how tasteless to tender admiration.

On February 8, 1909, in the eighteenth year of his reign, the Khedive Abbas Hilmi II laid the keystone of the great Nile dam. His face was the only one in the multitude of men's faces that seemed to express any real understanding of the land and and of the nurturing river. He did not stand there as a ruler, but as a farmer that loved his land, and understood how to manage it. His straightforward practical instincts had made him Egypt's greatest landowner, and his estates were the most fruitful and beautiful in the country. He put his trust in the earth, and she never disappointed him. Sometimes he bought great tracts that seemed worthless to everybody else and as if they could not possibly yield a prosperous return. But in a few years their arid stretches of sand were turned into fruitful





Gardens and green fields. The Khedive liked to ride round his estate all day under the burning sun, overseeing everything and sensing what was needed. He heard the voice of the earth. When he opened the Nile dam, on which his name stands graven in gold letters, no man had been more intimately associated with the work than he.

#### VIENNA. AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE TURKO-BULGARIAN WAR

A cable in cipher from Cairo. The Khedive asked me to come at once, saying it was necessary for me to travel completely incognito. I sat still, thinking, while I smoked ten cigarettes—by that time my plan of campaign was made. It never enters my head to doubt that I can do what I resolve. An hour later I was sitting with the Lady Superior of the Red Cross Society, Baroness Apor, asking her to have a passport made out for me as one of her Red Cross sisters, and to let a genuine sister go with me on the journey. The strangest things become possible when they are treated practically. The Baroness was astonished: but in the silence of the little sitting-room, among her flowers, a deep feeling of sympathy arose between myself and this delightful woman. We telephoned for Dr. Frisch and asked him to come at once, and the three of us together considered, discussed and finally solved the problem. By the time I was in the car, driving back to my hotel, the dressmaker who worked for the sisters was already sewing my uniform.

The Superior took the tickets and berths, and saw that the passports were in order. The uniform





was dreadful—the material scratched my skin, and I had to wear a switch of artificial hair, for none of the sisters had short hair. As I had never had long hair I could not imagine how switch and cap would stay in place. Professor Frisch and the Superintendent gave their opinion on “Sister Sophie.” “Your Highness must not look so self-conscious about your hair,” said the Superior smiling. “There—now you look a delightful sister.” My travelling companion was introduced to me; she and Professor Frisch and the Superior were the only ones who knew my secret—even the dressmaker thought I was a new sister. We were to set out next day. Hermeline was in the hotel, packing my outfit: low-heeled shoes, linen underclothes, cotton stockings. . . . I shuddered to look at them. Hermeline and I argued hotly about the wisdom of taking perfume, toilet water and silk nightgowns. I conquered. I might take them if I promised to keep my shabby little suit-cases carefully locked. I envied Hermeline when I reflected that she would travel with all my other trunks that held nothing but soft, delicate garments. A cipher cable went to the Khedive, simply containing the date of my arrival.

The Superior conducted her sisters to the station. Each of us carried her own suit-case, and received her last instructions outside the door of our second-class compartment. The time came to take our seats. The Superior grew somewhat embarrassed, and whispered to me: “Your Highness, I don’t like to tell you, but as a sister you must at any rate appear to kiss my hand before you go. It would look strange otherwise.” I did not find the kiss unpleasant, for our Superior was charming.





My colleague's kiss was humble, but mine was really spontaneous and enthusiastic. Then the two Red Cross sisters set off for Trieste on their way to Alexandria, where they were going to nurse an old lady.

My misfortunes began even in the coupé. Sister Hildegard almost fainted when I drew my cigarette-case out of the deep pocket of my skirt, as the most natural gesture in the world. She seemed positively frightened, and begged me not to smoke. I had never heard a voice that was so antipathetic to me. When I have to submit to reason I always do it unwillingly. It suddenly occurred to me that we had no sleeping compartment, but Sister Hildegard informed me that the regulations of the Red Cross did not allow the nurses to travel in *wagons-lits*, except when they were with their patients. Then my clothes began to make my skin itch terribly. In spite of careful pinning the long black switch slipped out of place whenever I leaned my head back, and made the cap sit all awry. Allah! When would the night be over?

Next morning we reached Trieste. Our boat sailed at noon. At last I would show my companion that I knew how to travel. I took her to the best hotel and brought suspicion on us and our order by engaging the most beautiful rooms, taking a bath and ordering an elaborate breakfast. Moreover, I smoked enough to make up for all the cigarettes I had denied myself in the train. The waiter did not conceal his smiles as he served us, but that did not disturb me. I did not grudge him a romantic experience.

Mercifully we had a second-class cabin to ourselves





on the ship and the crossing was delightful. The ship's surgeon who sat at our table at meals inquired where we were going. I let my carefully instructed colleague answer him, and her subdued toneless voice certainly suggested the atmosphere of the sick-room. Next to me sat a lady who had revealed all the unappetizing secrets of her married life before we reached the meat course—"Vous comprenez, ma sœur," . . . Yes, this sister understood everything, but it did not interest her to hear details that had better been told to a gynaecologist.

I stayed in my cabin as much as possible, for I could smoke there, and take my hair down. It was nauseous, that stiff, bristly hair—as if one would not be so good a nurse with short hair! Every morning when I had my bath I was delighted that I had brought the toilet water with me. At Brindisi our passports were inspected. Sister Hildegarde trembled. All the passengers were ranged on deck with their passports in their hands. The inspectors were specially polite to us, for thoughts of illness and gentle nursing rose in their minds. Everything was in order—and that was all we saw of the Turko-Bulgarian War.

During the night someone knocked at the door of our cabin. A gentleman was ill and needed help. I could not give it, but Sister Hildegarde went off on her professional business, while I turned over and went to sleep again. The last thing I saw before I went to sleep was that tail of hair hanging over my bed and swinging to and fro like a snake.

At luncheon next day the Khedive was the chief topic of conversation. At first the talk was political, then interest shifted from the ruler to the man.





Sister Hildegarde, exhausted by lack of sleep, nearly fainted when she saw my flushed face, and our thick, flat shoes touched under the table. The ship's surgeon did not like the Khedive. I saw red, but I fixed my eyes and was silent. The surgeon told how the Khedive had once travelled to Constantinople on board a Roumanian steamer. It was a stormy crossing and the Khedive shook with fear and had constantly to be reassured. What an infamous lie! The storm was real enough—I was in it myself—but I saw nothing of the fear. We only comforted our dogs who were sea-sick all the time. The Khedive is a better sailor than any weather-beaten captain. He often navigated the *Mabrussa* through heavy weather, and he would stand on the bridge all night when we were sailing through fog, while the sirens hooted continually and waves as high as houses rolled round us. In the worst weather the Khedive never thought of his own life but only of his responsibility for the others who were at sea on his account. . . . I could only hold my tongue; if I kept thinking, "You wait a little, and I'll give you something to think about! You will hear about it soon enough! I'll make you sick of the very thought of nurses and stories about storms!" I called him all manner of names too, for there are some apt expressions in Arabic.

Sister Hildegarde's patient was worse, so now only the quarantine was lacking to make our pleasure complete. My colleague had a special understanding of nerves, and she used to massage me and rub me with my much disputed toilet water. She remained in deadly fear lest I should give myself away while I was on board. Her patient had improved by the





we arrived, and the first passengers to leave the ship were the two Red Cross sisters.

An *arabdj*i driving at top speed carried us to the court hairdresser. "Que désirez-vous, ma sœur?" enquired Mme Desciseaux. But she recognized me when she heard my voice, and let us both into her private house. She sent for a trunk-load of robes and cloaks and veils. And soon two Turkish hanums with black veils over their heads were sitting in an express train on the way to Cairo. We were sisters of mercy no longer. Women can change their habits very quickly! There was no longer any humility about the lady that accompanied me. She had a certain poise and assurance and her every other word was, "Your Highness."

Cairo! Masr! The *arabdj*i stared his astonishment when I gave him the direction, Serajet Abdin. Next minute I was hastening down the long galleries of the palace while a servant ran before me to summon Frederick. Frederick in his turn scarcely looked at me before he rushed to give the news to the Khedive—and then the Khedive was there himself. Sister Hildegard looked away discreetly.

The Khedive had studied all the passenger lists, but had not been able to identify me under any name or title. Nevertheless he had sent Dr. Kautsky Bey to Alexandria to meet the ship I had travelled on. This assured me that I had seemed like a "real" sister of mercy. Naturally I told him at once about the ship's surgeon, and Thurneyssen Pasha interviewed the Director of the Austrian Lloyd Line. At first the surgeon denied all knowledge of the affair, for he knew the other passengers who sat at his table from previous crossings, and he never



remembered the sisters. Only when Thurneysen Pasha told him that a Red Cross sister was ready to confront him with the accusation did he get his bearings. Later he is said to have declared that he had always been suspicious of me because I took so many baths, and the bathroom smelt of perfume after I had left it. The real sister stayed with me for a few weeks in Musturut, and when I saw her off in her Red Cross uniform I was glad that it was she and not I that had to wear the tickling clothes.

### CONSTANTINOPLE—THE RAMADAN

We are to spend the whole summer in Constantinople this year and omit our usual European tour. I shall not miss it, for I love Constantinople. I know no place in the world where I feel more at home than I do here. Here we are far away from the official life of the Egyptian palace, and even if the Khedive has to receive visitors the reception is treated as a social engagement rather than a ceremonial audience. It is in Constantinople that I feel that I am really married; that can be a beautiful feeling and give rise to soothing dreams of security from time to time. You are really my husband here, and the knowledge that I am Your wife comes fully into my consciousness. We seem to be different people in this environment—certainly our relation to one another is different.

I always feel that I live three separate lives, one in Egypt, another when we are travelling and a third in Constantinople. In Egypt I always remember that You are the Khedive. Even when You come to Musturut I never feel that You are a "private"





CSL

individual. The mere fact that the carriage waits for You in the garden sets a limit to Your visit, and makes it seem fleeting and casual. When I think that You have never known many of the rooms in my house. . . . I had Musturut rebuilt, and altered and decorated it to suit my own taste. It used to belong to a eunuch, reverting after his death to the Khedive's family, but it had lain empty for some time before I lived there. And as I always think of it as my home it can never have been *our* home. When we are travelling, even if the tour is a long one, we are together only from time to time; in adjacent cabins or *wagons-lits*, or in hotel rooms next door to one another.

But it is different in Constantinople. We watched the building of Chibukli together, and from the beginning we discussed all the plans and ideas with one another. We both looked over every pattern of material before we made our choice, and knew every piece of furniture before ever it stood in its place. All the trees and rose bushes, the flowering shrubs and plants were planted as we ordered, and our wishes conjured up all the slopes and garden paths. They were created for both of us, not for You only or for me. The Chiftlik Chalet was built in the same way. Chibukli and Chiftlik were joined by the drive You had constructed, and which we both saw in the making. We shared our home in Constantinople. . . . Beloved, where shall we have supper this evening? Down by the sea-shore in Chibukli, under the magnolia-trees that grow by the little *selamlik* in the garden? Or shall we stay in the palace, on the round terrace? A light shines below us. The Bosphorus is illuminated by





the lights of ships that float down to the moonlit sea.

How often have You asked me, "*à quoi pensestu, mon enfant?*"

If I could only tell You. . . . It is not real thinking, for it has little to do with consciousness. It is as if I were flying above wide spaces where there are no clearly defined contours, and only light and shadows suggest the things I cannot see; or as if I were gliding over past events which have long lost all reality. Only a colour, a light, a perfume can conjure them up again, and then not in their original form, but as a low distant echo of a voice heard long ago. Do you know that sometimes, when I see an actual yellow cornfield spreading its undulating ripeness before my eyes, I feel that its real abundance is already a thing of the past.

"*Comme tu es drôle.*" You often say that too. I sit writing in the little chalet, my eyes wander through the open door past the green climbing vines and are fixed on the white strip of road down which Your car will come. Each time that I see a dark speck on the road I have to assure myself that You are in it. The speck engrosses me to the exclusion of all other thoughts. I can scarcely imagine that it is drawing nearer, that it will come straight to the chalet, just because I am here. . . . It is strange how the most ordinary things seem unusual and significant to me, and how events that interest nobody else reveal mysterious secrets to me. They are not concerned with solid facts, and they fade away before my resolute enquiries—only a faint trace remains. I believe that my eternal longing rises from these misty conceptions and undefined





CSL

thoughts. Perhaps also from my continued seeking. Others do not seek—blind creatures who think they have found already. . . . Allah, how hungry I am! Of course, it is the fast of Ramadan! I hear the sentries by the gate speaking to one another, "Only half an hour more." . . .

They are talking about sunset—about their empty bellies too. A cigarette lies beside my paper. It will be my first gratification after the fast. At last the dark spot appears on the road and races up the winding way. The chauffeur has never driven so quickly as to-day. Beloved—I was wrong—I know without doubt that You are in the car. . . . Why does my heart beat so—is it for joy or hunger? So the cigarette was not my first thought after all.

We ought always to eat as we do in Ramadan, an array of tiny dishes before us, with fat sultanas soaking in sherbet, and always conscious of the thought that we must eat now, not simply because we are hungry, but because we are allowed to eat only between sunset and sunrise. It is all so piquant and unspoilt by habit. Even sleep is different in Ramadan; one sleeps more quickly—almost more urgently—and sleeps on until the second meal. Then we sit down again—You and I—beside the little table. The candles flicker in great lanterns and shine on the pilaff covered with pistachios, and on the silver covers that hide the food that is still to come. The glass of water that stands by Your place and the cigarette that lies by mine mark the end of our eating until to-morrow.

The next day of the fast brought an unexpected visitor. During the Ramadan one has to push the





days along so that they may pass more quickly and seem as short as possible. It is not because one is hungry, for the meals are only postponed until evening. But there is no sense of well-being even when one sleeps, and at daybreak a feeling of emptiness is there already; it seems to rise from the consciousness of prohibition that occupies one's thoughts continually, and it is this preoccupation that gives all other prohibitions their importance and power.

In the hall and drawing-room all the furniture and the floors were covered with materials—I was planning new sofa pillows, loose covers and lamp shades, not because we really needed them, but because I wanted to enliven the hot arid days of the fast with colourful patterns and flowing shimmering silks that gave an illusion of shadowy waters. Perhaps I was thirsty and did not want to be aware of it; for even if I recognized how thirsty I was the knowledge would not help me. The sun was still high in the sky. . . . My drawing-room looked like a bazaar—"Hanum-Effendi! Hanum-Effendi!"

Something extraordinary must have happened if a loud cry dared to break through the ceremonial quiet of the harem. Indeed, something unusual was happening. The Khedive was standing chatting to a Turkish prince outside the chalet and showing him the garden, and I understood that he wanted to give us time to disappear. Never have materials been so quickly rolled up. Then, heavily laden, we fled to the first floor. The next minute the Khedive and his companion were in the drawing-room. But not a single thread was left behind on the battle-





CSL

gave not the slightest indication that women had been there.

The Turkish Prince who had been driving with the Khedive had suddenly expressed a wish to see the little Swiss chalet, not knowing that the harem was lodged there, and the Khedive had no alternative but to grant the Prince's wish, for precedent forbade him to make any mention of women. We must be passed over in silence. Were we so precious—or so worthless?

Once my person came under discussion in a general way when the Sultan Abdul Hamid felt himself compelled—perhaps in his character of "The Shadow of God"—to tell the Khedive that I ought not to go with him on his European travels. The Padishah mentioned casually that "Mohammedan women ought not to have European habits"—that "it would be better if no Mohammedan woman ever went to Europe"—and such-like instructive maxims. The Sultan advised and the Khedive listened, but I had a word to say too. The new Paris clothes that I had ordered specially for the journey seemed yet more entrancing to my eyes after the Khedive had described the conversation to me. How should my life, my travels and my affairs concern the Sultan? I did not think of renunciation for a minute. But, dear—it was sweet of You to say, "Fais comme tu veux." . . .

The day of departure came. The Khedive had to make his ceremonial farewell visits before he was escorted by his retinue to the Galata Station, where he boarded the Orient Express. Two hours before the train was due I left Chibukli in a motor-boat, still in the guise of a veiled hanum. A second launch





230  
appeared a little distance behind us; it carried the Yildiz spies. But they were powerless, for the Khedive's flag waved over my boat! The little blinds were let down and the cabin was used as a changing-room. . . . At Galata a European lady dressed in newest Paris creations left the boat—then quickly into the train. Bosso, my black bulldog, was waiting for me in the train. He gave me enthusiastic welcome and sniffed inquisitively at the unaccustomed hat. It is good to be married to the Khedive of Egypt—especially when he says, "Fais comme tu veux." . . .

The days of the Ramadan seem infinitely long, for they are never interrupted. One misses the customary divisions made by meal times, and the diverting and soothing influence of a cigarette. When life-long habits are given up, time assumes a continuous significance that was never recognized before. In ordinary life time is artificially divided, but in the fast the thought of it is present from sunrise to sunset, like a single thread of exclusive importance. A day usually belongs to him who lives it, but in Ramadan it belongs to itself. I have no place in it; I watch and follow its course but nothing ties me to it. Only when the sun has set do I take up my ordinary life again—and then it seems like the memory of a past day. Events and functions that usually happen in the day-time seem unnatural at night, as if they had no justification then. They lose their meaning and coherence in the vague darkness. The best *café au lait* forfeits its morning charm when it is drunk at night, and the dreams that follow a midnight luncheon are insolently comfortable, altogether too solid to be dream-like. After a while all this postponement undermines





equanimity, and irritation and impatience set to work. It is natural therefore that among primitive uncontrolled people the greatest number of divorces are procured in the Ramadan. It is a usual occurrence for the unsatisfied desire for food, drink and tobacco to discharge itself in an outburst of rage against the wife who has suddenly become useless—she can give no help because her appointed position prohibits it.

Ramadan has given me a magnifying-glass, and through it I see men for the first time as they really are. The fast has stripped off their outer coverings and left them with no established habits or regular time-table to create an illusion of similarity. This new insight has nothing to do with the frequency of divorce, but it irrevocably confirms the knowledge that each individual is eternally alone. Fellow travellers often imagine that they are going to the same destination, and it is easy for people who share a daily partnership to cherish a false hope of deeper communion, specially when their daily intercourse is never interrupted, for then it becomes a habit, and habit is the enemy of discrimination.

What does this Ramadan want of me? Will it rob me of everything? Does it want to prove by taking away my food that my existence has no solid foundation? Or that my wishes are so strong that out of an instinct of self-preservation they can imagine themselves fulfilled. Have empty days and empty stomachs so strong an influence that they can force me to see clearly? This Ramadan will drive me mad before it is over. These interminable summer days when the sun's only purpose is to mark the passing hours! Habit distracts me like the





irritating chirp of a grasshopper; my nerves are on edge, and at regular intervals I feel a craving for a cigarette. I am not accustomed to renunciation, nor am I suited to an ascetic life. I only know that I feel miserable and that I am not convinced of the religious necessity of this fast. Heaven send that nobody looks over my shoulder and sees what I have written. . . . If one of the guard that marches up and down in front of the chalet should read it he would despise me for ever. But he is out there, and I am inside. He knows nothing about me, and if he catches a glimpse of my white veil he stands stiff and salutes. . . . My God, is the world crazy?

The Khedive is not in a sunny mood either to-day. He has thrown all the ironing-men that work at Chibukli into a panic because they iron too slowly. I hope he has not discharged the one that can set pleats with such mechanical precision. Why should the Khedive trouble about the laundry anyway? Whenever we in the chalet need anything we have to inform him. He is the only one to give instructions as to which car and which chauffeur shall fetch it to us at the hour appointed by him. The chalet is like an annex of Chibukli. Still it is unreasonable that everything should have to be done through the Khedive. If there is delay in the delivery of goods it is better to say nothing about it, for fear he will be angry with the offenders and reduce their wages or discharge them. How can he waste his time over such things and in this way produce employees who in the end become incapable of thinking for themselves? But the force of habit is so strong in him that it is idle to contend against it. There was no need for me to engage a house-





keeper for Chibukli; she only adds another to the number of people who have to refer everything to the Khedive. Now I come to think of it, even Abdul Hamid pokes his nose into the management of his household and devotes part of his royal interest to what happens to the dirty linen! The Sultan with his own hand seals the tanks that hold his drinking-water.

Constant apprehension of impending danger accounts for Abdul Hamid's autocratic meddling, but Abbas Hilmi's behaviour has another motive. The Khedive is like a self-made man who began with a small business, and who, even after he has become established, must do everything himself instead of confining his energy to the management. Abbas Hilmi inherited nothing but the crown of Egypt. The nature of his inheritance assured him of every facility for carrying out his projects, but none of them would have been of any use to him had it not been for his practical capacity. Abbas Hilmi is not a typical ruler, he is a farmer and a man of business. And even when he seems proud and tyrannical, these qualities do not emanate from a consciousness of his kingly state; they have been developed by force of circumstance, and for the most part by instincts of self-preservation. At the age of eighteen he ascended the throne in the most unfavourable circumstances. He succeeded a weak, spiritless Khedive—his father, Tawfik Pasha, who in his turn had taken the place of Ismail Pasha—a powerful prodigal megalomaniac who had been deposed. Nobody had any confidence in the eighteen-year-old Khedive, and Lord Cromer was altogether too reserved and hard to trouble himself





establish the least sympathetic human relationship with him. Petrified political circles are not interested in warm feelings, only in mathematically determined conceptions of ownership. Lord Cromer treated the young Khedive much as a fossilized schoolmaster might treat a pupil that he did not find the more attractive because he must call him "Your Highness." The Khedive's authority was expressed in his title—but Cromer had always felt that he himself was a ruler and that was sufficient to make him think of Abbas Hilmi as his puppet. But from his childhood up Abbas Hilmi had never been submissive. He had a stubborn will, and behind his most delightful smile he became only more obstinate. His determination increased as he saw himself confronted by responsibilities and duties that he would have comprehended rightly if he had been left to himself. But as it was, he had to defend himself against an enemy who had been set above him and who had power to humiliate him both as a ruler and as a man. It could not be expected that a Khedive with even semi-nationalist opinions should hail as confidant the dictator that a hostile power had forced upon him, when the sight of such a man must remind him of the weakness of his country and of the humiliation of his ancestors. The bitterest years of Abbas Hilmi's life were those he spent under the strict shadow of Cromer's mentorship. For Cromer continued to treat him as a tyro of eighteen, and the policy of brusque supervision paid no heed to the Khedive's later development.

Sir Eldon Gorst was the first person to bring him respite, for he was a man who had retained his humanity although he was a politician. If Eldon





Gorst had been in Egypt at the beginning of Abbas Hilmi's reign he must have exerted a favourable influence on the Khedive's character. I lay many of Abbas Hilmi's more malicious characteristics to Lord Cromer's account. The friendship with Sir Eldon Gorst was the strongest in Abbas Hilmi's life, and it was as much a relation between men as it was a political alliance. The Khedive was both devoted and grateful to him. We were in London when Sir Eldon Gorst lay mortally ill at his country house. The Khedive hastened to see him, and when he returned he was more sad than I had ever seen him before. "Nous avons parlé—ensuite j'ai dit nos prières." ... Our prayers—but that "our" was not meant in the exclusive religious sense. The Khedive laid stress on the word because it bound him closer to his friend. It spoke of the reciprocal human ties between the Mohammedan and the Christian, and between the English statesman and the Egyptian ruler who included his dying friend's name in the prayers of his own faith.

Abbas Hilmi loved his country; his intimacy with the soil was a guarantee of the solidity of his affections. Every year he steadily enlarged his own estates, and he personally superintended their growth and prosperity, riding round them for whole days at a time. He never relied on another man's information, believing only what he saw with his own eyes. His most beautiful estate, Montazah, lay on the coast near Alexandria, where one could see evidence of years of systematic labour. Before the harbour could be made the bottom had to be dredged to give the requisite depth, then a long broad stone quay had been built in a semicircle round it.





Two palaces situated on rising ground overlooked the countryside. Quicksands were converted into fruitful land and a nursery of young trees was planted here to supply all the Khedive's other estates, while natural pine woods shaded the plain that stretched down to the shore. Montazah slowly and steadily developed into a great colony under my eyes. Dispensary, kitchens, laundry, electrical station, carpenter's shops, stables and houses for employees—all these buildings were scattered over the giant plain. We often used to drive from one building to another in a carriage sheltered by an awning. Many of the roads were lined with tall oleander-trees, then suddenly round a corner one drove into the sweet perfume of olive-trees in bloom. Nature had been prodigal here with abundant growth and colour; perfume, vegetation, sky and sea united to create an incredibly beautiful prospect. A moonlight stroll beside the sea was like a walk in fairyland.

The Khedive had built a little village adjacent to Montazah where needy people were accommodated and provided with food and tobacco. It was a shifting population, for the Khedive gave the men a chance to work on his estates—only a few old men who were too weak to work found a permanent home there. Their long residence made them guardians of the place and of its peace, and they kept the Khedive informed of the wishes of the other villagers.

A simple white mosque towered over the narrow road which separated the houses and over a round sunny space where a single tall tree provided shade. Turbaned grey heads dreamed in timeless peace under its protecting branches. Whenever the





Khedive was in Montazah he conducted the Friday prayer for all the others in the mosque. Montazah was the estate he loved best, for it was the first great project he had achieved by himself.

Each of the Khedive's different palaces, country houses and estates expresses a different phase of his life. The Edfina Palace on the Rosetta canal has a less lively magic than any other—it is a palace of contemplation. The drive is made of a mosaic of little stones which is the only restless element in the picture. The white palace itself lies peacefully dreaming at the edge of the Nile, while the river flows so quietly there that even from the terrace one cannot hear the murmur of the water that runs along the entire length of the building. But in the rooms of the palace one can have just as much noise as one wants; one need only make the grim resolution to start off all the musical boxes and clock-work toys that lie within arm's length. All instruments are represented here, from an orchestration that reproduces the music of organs, bells and trombones, to antique gold musical boxes that twitter like tiny birds. Each room offers new possibilities of harmony. In them are stored the collection of striking-clocks that the Khedive made in the earlier years of his reign, when melody most delighted him and he still felt that life was rosy and gay. Now they rust in silence. And the massive deserted palace makes a fit bond between the mute instruments and the noiseless waters of the Nile.

Ismaliya, lying on the banks of the Ismaliya canal near Cairo, has no claim to be called a palace. It was built and enlarged little by little, in response to our needs. It is like a lively caravanserai. From





The canal boats one can see that the noble colonnade is furnished with comfortable wicker chairs, and might suppose that idle peace-loving inhabitants secluded themselves within it, provided one did not know that Ismaliya belongs to the Khedive. Every fellah knows that there used to be no trees or fields in the neighbourhood, but a fresh spot of green appeared here and then grew bigger, extending in every direction; while the building grew to keep pace with the growing fields. To begin with we had only a bedroom, a sitting-room and a bathroom—not until later did we add the luxury of a dining-room. Our staircase door and the three rooms for attendants all opened on the colonnade, and at the end of the gallery there was a door behind which lay the caravanserai. Here were the servants' rooms, the kitchens, employees' quarters and offices for the agent of the estate and his clerks. In the middle of the square building was a great courtyard surrounded by stables, garages and store-rooms.

It was stimulating to reach a place devoted to such practical purposes after four hours' journey in a motor-boat up the quiet canal. There were camels, horses and asses to be seen and heard, and a stream of life passed before one's eyes; that one had stepped into the midst of a big farming project was proved by the lively clatter of work that filled the palace.

Early in the morning the white Arab horse stood pawing the ground outside the house, waiting for the Khedive to start on his tour of inspection. He rode under a green-lined umbrella as he set out for the fields that stretched into the far distance. The





His often lasted until sunset, for the most delightful meal could not tempt him to interrupt an occupation he felt necessary. The Khedive never gave heed to his hunger, for he was endowed with indefatigable determination as well as with remarkable physical endurance. His tastes were very simple and he always modified his demands according to his way of life. He would make no complaint if he was served the same meal day after day—not because he did not appreciate good cooking, but because his requirements were so moderate. He could sleep on the hardest bed, for from his childhood onwards he had been used to have a mattress laid on the floor. On journeys he was absolutely unassuming. He did not “travel for pleasure” in the accepted sense, for he visited only places where he had special work to do. The most crude arrangements for his lodging did not disturb him in the least, and he enjoyed himself more in a tent than in a palace. The palace was only part of his public life. He was more interested in its external architecture than in the comfort of the rooms inside. He did not concern himself with living-rooms that he did not actually use, and that had no important rôle in his daily life. He had not a single occupation—except for bathing and sleeping—that depended on these living-rooms or was conditioned by an indoor environment. When he built a palace it was from sheer love of building. He loved the plans and drawings, the surveying, the foundations, scaffolding and girders more than the finished work, which only pleased him in that it was an achievement. He did not read, he did not debate, he did not write, he did not smoke, he did not trouble





to create his own atmosphere, and all that he thought about in a new room was its system of ventilation. His thoughts were always occupied with vital matters of practical policy; with communicating roads and railways, or river transport, with marshes that must be drained, fields that must be tilled, soil that must be cultivated. He loved the country too much to feel at home indoors, for all his instincts found stimulation and satisfaction in the open air. It was a matter of indifference to him if he sat on a hard couch in a bare attic instead of in a luxurious drawing-room. He recognized no spiritual problems and had only practical standards of value. Any growth, development or prosperity gave him pleasure; when he saw a calf fattening, or an orange sapling beginning to sprout, he felt real satisfaction.

The sight of material growth waked a kind of fatherly pride in him. He has often been reproached for being too hard a business man and making use of his position for his own material profit. If Ismail Pasha had been less of a despot and more of a business man Abbas Hilmi would have been more of a ruler and less of a business man. And if he looked after his own interests shrewdly, other people always benefited by his prosperity. He never buried his treasure in chests or deposited it in banks like most of the other oriental princes. He never let his profits lie idle.

Because Abbas Hilmi was Khedive of Egypt people criticized qualities in him that they would have admired in another business man. But he had one unpleasant characteristic—he was more quick-witted and cunning than actual men of business.





"Je suis plus juif que tous les juifs," he said to me laughing. Desire to earn money often becomes a mania. It is an interest that seldom maintains normal proportions, because after close scrutiny one sees that everything can bring in money or be converted into money. "To make money" is not an exclusive profession, for money can be "made" of anything. The harbour at Montazah was rented to a fisherman from whom we bought the fine lobsters that were formerly our own. All our orchards were leased out, and a greengrocer supplied the palace with fruit from other gardens. When we were away in the summer months all the flowers from the palace gardens were sold, while the beautiful Arab stallions earned stud fees in English stables. It was natural that frugality should have been associated with this interest in money. But when a monarch is thrifty his methods of saving are much more complicated and puzzling than those of an ordinary citizen. If the lining of a suit wore out, it was relined instead of being given away. But once when the royal yacht, *Mabrussa*, lay by the quay in Alexandria ready for departure and we had already spent the night aboard and had our luggage unpacked, there was trouble with her turbines and sailing was postponed for another hour. The Khedive found the prospect of the delay quite intolerable, and accordingly, to the consternation of the captain, we left the yacht and installed ourselves on a Roumanian steamer that happened to be on the point of departure. We saved a bare half hour and lost a thousand pounds, and next day the *Mabrussa* sailed proudly past us on the open sea. As the Khedive never earned any small sums he was more interested in





them than in big payments. He never spent money on useless things, so he could not understand why I should want to give five francs for flowers when we were travelling. They would fade so soon. Still, he would often pay an enormous sum for a single carnation. For instance, when we were staying in Paris my *modiste* used often to surprise us by sending us both button-hole flowers in the morning. At the same time she would send on approval a few dozen hats that could be used only in Europe. Her bills were never discussed. The sum-total did not worry him; it was the items that he could not bear. A hundred thousand francs for clothes was a round sum, but if a dress was priced at eight hundred and sixty-five francs it cost sixty-five francs too much. For this reason all the shops I dealt with were accustomed to send in bills with figures ending in a nought. "Je sais tenir de l'argent dans ma main," said Abbas Hilmi in explanation when I asked in admiration how he could hold water in his hand without letting a drop run through his fingers. Perhaps he was right—for water always runs through my fingers. At the beginning of the year the Khedive made accurate estimates for his budget. Every year a new block of houses was built for letting on his Cairo estate—nearly a quarter of the city belonged to him. All the wooden fittings, doors and windows were made under his supervision in the electrical workshops at Montazah. When we were in Cairo we went about the town incognito every evening, so that the Khedive could see how far the new houses were progressing; if they were on his own land he would climb the highest scaffolding, and step over chasms or across shaking boards





with an ease that astonished the workmen. When Chibukli was built he superintended everything. He knew exactly how much weight every traverse had to bear, and the precision of his knowledge made me distrust other builders, so that I felt quite safe only in the houses that had been built under his eyes. When we passed by an unfinished building during our evening tour of inspection the Khedive immediately comprehended its structural defects and explained them to me. His criticism was always justified; in many such cases the building collapsed before it was completed.

Several engineers had been called to give their opinion about a bridge at Maryut, where the Khedive was making a railway through the desert, but his own design was finally adopted because it was the simplest and most practical. When he began to build the railway most people thought of it as a mad project, or at any rate as a gambler's speculation, and nobody realized the scope of the undertaking. Abbas Hilmi's aim was to build the line out of Alexandria through the desert of Maryut, then in a straight line until it reached the sea at the harbour of Sollum. Every year the railway grew kilometres longer, and always it was preceded by a narrow-gauge line that carried the necessary building materials. Only when the broad-gauge line had been completed up to a certain point were the other rails taken up and laid down again ahead of the work. Every drop of water had to be transported from the railhead and an infinite number of difficulties were surmounted before the railway lay finished under the burning sun. Meanwhile, the desert waited on the event. . . .





214

When the initial stretch of line was ready and its transport facilities were at the disposal of the desert population for the first time, the Khedive had won the heart of every Bedouin. It was "their" railway. It ran through "their" land and had been created to serve "their" needs. Flags waved on the little wooden station shelters and the first train that penetrated into the silent desert was wreathed with leaves and flowers. It bore the hopeful green of new life into the wide glaring wilderness. Tall, white-robed Bedouins gathered at the stations along the line; they stood motionless, staring at the miracle the Ruler of Egypt had wrought in their honour and for their service. When the little train stopped at the first station, the tribesmen had been ready and waiting for it for days, and they boisterously took possession. And since the carriages were already crammed with white-swathed forms, the newcomers hoisted themselves up to the roofs or sat on the steps. They swung on the iron railings which bounded the platforms, and in their astonishment and delight they forgot the gratitude they owed to their faithful camels who had hitherto been their only means of transport.

The desert tribesmen do not receive gifts without making due acknowledgment. When we arrived at our camp at the end of the line a few days later, the desert was covered with people. Strong, swift Bedouin horses galloped over the ground on each side of the train while the riders stood upright in the saddle, swinging their guns and throwing them high over their heads; they caught them again and the clear air resounded with shots. The Bedouins had arranged a fantasia in the Khedive's honour.





Then the Bedouin chief received us in his tent, and despite the reverence with which he welcomed the Khedive, one felt that two rulers were meeting one another. The coffee they drank together was served with proud hospitality. I knew it was not only a refreshing drink, but that it testified that the Bedouin sheik was ready to guard our safety with his life.

The next morning, when we came out of our tent and looked at the open desert, we found it strangely transformed. Wide stretches of the plain were crowded; the yearly market was being held in the wilderness! Cloths were displayed, and material, soaps, copper cans and innumerable bottles of perfume that had the Khedive's picture printed in crude colours on the label. Among the crowded merchandise moved a white, heaving bundle of wool—a flock of long-haired, broad-tailed sheep pressed tightly against one another. From what quarter of the quiet desert did all these tribesmen come? Did desire for the wares spread out in the market-place entice them? Slant-eyed Bedouin women were there, wrapped in indigo blue robes whose colour made their unveiled faces seem even darker; gold clasps rattled on their arms and ankles. They seemed as happy when they bought their little bottles of scent in the market as I am when I order *Le Bouquet du Khedive* or the *Parfum Djavidan* from the *Institut de Beauté*, in Paris. Even the white-robed Bedouins bought up stores of soap for their lonely tents.

Abbas Hilmi was the first Khedive to whom the Bedouins submitted unconditionally. They treated him as one of themselves, and never distrusted him on account of his position and title. Once only





did a Bedouin betray the trust that Abbas Hilmi reposed in him. We were travelling in the desert, pushing forwards in short stages. Each day the tent was sent on to be pitched for the next evening, and we followed later in the day. The Khedive and I and two chauffeurs were in the car, while our Bedouin guide was mounted on a camel. We drove slowly. The ground was carpeted with low-growing flowers, like anemones, an endless stretch of pale lilac colour. For in the spring all the desert round Maryut was alive, and tall weeds scented the air with heady perfume. The hours went by—they drew near and passed quickly, as everything within sight in the interminable plain seemed to do. The wind playfully blew the fine sand in whirling circles over the dunes, laid it down again and then drove it further on. Outlines were being continually altered and shifted, and yet they had a deceitful appearance of being always the same. The sun was sinking, and we ought to have been at our camp long ago. We halted and the Khedive spoke to the Bedouin, who assured us that he could not have made a mistake. His lean swarthy face expressed nothing but a stony imperturbable indifference. It was a typical desert face, remote and self-sufficient. Again we followed the Bedouin's blowing white drapery. Mauve and rose-coloured bands flamed in the sky—then suddenly it was night and stars began to shine. The camel and its rider disappeared as if the darkness had swallowed them. We drove on without our guide. What had happened? Had the Bedouin's sure instinct failed him because he had to guide a car instead of horses and camels? Or had he not been able to control his camel because the beast was





irritated by the hostile hum of the car behind him? The stillness was startling. In the burning sunshine it was a dazzling silence, for living light hid the menace of the waste land. But now we knew that we were lost. We had driven for hours perhaps forwards, perhaps backwards, perhaps in a circle, none of us had dreamed of such a possibility. My eyes scanned the heavens: the brightest star should lead us. The Khedive sat at the wheel now and I sat beside him. I trusted the light that twinkled and shone above us, and I guided him as the star directed. I was quiet and confident—I knew that we were on the right road. Lights . . . then voices . . . and a single file of horses. They were soldiers, searching for the Khedive and we had reached the camp. Of course we were not really lost—for a Khedive cannot be left to die of starvation in the desert—but still we had a slight foretaste of the torments the desert can inflict. Directly we realized that our guide had disappeared, all eyes were magnetically attracted to the plain leather case that contained the silver water bottle the Khedive always took about with him. In the desert water makes the difference between life and death. I took the bottle, so as to spare the chauffeurs the torments of indecision, for in my arms it was no longer a bottle of water—my adjutant's uniform made it as dangerous as if it had contained high explosives. My throat feels parched as I remember that night—but it is Ramadan. My thoughts have travelled in a circle, through palaces and deserts, and still the sun has not set. At this moment it touches the horizon. If in time to come I happen to read the lines I have written here in Chiftlik, I shall





feel hunger and thirst again—and perhaps, longing.

When the Khedive asks me what I have been doing in his absence I generally answer, "*rien*." May all great spirits that I love forgive me the secretive lie! It is not a real lie, but an equivocal answer. My husband knows very well that this "*rien*" comprises many activities, all of them in the realm of music and literature. But they are activities that do not interest him and to which he ascribes no vital significance, so I do not name them specifically. Moreover I often think that there is something crude in a precise definition. For instance, it would be much kinder if a man said: "You cannot come to me," instead of saying "A gulf lies between us." The Khedive has always been content with this "*rien*," for occupations that mean a great deal to me are of no importance to him. And if, on the other hand, I answer his question with a detailed account of what I have really been doing, for the most part it would consist of things that are of no importance to me. But still we meet again and again in oases of pleasure that are common to both of us; we still share many of the same interests, even if we view them from a different angle. We both love animals. Once I saved two stray dogs from imminent death when the cruel dog massacre was raging in Constantinople. But they were too weak to survive in their new security; *le petit frère* and *la petite sœur*, disreputable yellow mongrels that they were, died in our arms. My love of animals made me their slave, but the Khedive has no difficulty in making all animals docile. Horses that





body else can ride or drive behave like lambs under his hand. "*Ours*," the great French sheep dog, makes a respectful bow as soon as he sees the prayer carpet spread out; one explanation had been sufficient to teach him. Often I am told, "*Les chiens se moquent de toi, mon enfant . . .*" but that does not wound my pride; it does not occur to me to be annoyed if the dogs laugh at me. But when a scorpion bit *Ours* in a very sensitive spot the Khedive instantly brought him to me in Musturut. He was carried in on a white linen sheet, and laid down mortally ill in the hall of the palace, for the veterinary surgeon had given up all hope of recovery. It is certain that *Ours* never laughed at me when I nursed him back to life and health.

Most of the animals that the Khedive receives as gifts come to settle with me at Musturut. The Sheriff of Mecca once sent two greyhounds that are used for hunting in the desert. A sheik travelled with them and brought precise written instructions concerning their food and drink; they could take only stoned and pressed dates and milk. The two desert hounds were transferred from their cage directly into my car. I sat in the middle of the back seat and a dog gnashed its teeth in each corner, so that I turned my eyes from one danger to the other. I had ordered that a room should be cleared in Musturut, but unfortunately the servants had forgotten to move out a tall cupboard and both dogs sprang to the top of it for refuge. For the first few days they did not leave their observation-post for a moment, but in a month's time they were as tame as natives of the wilderness can ever be. They had refused all meat and even left their stoned dates





untouched. Their coats bristled up threateningly at the very sight of water and they could not be persuaded to touch it.

Once when the Khedive returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca he gave me a great cockatoo that he had bought from a poor pilgrim. *Hadji-Fatma* was a beautiful bird with a wide wing-span and white and pink plumage. But she always remained intractable. Her defensive instincts had been developed under the roof of a tent where she had been trained to watch for any danger and to give the alarm with shrill screams. Whenever she was set free to fly in the hall at Musturut, red umbrellas were placed at all the doors as danger signals, so that the servants could pass through the hall under cover; for the cockatoo had a delightful habit of settling on any head that attracted her, and trying to investigate its contents with her beak. Directly after her arrival *Fatma*, "the pilgrim," tore an ear off one of the servants, and the *selamlık* of the Kubbeh Palace resounded with ghastly cries. Accordingly she was sent to me. She had a room to herself at Musturut, and after a time she would even let me carry her round under my arm. But to the last she remained the only pet that resisted the Khedive's efforts to train her. The sight of him was enough to make her delirious with rage—perhaps she did not like the brilliant red of the tarboosh. We knew that the Sultan's tarboosh was a darker red and that all the animals in the Yildiz collection recognized it; so when we went to Constantinople we had a nickel-plated cage as big as a room built for *Fatma*, and she travelled with us on the deck of the *Mabrussa*. Abdul Hamid





had the full benefit of her shrieks when we arrived there.

I do not find the days of Ramadan so long since I have enlivened their vacancy with my daily diary. They seem to shrink together and the sun sinks more quickly on the finished day. I am so often overcome by the vitality of these pictures of the past that I compare their compelling message with words of the present day. Have I already had my most beautiful, most treasured experiences? Or do I overestimate their importance simply because they are past—because now they are free they belong to me alone, and will always exist for me thus? For me? Why not “for us”? “We” and “us” are words that I have seldom used; while “I” and “he” are written on every page. “My husband” is an unused title, too, for I could never speak of the Khedive as “my husband” to anyone. He has remained “The Khedive” even to me, although he is my husband, and although I believe that my deepest emotions are felt for him. Rulers lead lonely lives. The restless bustle that perpetually stirs round them is not an effect of their vital personal activity. It is a fixed circle and its motive power is always the same; the only thing that changes is the name of the man within it who wears the crown. If another smaller circle lies round him, it must be subordinate to the line of the outer circle, and the external line confines it and excludes every influence from outside.

Abbas Hilmi has no friends. He has eased his conscience by giving appointments as adjutants and court officials to old school friends who had shared





the same emotional background and youthful experiences. But the new title with which the old friend has to be greeted hardly indicates the former comradeship. Commands on the side of the Khedive and dependence on the part of his official have altered the balance of the original equality. Sometimes memory is stimulated by a word or a scene, and they speak of the old student days. Often the glimpse of the past is interrupted by an official announcement, a memorandum or an order—immediately the old friend stands clearly separated from the new employee. But memories change and grow remote from the moment that the man becomes the ruler. For there is a kind of fore-past that becomes static on the day that the crown is put on.

No ruler has friends. How should he achieve an independent reciprocal friendship? A certain formal correspondence between relatives passes from one royal eminence to another, but it indicates only distant family ties that are easily loosed, and a gunshot on the frontier can blow them into the air. The territorial metaphors at the end of the crown-stamped letter are quite amusing—in contrast with the cream-lined paper above. But *votre confrère balcanique* says just as little as the *confrère pyramidal* of the Nile and the desert. As for the titles, they are well justified puns emanating from the wit of the private secretary. But which ruler knows himself as a man? And who knows any ruler as a man? Perhaps this conception is possible only to a woman—to the woman he loves. But when the ruler meets a woman who wins his man's heart, she has to go through the same experiences as the friends of his boyhood. She is put in her place,





CSL

allowed to a certain function—and that is the net result of the desire that began the process. The power to subordinate all things and people to oneself by robbing them of their value revenges itself.

Since I have known Abbas Hilmi I have often longed to be a man—not one of those ciphers in the company of world rulers, but an independent man who stands and falls by his own merits, and whose convictions secure him against detraction and depreciation. But I am a woman, and my physical appearance and the maculine attitude towards a woman mask the so-called masculine virtues beneath. Moreover I am Your wife, whom You have raised to be Your equal, a factor in Your life that You have acquired but have never recognized. I am subject to the very conditions that Your position makes for You—but I am doubly deprived of freedom by the ruler and by the man. I am in a snare that entangles everything; You did not create it, for You must Yourself submit to the law that made it. I should love to be Your friend, to leave behind me all thought of the body, all suspicion and curiosity, all habit and formal fellowship, and be only a man before whom You could be weak and poor, a man to whom You need give nothing but Your brotherhood. But I am Your wife. Such an interchange of spiritual gifts is impossible between us, because they seldom travel through physical channels which necessarily obstruct them; and because with bodily communion sets in the primal feud—the conflict between the two arch-enemies, man and woman.

The magnetic attraction of the sexes rises out of





this hostility, and deceitful mockery hides under the name of love. Consciously or unconsciously every kiss, every desire and every embrace serves mutual forces of destruction. Death wishes lurk in every profound impulse. I want to kiss you to death, love you to death, crush you to me—such are the endearments that passion breathes out—a confession of sexual enmity veiled in ecstasy. But it is only the exclusively male and female instincts that wrestle with one another; the common feelings of humanity take no part in the conflict and look on in uncomprehending amazement.

No man can know a woman's nature, or suspect that his love may humiliate her more than his careless indifference. No man knows how strong a woman is. The fable of her weakness is derived from the consciousness of masculine physical strength and the importance accorded to it. Woman comprehends more of the nature of men. She brings boys as well as girls into the world; infants of both sexes have sprung from her womb, and her blood has nourished both of them and given them life.

But if I had not been a woman, we—You and I—should never have met one another. For, if I had been a man, I should have belonged to a species that kings do not meet. Sometimes I feel that I have betrayed You, when I remember how little You know of me. But Your knowledge could not have helped us, for it could not have prevented You from being as You are. Each of us has a right to a separate individuality, but it is hard to accommodate two different worlds in one home. It is only when the roots of two souls have been fed on





the same soil that there can be true communion between them. Even if they grow in different directions in the days of their maturity, their natures are still allied, for they both represent different aspects of one fatherland. Perhaps You are to be envied because You do not know the pain some thoughts may inflict; perhaps You are to be pitied because You know nothing of the freedom they give. But when I feel the serene self-confidence that radiates from You, when I plumb the sure basis of self-determination that underlies Your negligent thoughtlessness, I become thoughtful—even if the shadow passes quickly, as it must in a life spent under the eternal sun.

A tall upright figure has just passed under the balcony of the chalet where I sit writing. The red fez shines in the brilliant daylight, and the black tassel swings rhythmically as the steps go steadily on. The hawk eyes are unshaded, but they are wide open, for they are used to the sunlight. Every feature of the tanned countenance is modelled closely on the bones beneath, and the firm mouth suggests the reticence of a stubborn will. The man is alive with invincible primal power. He is Fahr-Ed-Din, "the pride of the Faith." The sight of him has been enough to interrupt my meditations with a strange memory.

The *Mabrussa* lay in the harbour at Kavala, ready for departure. Kavala is the birthplace of Mehemmed Ali, the founder of the dynasty of the Khedives. To this day hundreds of the poor are fed by his money, for he made an endowment which provides for the daily distribution of rice and mutton, and we have often eaten food provided





by that ancient endowment. I always felt strangely moved when Abbas Hilmi and I ate the rice that was sent aboard for us, for then I thought of the donor. I did not know him except as a tradition of the past and I should never learn anything of his personality, yet I ate the food he had prepared for me on earth. The distant Spirit had given the Khedive his kingdom, and to me he had given a husband.

Fahr-Ed-Din had been the hero of Kavala for many years. He was not only the best shot and the strongest man in the town, but he was a man to whom one could attribute every possible and impossible adventure. Everyone knew him; everyone hesitated to annoy him and kept out of his way when he was angry, for it was well known that he could reach the smallest leaf on the top of any tree; it was also well known that his lightest word meant more than a thousand oaths. He had a wife and children; he tilled his own land and was industrious and religious. A few days before we arrived he had killed a man. The victim was a musician who used to play the fiddle in a little café, and who had insulted a woman that Fahr-Ed-Din liked. From the first it was a fight to the death, and none of the bystanders dared thrust himself between the tall figure and the reckless wastrel who had provoked him. Conscious of his superiority Fahr-Ed-Din did not rush on his victim; he did not even raise his voice when he pronounced the fatal verdict. He made an ironical offer of safety to the doomed man, declaring that his only hope of deliverance depended on the working of a miracle. "I will spare your life if you can play on the back of the fiddle, but you must play so that





hear it" . . . Fahr-Ed-Din turned the fiddle over and handed it to the musician who had insulted a woman. Then he picked up his pistol and waited. The bow trembled to and fro in the timorous hand, but no sound came out of the polished wooden surface. . . . Fahr-Ed-Din shot the fiddler between the eyes; then he put away his pistol and went home and nobody dared to stop him. The police came to him. "Go," said Fahr-Ed-Din. "I will come to prison after you have gone." They left him, for they knew that he never lied. But when he came to the gaol and they wanted to take him in, he stood outside the walls of the prison and spoke: "I promised to come—I am here. I will go into your prison, but I swear that I will not stay there." They thought that Fahr-Ed-Din had sworn an oath that he could not keep. But the man who rowed out to the *Mabrussa* when she entered Kavala harbour was Fahr-Ed-Din. He had kept his word.

So the hero found sanctuary aboard the *Mabrussa*, and sailed with us to Egypt. One could trust him for ever, after once seeing his face as he watched Abbas Hilmi, and for many years he has been the Khedive's most faithful bodyguard. His ears hear the faintest rustle, his eyes see everything and he would die a thousand deaths for his master. Every year that we visit Kavala a little boat is rowed out to the great ship as she lies at anchor in the sunny harbour. It carries Fahr-Ed-Din's wife and children. The Khedive orders a linen sheet to be stretched out across the lower deck, and behind it Fahr-Ed-Din's harem may enjoy the hours of family reunion without being disturbed. The police stand waiting on the shore. . . .





Fahr-Ed-Din stops by my vine-covered balcony. He bends down and I watch how carefully his hands prune away the useless tendrils. Perhaps he is thinking of his fields, his wife and his children, for we are not going to Kavala this year. If your desire is as great as your strength, Fahr-Ed-Din, I pity you.

Fahr-Ed-Din's nature accorded best with the wild countryside round Dalaman in Asia Minor. The man and the country had something fundamental in common. In time it will not be so—when highways have been constructed; when clean solid stone houses have replaced the soldiers' and labourers' flimsy tents; when no more mosquitoes swarm over the marshes that lie in stagnant green plains, breathing out a poisonous vapour under the heat of the sun; when men walk at ease in the heart of the woods where flowers and rank undergrowth used to grow. Then the man and the land will not be alike. Dalaman and Fahr-Ed-Din ought to stay for ever as they are now, invested with wild primeval power.

There are some forces whose menace has a more generous and liberating effect than any comfortable security. If one is weak and dependent one can always find a peaceful and secluded path that will lend firmness to feeble steps; there are plenty of harbours which give shelter to frail barks in stormy weather. But if one would set free tempestuous passion and ease panting desire, if a longing to forget mankind throbs in every heart-beat, then Dalaman is the world which offers the most abundant fulfilment. Dalaman. . . .

Every time the *Mabrussa* sailed into the harbour





But a fresh revelation of beauty lay before me. But I was unwilling to take it in immediately, and looked away from the enchanting picture, for I had rather greet it at sunrise on a new day. Even if the shore allured me in the twilight, stretching its soft, scented shadows towards me, I waited until the next morning to see it again with full understanding. But I heedfully greeted the dark mountains on the horizon, and specially the greatest among them, Kara-Dag—the Black Mountain. When night had fallen I sat up on deck with closed eyes while I breathed in the wonder that lay waiting for me. A lover waits thus for his mistress, all his nerves tense with trembling expectation; he closes his eyes and forgoes the bliss of immediate satisfaction so that he may feel full measure of longing for the rapture that is still to come. Moonlight stole through the open porthole; soft, muted waves beat gently against the ship and the scent of rank wild flowers burdened the air. Only the flowers of Dalaman have so heavy a scent.

When the sun rose our flag was the first to greet the new day: three white stars and three white crescents made the glowing red background seem yet more brilliant. The salute rang through the clear air. The band began to play on deck an hour afterwards. The rhythm throbbed in our limbs, tautened every muscle and nerve, and braced our wills for the demands of the day.

For me the first day at Dalaman seemed like a joyful marriage with Nature, but the Khedive went early to his work. Horses and asses were disembarked, and with them went machinery, carts, building materials, doors, windows, panes





of glass, tents, uniforms, blankets, saddles, harness, fodder, dispensary stores, telephone posts, ladders and every conceivable piece of apparatus. The Khedive had planned the disposition of all the supplies, and his commanding voice could often be heard. Every hour was precious. Transport was slow and difficult, and in spite of the haste with which the work went on, nothing must be damaged or broken, and there would be delay if the smallest article were missing. After a while the harbour side was covered with a mass of incongruous goods. The unity and purpose of this widespread and heaped-up chaos could be recognized only by the single mind that had conceived and formulated the plan of subduing three hundred square kilometers of wilderness. Marshes had to be drained and canals dug; streets, bridges, houses, villages, stables, garages and workshops must be built. The virgin soil must be ploughed, harrowed and sown. Forests must be cleared and new trees planted; and wide stretches of weeds that grew yard-high must be converted into profitable crops.

The Khedive was the commander-in-chief. At one moment he was on shore, at the next he stood on a raft, in a boat or on the quarter-deck of the *Mabrussa*. All hands and ropes and oars were under his stern direction and his accurate memory identified all the packing-cases, bales, sacks and rolls of goods. At last the foreshore began to clear, and a long file of laden horses and mules crept slowly up the stony path that wound over the steep mountain side above the shore. The great Dalaman Valley lay on the other side of the mountain. A few simple little cottages had already been built above the





aller. The two-roomed one—our own—actually had a verandah, and the cupboard that was destined for my room was making its way thither, balanced on the back of an ill-tempered mule. Objects which in ordinary life go unnoticed because their presence is taken for granted were here treated as luxuries, and everything to do with their transport and final position was intensely exciting.

One could look far over the countryside from the verandah of the little house. A panorama of every imaginable colour stretched into the distance as far as the broad silver band of the Dalaman river. The evil marsh vapour brooded at the foot of the hill on which the house stood. The green iridescence of the water was hidden by water weeds, and disturbed only by waving bulrushes. Here lay the menace of Dalaman; insidious fever made its home in the marshes. It seemed as if the swamps knew that they were doomed to give way before the dry plain, for plants that charmed the eye spread above the bottomless marsh; perhaps their beauty would so bewitch the traveller that he would not comprehend their fatal import. Men's lives were at stake in this battle with the marshes; it was not only a reclamation of waste land. But malaria was victorious in spite of the prophylactic measures employed against it and the huge stores of quinine that were used. All the labourers, soldiers and overseers fell ill before they had been long in Dalaman, for the whole countryside was infested with fever.

The hardest labour of all was to drain the swamps. Fifty kilometres of wide road had already been constructed and it steadily penetrated deeper into the interior, solving the problem of transport as it





went. Heavy steam ploughs rolled up the road; lorries and farm machinery followed them, until all Nature knew that the enemy was at the gate! My own thoughts vacillated between admiration and regret, between common sense and inconsistency, between practical intention and seductive temptation. When Dalamán had once been conquered her beauty would be but a pale shadow of her radiant prime. My eyes grudgingly followed the line of tall, bare telephone posts that led through the wild country like a chain of giant toothpicks. I loved the land as it was then, in the primal grandeur of its rank vegetation and stifling creepers; its wildness took my breath away. I did not fear the injurious breath of the marshes, for I knew that it would not harm me. I took no prophylactic quinine. Every evening when the red sun sank paraffin flares were lighted round the base of the hill, but in spite of the hungry flames many mosquitoes escaped from death and made their way into the house. They might sting me—I was not afraid. Perhaps there was a fever in my blood that was stronger than the fever of the green marshes. . . .

When You go out to Your work in the morning You destroy a part of me as You clear the land. Nature frankly displays her menace before Your eyes; You fear her but You are resolved to conquer. You have studied the land that You are forcing into subjection; You know all its dangers and obstacles already. But You know nothing of the danger that threatens You in my heart. It would be a hard task to build a highway through my soul, and the strongest steam ploughs in the world could not guarantee the desired harvest. Some soil can never





be killed; its proud loneliness gives it strength to resist every attack. Do You know that You have no humble wife? You have set a crown on an unsubmitive head.

Nevertheless we had a happy breakfast together on the verandah, and my dark forebodings were banished by the brilliant sunlight. As soon as I saw men moving at their daily work my hold on reality was strengthened. The human form had a special significance in Dalaman, where men were to be met only one at a time, and that very rarely. Except for passing nomadic shepherds few inhabitants struggled to feed themselves in these dangerous pastures. The children had swollen bodies like tadpoles and were heavy-eyed with fever, for the chronic infection defied huge doses of quinine. I hated the marshes when I thought of this suffering band of children. But the Khedive's energy had more effect than my hatred. His will and his labour were focused on the iridescent peril that must be drained. And so he went to his morning's work again. . . .

I have always been thrilled by the thought of Roman antiquity. Every step of the crumbling stair that led to the ancient rock tombs must have been difficult of achievement. The tombs were hewn out of the rock-face, like crescent-shaped amphitheatres, and were roofed with solid rock. The quality of the stone guaranteed their eternal survival, while the slender bridges that were built at the same time had long since been replaced by more solid though less beautiful structures. The streaming rains that fell in the autumn softened the soil and washed it away. A deluge of rain flooded the whole land, and



practised hands were needed to secure the tent-pegs in the sodden earth. Only a strong sense of duty and love of the work could support the pioneers who had to live alone in these tents for months at a time.

When the day of departure came and the *Mabrussa* weighed anchor, as I boarded the luxury-ship I felt all the neglected niceties of civilization close round me again, and was humiliated by the pettiness and dependence of my life.

The sight of Fahr-Ed-Din stimulated my memory and led me to Dalaman. Now he has disappeared, and so has the sun. The car appears on the winding road to the chalet. The Khedive is coming to break his fast with me.

I have not a single good photograph of myself—I was rummaging through a portfolio of old pictures just to-day, and thought that they were all unsatisfactory. In all of them the face was expressionless as a doll's, as if superficial beauty were the only quality that the eye of the camera can find in me. Photographers can seldom take good photographs. Every art that is practised professionally is destroyed in time by the profession. Perhaps my first true likeness was taken by a photographer who defied tradition, good manners and the cordon of police that surrounded me so as to register a picture of my unveiled eyes on his film. But his camera was confiscated. I remember his face to-day, for the incongruity of the clear child's eyes and the thin-lipped ironic mouth impressed me forcibly when I saw him. If his eyes had not attracted my attention I should have noticed





that he was taking my photograph—a criminal undertaking.

It happened in Cairo at the time of the Mahmal ceremony. Every year the Khedive sends a new carpet to Mecca for use in the Caaba, and the annual procession of pilgrims accompanies it on its long journey. On the evening before the festival crowds of men collect on the flat roofs of the houses that command a view of the open space beside the citadel; they sleep there, under the starry sky, waiting until it is time for the morning ceremony. Music, troops, flags—and a multitude of spectators. Cordons of police guard the places set apart for the various carriages—for harems, the diplomatic corps and private families. As soon as everything is in order the royal coach starts to drive up the hill to the citadel. Then the Khedive mounts the marble stair of a terrace that lies in front of the building which is used only for purposes of ceremony, and his ministers, officers and religious dignitaries gather around him. The camel that bears the holy carpet on its back is led up to the stair, and a corner of the carpet is raised up towards the Khedive who kisses it and holds it reverently against his brow. Then, uttering a blessing, he entrusts the carpet to the care of the Emir El Hadj, the holy man under whose guidance the pilgrim band will travel to Mecca. All eyes are fixed on the Khedive. His brilliant red fez gleams above the white turbans that surround him.

Half-veiled faces and small lightly-covered flowery hats lean out of all the windows of the harem carriages. Close to my black lacquer coupé emblazoned with armorial bearings rode a cordon



of the guard separating it from the other vehicles. Suddenly I was aware of a quizzical gaze and saw the round expressionless eye of a camera focused upon me, while the hard outline of the box stood out like a black island in the brilliant sunshine. Behind the kodak I saw an English uniform. But an Egyptian officer mounted on a white Arab horse had noticed the man's approach and guessed his unlawful purpose. He seized the camera and carried it away at his saddle-bow.

Perhaps it would have been a good likeness this time, for features that were reproduced in spite of stern prohibition might have escaped the stamp of mask-like beauty. The little episode took place in the midst of music, waving flags, blowing dust and lines of moving people who paused to snatch up the gold pieces that were thrown to them. But the sharp eyes of the Khedive saw it, as he saw everything, without appearing to look in our direction. When we met in the Abdin Palace after the ceremony the black kodak was lying on a little table.

A wave of protest rose in me. A woman's face, half-veiled and printed on a negative, is not a treasure valuable enough to be thus confiscated and delivered back to the original of the portrait. The English officer would not have taken anything essential away from me. There are so many kohl-painted eyes in Egypt, so many veiled hanums, that if the picture had been added to a collection of similar photographs it could scarcely have been distinguished from the others. It would have been absorbed in a community, just as, in real life, the individual differences in facial expression are con-





CSL

LEAVES FROM A HAREM DIARY 267  
sealed or even obliterated by the veil. I do not know the fate of the camera; but the photographer was severely reprimanded. Perhaps he valued my picture the more highly on that account.

When we come to Cairo again I must arrange for a photographer to come to Musturut, as I did last time, in the guise of a piano-tuner. But I suppose everyone will get to hear of it this time, too.

I shall never be a typical hanum, for I cannot think of an action that my conscience approves as a mortal sin. It seems to me that there is a wide gulf fixed between religion and the traditional morality adherent to it. I have the courage to distinguish between them, but others, with a hypocritical turning away of the eyes, worship formal custom instead of the truth it symbolizes. Perhaps they feel very pious so long as every single garment and every wisp of veil they wear is hallowed because it is made on a prescribed pattern. External distinction does duty for spiritual dignity. I cannot clearly picture how in old times the *sultana-khasseki*—favourites who were very much to be envied—would have looked in their more intimate and seductive *déshabillé*; but, knowing their taste in perfume and passion, I am sure that they would be discriminating enough to fly before the conventional night attire prescribed for the strict Mohammedan woman of to-day.

Our primitive ancestors were convinced that even their finger-nails were poisonous. Our great-great-grandparents believed that some of their members were "clean" and others "unclean," and that different parts of the body must be prevented





from touching the same sheet by wearing closed night-clothes. But I assert that my whole body is spotlessly clean, and that I will not envelop myself in a long-sleeved nightdress and sleep with my head wrapped up. The strong linen trousers and the high-necked shirt that ought to be drawn down over them are not amusing, like the pyjamas I wear for night journeys: why should a woman look ugly at night? I will stay true to my silk night-dresses, even if I have to conceal them from the critical eyes of my slaves. Allah! my boast has roused an avenging fate! I have just been informed that the Khedive has discharged my favourite among the ironing hands—the man who pleats so beautifully. Perhaps if I summon up courage to face the toughness of the puritanic trousers You may then be moved to recall him. . . .

It is fortunate that Ramadan does not last for a whole year. For unaccountable moods are bred in empty bellies. I feel quite unbalanced myself. Although I am not usually sentimental I waked up last night and wept aloud. At first I felt utterly alone, as if I were lost in the dark; then I had a companion—my grief. One can never be alone so long as one greets each emotion as an independent entity, even if the meeting is not always a happy one. It is a strange sensation, to be suddenly released from the dream and then, waking, to burst into tears. One may weep in a dream, but the tears are shed behind the misty curtain that separates the dream-sorrow from reality. But this dream was not satisfied until it had given me real salt tears. Some gifts cannot be investigated; they may give, or take—or warn of





the future. Perhaps this dream purposed to tear the veil off the face of reality, when it strayed from its own domain and suddenly appeared in the silence of the night standing between sleep and wakefulness.

I write all my records on single sheets of paper and keep them together, but in no special order, in a big leather case, whose expanding silk compartments get fuller as I watch. If I were to re-read these multitudinous pages I could scarcely decide to keep them—their contents would seem so definitive. The keyword is lost in the monotonous black letters. But the most trivial event is enough to give a fresh quality to my thoughts. I open a bottle of perfume, and the newly released odour evokes a sympathetic memory. *Une Rose* . . . no one would believe the visions that are conjured up by the drops of colourless perfume. *Roses* . . . the sweetest roses in the world bloom in the gardens of Chibukli, and von der Goltz Pasha shares my opinion. I am prepared to like any man who loves flowers, but I should have to like this man even if he hated them. He was German, but the Turks did not long think of him as a foreigner. He could not have been more loved at home than he was in Turkey. Perhaps the call of the East found an echo in his heart that would have been mute, unknown even to himself, in the wintry climate of the north. The Khedive often sought his company, and they both felt at home in the atmosphere created by German conversation. The Khedive had spoken German all his childhood, and the German General felt that Turkey was his second home rather than a foreign country—a second complementary home that never





obliterated the memory of the first. Each enriched the other, and the native land became more dearly treasured as the new country seemed more homely.

Last summer von der Goltz came to lunch at Chibukli. If the Khedive is in a hurry to speak to me personally he rides up from the little *selamlık* beside the sea to the palace on the top of the hill. A shaggy little foal galloped after the mare he rode that day, for in these informal rides in the garden mother and child are never separated. Goltz Pasha was expected to lunch in an hour's time. "And you must see to it yourself that we have our loveliest roses on the table, *mon enfant*."

It is fortunate that unexpected things are the rule with us, and that the whole household is used to sudden decisions. All departments are prepared for action at a moment's notice. Even if we have settled down somewhere to lead a regular life the routine can easily be changed. As soon as any one of the valets sees the empty trunks and suit-cases his trained imagination fills them with all the paraphernalia that his master needs, and the actual packing is a reflex action that can be done in a minute. As the kitchens have to attain to the same standard of speed, the casseroles are never empty. Half an hour gave the cook plenty of time to transform a *déjeuner à deux* into a ceremonial luncheon. I had no pity on the rose-trees, and as the Khedive turned to ride down to the *selamlık* I set to work on the thorns that defended them. Soon the butler had finished his work on the table in the long grey-blue dining-room. Hashim was a consummate butler; he was tall like all Berbers, and nothing escaped his attention. His long slender hands touched the





Diates tenderly as if he loved their golden coat-of-arms and their cobalt-blue rims. He set them on the table so that each crown with its satellite crescents and stars lay in exact line with its neighbour. When I appeared with my head covered with a white veil and a rose-coloured crêpe-de-chine cloak over my shoulders, Hashim's labours were over and he felt my appreciation. When the gleam of silver had lighted up the parchment tints of the intricate lace table-cloth, my own work began. Hashim held my great basket of roses for me.

Why should anyone be compelled to look at lace? I have heard a story about those mischievous evil spirits, the djinns; they danced round a needle point and made it express their cunning nature in intricate designs, and this is how lace was first made. But every sort of evil spirit ought to be forgotten on a radiant summer day—and slowly the roses covered the last mesh of the open-work cloth. I could not distinguish one coloured bloom from another in this bed of roses. They share one nature when they are indoors, but when they grew on separate bushes in the sunny garden they were friendly only with their own species. Deep purple tints, gentler red, soft blooming pink, cool elegant yellow, and the colourless severity of waxy white, all have different origins, and meet together only in the flood of perfume they exhale. The table was finished, but Hashim looked at me with more admiration than he did at my bed of flowers. Then he disappeared—I believe he mounted a donkey and galloped down to the sea where the kitchens stand in a thick circle of trees that cut off the smell of cooking.





When You see it You will be glad that You rode up here to tell me that von der Goltz Pasha was coming and that I must pick my sweetest roses. What a pity that I cannot be with them at lunch. The gossamer veil that covers my face is light enough, but it is a symbol of the weighty curtain of custom that divides us. Still I must at least try Goltz Pasha's chair . . . very soft and comfortable—and the places are set wide apart, so that every guest is free to move . . .

But the scent of the roses was not so strong when I was seated; perhaps it floated back through the open window into the sunlit garden where I gathered the flowers. Suddenly I had an inspiration that sent me up running out of the dining-room, up the wide marble steps to the first floor and into my dressing-room. Then, laden with three tall vials of *Une Rose*, I hastened back to the dining-table. Mâshallah! There was not a sign of the footmen's red and gold liveries, and I could carry out my project. Accordingly I poured a generous supply of attar of roses on the thick soft carpet that lay like a soft grey cloud under the decorated table.

After Goltz Pasha and the other guests had left the house the Khedive called me. "Do you know, *mon enfant*, that Goltz Pasha says that he has never known roses to smell so strong as they do in Chibukli." . . . To-morrow I will order the car and drive to Chibukli to see the roses blooming again.

What am I to do with my frogs? There are no more flies—Ramadan has scared them all away—and the numerous members of my pale green family are hungry and distended. The swelling seems to





be a practical procedure designed to replace food by deceitful wind. But self-deception easily leads to ruin, and wind cannot take the place of real flies. When the windows are wide open there are never any insects humming up and down the panes. Puftikrex, the most perfect frog in the whole collection, is so cross that he will not hop on to my finger. The Khedive who knew my fondness for green frogs had these collected for me in Dalaman. They were packed into little boxes with holes bored in them, and then stowed away in his pocket. Next they had to endure a long tedious ride, and finally he brought them aboard the *Mab-russa*, much shaken but still living. Now they go with me on all my travels. Hermeline found a way out of the trouble, for neither of us could bear to watch while the little creatures starved. She interviewed one of the Khedive's adjutants and besought him in my name to give his men orders to catch flies: but the flies must be caught alive and unhurt, for my frogs will not eat mutilated insects. Hermeline forgot to tell the adjutant why we needed flies, and I wonder what solution he found for the mystery. The officers know nothing about me. Contact is established between us only when they have to satisfy one of my bizarre wishes, and even then they have no clue to the meaning of the wish or to its origin. It shoots like a rocket out of a royal domain where all caprices are taken for granted, into a group of people whose purpose in life is to execute orders without question.

It is raining. Nature must be fed even in Ramadan. I feel how every wooden fibre in the chalet rejoices.





14  
It was first built as a part of a Swiss exhibit for an international exposition and bought for a whim, and then the purchaser insisted that it should be taken to pieces and transported to a foreign country in a series of crates. The foundations and the inner surface of the walls are built of Turkish stone. All the wooden fixtures, the wainscot, the slanting gabled roof, the carved window-sills and balconies proclaim their Swiss origin, but they rest on the hidden strength of another world. The Swiss chalet stands on a commanding hill, and when the wooden shutters are closed at night the heart-shaped openings in the shutters gaze with startled eyes at the sea that shines in the distance. Not even the hills and slopes that stand near it, not even the perfume of wild broom and the rustle of trees in the wood, can make the chalet feel at home. But all the wooden elements are united in one whole; every fibre, carved device and solid beam stretches and expands in the falling rain, longing for its native land. But perhaps the shady forest where the wood matured was only an illusory home community. . . .

I set the large glass bowl by the window and watch the frogs inside. They are slim and healthy again. The sailors found plenty of flies aboard the *Mabrussa*. I feel suspicious—flies in Ramadan. When the adjutant gave Hermeline the jar full of the cherished victims he knew what lay in store for them. But he could not imagine the purpose of the frogs.

Getch Pasha, Captain of the *Mabrussa*, was summoned to meet the Khedive in the *selamlık*





of Chibukli—not on the frogs' account, but to take his orders. He is an Englishman, and if he were out of uniform and one saw him in the civilian clothes that would best express his personality, one would suppose that he was a countryman with a turn for quiet meditation. One could imagine that he spent his time raising flowers or reading humorous or sentimental literature while he smoked his sweet-smelling tobacco, and that he had a quiet, capable wife. I never knew anything of his family, but his steady eyes and his whole attitude expressed a kind of imperturbable stability that contrasted strangely with his life on the rolling waves. This contrast of profession and appearance was stressed not only by the Captain's phlegmatic orders, but by the infinite longing in the clear grey-blue eyes that never seemed to sparkle. His personality would have harmonized better with a peaceful cottage life, undisturbed by adventure, than with the heavy weather that rages round the captain's bridge.

The *Mabrussa* does not carry a drop of alcohol on her journeys. But when she lies gently rocking at anchor by Chibukli the old Captain feels all the lonelier because he has nothing to do, and the prohibition of alcohol increases his sense of inactivity—Getch Pasha arrived at the Chibukli quay-side in a dress uniform that was covered with orders. But as he disembarked, foot and eye misjudged the distance between the quay and the motor-launch, and he fell very unprofessionally into the water. After this involuntary bath he returned to the *Mabrussa* for a while. The Khedive's exasperation at the delay was not relieved when he told me





that had happened, but the officers round him took a malicious pleasure in the story.

It does not seem to me that a false step on the way to an audience is more vexatious than any other accident. And if I had been cooped up for months on a stationary ship, surrounded by sailors and deck-hands, I might not be in a fit state to surmount the difficulties of landing in my stiff parade uniform. I sought for a reasonable excuse for the evil fate that overtook Getch Pasha, for I remembered that he had always been specially attentive to my wishes. Whenever we went to Dalaman I used to send all sorts of household goods and materials aboard and ask the Captain to stow them away where they would not be seen. They were little gifts for the families of the soldiers who were employed to clear the wild country round Dalaman and who had to live in most primitive housing conditions. But the Khedive did not like me to interfere in an undertaking whose direction lay exclusively in his hands.

Once when I was staying at Musturut I summoned all the women and children from the neighbouring village into the park. Then, standing on the terrace of the palace, I distributed lengths of material that were printed with brilliantly coloured flowers. The women seized their gifts with cries of joy, and their pleasure was so impulsive and violent that one might have thought they were preparing to sack the palace instead of to receive a free-will offering. They rushed across flower-beds and lawns in their impatience, jostling one another fiercely in their efforts to reach the gifts. They had to hold the material in their arms before they could believe it was their own. I had not told the Khedive





about my gifts, but when he heard of them he asked me not to do such things, for "others" might say that I was trying to make myself conspicuous and thus to accentuate my importance.

The others . . . which others? Who has the right to demand that I should submit to a standard like his own—that I should tone down my wishes and cultivate a general colourlessness simply because it is the accepted way of life here? "These others" . . . I despise everyone who criticizes and complains of me from a discreet distance, just because I am the Khedive's wife. It is a petty envy that sets them talking. But it is not my fault that my husband is the Khedive of Egypt. I did not fall in love with his kingly state. And anyhow, is it possible to define what makes us fall in love? Love and faith are feelings that cannot be analysed and supported by reason any more than they can be explained. They exist, but we do not know whence they come, though their presence is so strongly felt that we think that they must have been always within us.

Often when I want to see the Khedive in my mind's eye, I can see him smile. Does he retain his most intimate ego in his own safe keeping? Perhaps the smile hastens out to greet me, but he himself cannot follow it, for the business of life holds him back. If that were true, the picture that charms me is only the promise of something unfulfilled. Or does his essential spirit hide behind the smile; will it always evade me so long as my imagination dooms it to the confining line of the lips?

What is the spirit of man? A riddle that nobody can solve. Each man must submit to the dictates of his own ego. He is the actor and the audience





of his life—he collaborates with Fate to write the play. My dear—I cannot abandon everything for the sake of Your smile, whatever magnetism I feel in it. I know that Your mouth can set so stubbornly that You cannot vent Your anger in words—only in deeds that wound Your friends.

The glass of whisky that enlivened the Captain's loneliness ended in a dive as far as You were concerned; a similar indulgence brought me an invitation to tea. The blueness of the sea had tempted me to leave Chibukli behind, and as the motor-launch sailed past the *Mabrussa* I suddenly longed to go aboard her and to look into the cabin where I had my first dreams of Dalaman. There were hurrying steps on deck as the launch was laid to beside the *Mabrussa*, and the Captain's tall form appeared in response to our signal. He did not seem very firm on his feet, although I knew that the *Mabrussa's* anchor could hold her fast in the heaviest weather. Perhaps I ought to have gathered my long train about me and retreated up the gangway into the launch when I saw his condition, but majestic flowing garments demand a slow and dignified deportment, and one cannot turn and twist as quickly as one would like. It was a good thing that the veiled women that followed me did not know a word of English. They saw a conventional gesture of reverence, but they could not understand the speech that accompanied it. Above my veil my expression was serious and my eyes were preoccupied, but my lips smiled when the Captain with delighted cordiality invited me to take a cup of tea with him.

I am sure that it would have been a good strong





English cup of tea, but I think it would have been Getch Pasha's last cup of tea while he was in command of the *Mabrussa*. There was nothing I could do except to give him some good advice and let him hear the motherly concern in my voice. But I cut short my exploration of the yacht. My own day-dreams must not give a bitter awakening to anyone else, especially not to a man whose human disregard for ceremonial prohibition has led him to invent original ways of circumventing the law.

Once when we made an expedition to Dalaman I stayed aboard the *Mabrussa* during the whole visit. Whenever I walked on deck the Captain enquired whether I had any orders for him. I should have loved to bathe, but that was impossible. There were eyes everywhere, and veils do not give much concealment when once they are soaked through with sea-water. My kind Englishman wanted to procure a diving outfit for me, and assured me that no eye could pierce the disguise. But sea-bathing did not attract me if I had to wear such a thick costume, in spite of the charm of the original idea.

I am thankful that the Khedive could not help laughing to-day when we began to speak of the Captain's involuntary full-dress plunge. But what would he have said if he had heard of the invitation to tea or the diving-suit proposal? I have no big secrets from him, but these little personal reserves help me to keep my poor damaged independence alive a little longer.

It is curious to think that my husband has two wives. Curious? I should have said it was incredible,





286  
especially when I remember that I am one of these two wives. Even though my priority has never been challenged (for mine was a second marriage that broke off the first union without recourse to legal divorce) I feel myself incomplete. Not in regard to my personal integrity but in regard to my emotional relation to a husband who has already been married to another woman. Of course, I knew that I was not marrying a monogamous ascetic, but a Mohammedan man, and I knew that my position was not altogether sure. Perhaps thought, concentrated, hard and clear, and carried unemotionally to its logical conclusion, would fatally crack the foundation on which I have built my life. Each man builds his own emotional structure, and he is the only person who can destroy it.

I hate all complicated and scheming ways in a marriage relation, especially when they seek to conceal straightforward facts and to invest the most ordinary primitive actions with the importance of secrecy. Monogamy is not a vague ideal but a clear contract. If a man has a marital right and makes use of it he cannot pretend it has the charm of forbidden fruit. Religious law has provided that slaves shall serve certain purposes. Personal recriminations between the hanum and the *kalfa* must be avoided in the disciplined atmosphere of the harem, but one can escape from these accidental storms only with a polite frankness. Love and sexual longing are not shameful feelings. But any man who is in love and is loved by a woman, suddenly creates a new code for his conscience and adopts standards that are at variance with his previous life and his true point of view. He denies and eliminates what





he has previously valued most highly; he wishes to make his feelings appear a rare revelation because he wants to make a unique gift out of what has for years been nothing but a common occurrence. A woman whose intellectual clarity is not subordinated to her nerves will never believe him again. But no man believes in a logical woman; he will not even agree that it is possible for her to exist, because she would destroy his exalted opinion of his own sex.

This Ramadan certainly seems to recall all the past events which have distressed me most. It is almost as if it would fill me with memories instead of food. I cannot help thinking of a slave whose candour had nothing of the usual slavish humility. The knowledge that she had once been far more than a servant to her owner came to light years after my marriage, and I must confess that it came in an unexpected and rather startling fashion. We were travelling from Alexandria to Constantinople and Abbas Hilmi disembarked earlier than I did. When we had arrived in Chibukdi I asked the slave to prepare my husband's rooms as he always liked them. She answered me with two deep bows: "Hanum-Effendi, I often slept with Effendina years ago, I know what I have to do now. . . ." I believe that all three of the slaves might have given me the same answer, but only one of them was sufficiently courageous. In her tone I heard the hope she had once cherished. She had not seen me before and her past longings stirred again as she stood in my presence. Perhaps I had taken the place that she had coveted for herself and she felt that I was an intruder. The woman in her





whispered: "If the Master has married this foreign woman he must love her." There was a dead silence after her outburst. None of the slaves dared to breathe, for they anticipated another of the catastrophes that so often happen in the harem. I have since thought it strange that I felt only understanding and sympathy for the woman. I restored her calm with a smile. . . . But You might have spared me that smile.

Yesterday I saw a slave following me with her eyes, and to-day I discover that her expression reminds me of another woman. According to the dictates of religion and of social law she stood outside the circle of women who might be favoured with Your intimacy. She was a little hanum who had a good-for-nothing husband and a charming child. Perhaps these were two important factors that determined her temporary lapse from marital fidelity; perhaps love itself drove love away. She was pretty. I do not complain of her beauty nor yet of the womanly weakness that was her strength, but I do reproach You for choosing just this woman to teach me how to pray.

Can one learn to pray? Can one seize hold on faith and fit it into a rigid mould? Must there be a mediator between the human soul and its God? Must our religious feelings don special court apparel before we are admitted to His presence? Does not the original faith die if we are compelled to express it in a certain form? Is it not in silence that we stand nearest to the Godhead? Revelations won by silent wrestling in spirit are whispered from an unknown terrible isolation; they make plain a way





Through the confused darkness, and once the path has been taken there is no turning back. . . . Sometimes the voice rises clear and unmistakable in the peaceful silence; sometimes it fills a cruel desolation with life. Now I must accept the revelation in my stereotyped, inadequate way; I must clothe it in words and sentences. I must arrange it in long and short cadences according to a rhythm I have always known. . . . That time when our two prayer carpets were spread next to one another on the floor I felt how artificial were all the little hanum's gestures; every one of them was imitated and carried out after due reflection. Hers was a prayer that was expressed in the movements of her billowing silks, but in spite of her deep obeisances the regular folds were not disturbed. It was a soulless prayer that originated in superficialities, and, falling back on the material world, remained imprisoned there. The level voice pronounced the accustomed words, and they went no further than the folds of her dress.

Every religion deals with the same difficult problems that are solved only by faith in God. But these are questions that I must decide for myself. Worlds lay between me and the little hanum. But if prayer could not unite us there was no need for us to have hidden ground in common—a ground I liked none the better for the nearness of our prayer carpets. I knew just as much as the Khedive meant to conceal from me. But that is not the way to pray.

I must break myself of the habit of always writing about Abbas Hilmi as "the Khedive." The title excludes him from personal participation in most





of my dearest memories, yet everything that has happened to me for many years past has come to me through him; he has shared most things with me. It would be interesting if he were to write his own account of all the happenings I have entered in my diary, for then we should both learn exactly when our spiritual separation took place, what its origin was, how it is expressed in our daily life, and whether it is possible to bridge the gulf. But the Khedive would be the Khedive no longer if he wrote down his reminiscences. He might still be my husband, but even then he would be different from what he is now. He would probably take to smoking if he once began to change his habits. I have always been sorry that he does not smoke, for I feel a kind of vacuum in the atmosphere round a non-smoker. I miss the smoky cloud behind which there seem to lurk certain invariable characteristics which are common, I might almost say, to everyone who smokes. I always light a cigarette when I want to retire into my innermost self: I find it easier then to disregard external influences and to be intensely conscious of my own feelings. Moreover, cigarettes form connecting links in a chain of thought; I pick up with a new cigarette where I left off with the last one. If I did not smoke I should feel like a room with doors and windows wide open, where breezes blow in and out, and nothing stays inside. Even kisses do not seem perfect to me unless they have this distinctive *bouquet*. Without it the kiss is so transparently clear. One can see through it as if it were glass, and can no longer endow it with qualities it does not contain. It is a kiss and no more. As I think further,





I am convinced that teeth seem crudely exposed in the mouth of a man who does not smoke. Abbas Hilmi often complains that my kisses smell of tobacco, while secretly I regret that there is no scent of tobacco about him. Tobacco smoke is not absolute in its effect. It adapts itself, like perfume, to the scent of the individual, at the same time concealing the personal odour and increasing its individuality.

Since the beginning of Ramadan the whole chalet has smelt empty. Smoking is as strictly prohibited as eating, until after sunset, and the few cigarettes that I can have in my bedroom after the second meal are soon smoked. Every morning I am repelled by the unaccustomed emptiness of the atmosphere and feel it hostile to me. Perhaps the Khedive would not race through his day's work so fiercely if he smoked. It is incredible to see how calmly he goes on being restless. Every minute of the day must be filled; he must be for ever working and planning. I am most conscious of this compulsive hurry when we are travelling in Europe, not here in Constantinople where I feel that we are at home. The plan of campaign is prepared long before we start, and we know exactly how long we shall stay at the various European cities and spas, even our daily programme is decided ahead. But when we actually arrive and have to put our plans into operation, there is always a great deal added. The Khedive can tolerate an almost ceaseless round of activity, even if it leads him on a wild-goose chase. He can never be still, and he succeeds in inspiring a breathless haste among the numerous people of his environment, and keeping them in a continual hurry.





The breathless chase over Europe usually culminates in a visit to Paris, for it is here that we make most of our purchases. Within a few days of our arrival one of the rooms is filled with parcels. The Khedive must choose everything for himself. Lunch makes the first interruption in the shopping; it proceeds again during the afternoon, and there is a crowd of people to see him when he returns tired out to the hotel in the evening. Then he must deal with his correspondence, as well as give the necessary social and business interviews. And when at last he has finished the tasks of the day, he slips into his dinner jacket as briskly as he hastens from one duty to another during the day, and settles down with a light heart to eat his dinner. Then, in the theatre, he follows the entertainment with unflagging enthusiasm and enjoys it as much as any child. Afterwards we drive out to Neuilly, to the noisiest, busiest fair in the world. The Khedive pushes his way through the crowd, dragging me after him by the hand. We stop in front of all the stalls, and between whiles I lose a hundred francs taking cockshies at floating eggs, so that my dress, which is now absolutely sticking to my body, may have time to dry.

We quarrelled once when we were at Neuilly, just as most fair-going couples do. I was at the end of my tether, and my favourite dress was in the same sad state. Our car stood at the entrance gate, but the prospect of retracing my steps to reach it filled me with such horror that my paralysed feet would not move a step. There was no alternative but for the Khedive to fetch the car, and, to show that the gate was only a stone's throw away, I soon





heard the chauffeur's voice through the noise of the crowd. Now, however, I was in no hurry to go, for I had mounted the merry-go-round, and rode in a cooling circle on the back of a pig. I could not have dismounted even if I had not enjoyed the ride, for I had no money with me and the Khedive was obliged to pay for my release. Then, hot and sweating, we took our places in the royal car and sat there in unprincely bad temper, while the crowd shouted angrily at us. Each of us was thankful to reach the hotel.

The Khedive feels happy in a crowd. Perhaps it is because, so long as he is in Egypt, he is secluded from ordinary contacts by tense cordons of police and by the bodyguard that always surrounds him. He likes best of all to visit fairs and exhibitions, and here he follows all that there is to be seen and studies the machinery and implements with the closest attention. When we stay in Vienna we visit "Venice in Vienna" every evening, and ride home on a third-class tram after the entertainment is over. He cannot keep away from switchbacks, trams and funicular railways. He does not only look at machinery, he becomes absorbed in it, and waxes enthusiastic as he inspects an express engine. With these mechanical interests it is natural that he should be a good engine-driver. When we reached the boat train at Dover, on our way to London, a group of railway engineers were waiting for the Khedive. They invited him to travel with them in the cabin of the engine, for they knew that he was accustomed to drive his own train in Egypt, so he stood beside the engine-driver all the way to London. Despite his glasses and dust-coat he was





as black and disreputable as his colleague when he alighted at the terminus—much to the astonishment of the numerous gentlemen who had assembled to meet him on the platform.

Life was not more peaceful in the little watering-places than in the large towns. We were relieved of our shopping expeditions and deliveries of goods, but the requirements of the "Cures," which had to be strictly obeyed, kept us in continual trouble. It is difficult to keep a man like Abbas Hilmi on a strict diet, especially when it excludes all the dishes that he likes best. Even though he often missed a meal when he was engrossed in congenial work, still, he regarded the yearly trip to Europe as a holiday, not as a time of self-denial. The meagre diet in Kissingen, where we went to reduce his weight by a few kilos, exasperated him by its ban on fat and potatoes.

For many years we were regular visitors to the medicated baths at Divonne near Geneva. The cure required one to walk up and down in the sun on a dusty high road for hours on end, until one's tongue was hanging out and there was not a dry spot on one's body, and then to plunge into an ice-cold bath for a specially medicated shower. Whenever the scales indicated a gain in weight the physician expressed himself as delighted with the striking success of the cure, and declared that the Khedive had lost fat and put on muscle! The main problem was to keep the weeks of the cure free from engagements, for Divonne became a fashionable resort as soon as the Khedive started to pay it an annual visit. Most of the company assembled in order to see the ruler of Egypt in the delightful





Ministre of the *Département de l'Ain*, and if possible to be introduced to him. Crowds of his subjects, who in Egypt were separated from him as surely as if by the Nile Dam, surged round the bathing establishment, bowing and courting his attention. They stared earnestly into the garden of our villa, feeling exalted and happy because they were in the same town and taking the cure at the same time as their ruler. At last the Khedive's weight was satisfactorily adjusted, and he took such a friendly farewell of his doctor and his landlord that they were sure of seeing him again. The fact that the weight lost and gained were intricately interwoven in the doctor's calculations did not disturb the patient. The main thing was that he had done something about his health.

After Divonne we left the Lake of Geneva and put in a fleeting appearance at a multitude of spas. Once when we were in Aix-les-Bains, we left an important political dinner-party in the Villa des Fleurs and went into the Casino. The Khedive did not play himself, for he had a horror of unearned money—and of unnecessary financial losses—but naturally I sat down at the table. It was not my gambler's luck that made everyone look at me that night; it was my jewels and my gown. The admiration became unpleasantly obvious, and the Khedive flushed in embarrassment. I did not know how I could ease the situation. I could not unfasten my jewellery and gamble it away—I could not take off my clothes. But the Khedive's nervousness must be calmed. I must return to the hotel, take off my jewels, change my clothes and come back to the Casino. Although I did not expect good results





from the transformation, I submitted, and my escort made a way through the crowd wide enough for my great black lace hat to follow. At two o'clock in the morning I appeared again in the Villa des Fleurs, dressed in a simple morning suit. But my altered appearance led to an interesting reaction. The puritanic simplicity was a failure and the whole evening ended in a fiasco. The Khedive returned to the hotel in a bad temper and I felt thoroughly guilty.

In Vichy we met members of a harem on their travels—two old princesses, widows of Ismail Pasha. They sat on the terrace of their hotel, wrapped up in long black silk mantles, their heads swathed in white veils, exactly as though they were dressed for a stroll in the gardens of their palace in Cairo. They were listening to the orchestra while they smoked cigarettes and sat peacefully together in meditation. They are the only two princesses who have never altered their way of life; every year they take their harem with them on their European travels. Two of their companions are dead.

Ismail Pasha had four wives, and all four of them were friends although they loved the same man. Perhaps the love they shared bound them close together, and the union of their feeling developed into a reciprocated love for one another. Perhaps the four women had purged themselves of ambition and wounded vanity, and really comprehended Ismail Pasha's nature. Perhaps they appreciated his fantastic generosity, his prodigality and his insatiable desire to experience all possible and impossible sexual adventures one after another. He submitted to the fourfold Islamic marriage as to





legal restriction. All the inhabitants of his harem received a generous measure of his passionate attentions, and any energy that the harem could not absorb was used elsewhere.

Ismail Pasha's prodigality was his ruin. If he felt in the humour to scatter presents in the harem he emptied the stock of all the jewellers in Cairo, buying valuables by the dozen. Eunuchs were sent to the shops with empty handbags into which the jewellers shovelled the contents of their shop windows. And the messengers knew that they would receive presents of gold cigarette cases, diamond pins, rings, watches and chains out of the bags they carried home.

When Ismail Pasha gave presents, he oppressed the recipient with gifts. When he loved, he monopolized the lady of his choice. When he built, he razed a quarter of the town to the ground, and was so impatient that he would scarcely give his thousands of workmen sufficient time to clear away the débris. He must have his new houses planned and built in the twinkling of an eye. He did not distinguish between day and night; there was no time when work stopped. Under a blazing sun or under the flare of torches the work of carrying, hoisting, bricklaying, planning and organizing went on. For the prodigal will that drove the workmen along at such breakneck speed was in its turn driven by desire—the desire of an omnipotent man who thought only of one woman whether he was waking or sleeping—of a beloved Empress. He would have pulled down every building in Egypt if he had been able, and sent pyramids, royal tombs, stones of Karnak rolling into the





depths of Joseph's well. He would have turned the desert into a wooded oasis and drained the eternal Nile until it was a sweetly scented garden, if he might have laid his own creation at the feet of the woman who reigned absolutely in his heart and burning senses. Her witchcraft had inspired all his gorgeous dreams, and in addition it brought desolation and ruin on the country he had inherited.

His will had such power that even the women who loved him were swept into the magic circle of his love for another. And such was the integrity of his passion and its dominance over his heart, mind and body, that the legitimate wives who loved him were moved with love for this other woman. She was queen not only of Ismail Pasha's heart, but of the French empire: beautiful Eugénie.

A whole district of the town was built expressly to give an illusory reminder of Paris to this bewitching lady with the fine profile. The Palace of Gezira arose, and the wide avenue leading from the palace gate into Cairo. Deep holes were dug in the ground and rare trees planted in them. The garden grew green and blooming as quickly as a garden on the stage, and inside the great palace silk tapestries were already being hung. A procession of carts piled high with heavy crates rolled continually down the avenue, for all the furnishings destined for the Empress's apartments came from her own country.

Then the august and exalted Empress—Ismail Pasha's idolized fairy princess—expressed a desire that was both original and whimsical. She must ride through the city on an ass. And so great was her seductive power that Ismail Pasha was her





humble partner on the donkey ride—he, who was used to protect his sacred form from any chance contact in the streets by erecting a barrier of pompous ceremony round him. The ride of the Empress and the Khedive made the Egyptian people understand more of Ismail Pasha's astonishing devotion than had all his destructive and constructive building projects. As soon as the news reached the royal harem the princesses began to prepare themselves to receive the Empress. Many royal ladies had passed in and out of the harem, and the splendid pomp that distinguished every article in it had been a revelation even to jaded eyes, but the Empress was not only an Empress—she was the love of the beloved Master.

Long after Ismail Pasha's death and the death of his son Tawfik, when young Abbas Hilmi was Khedive, a white-haired, black-robed woman used to travel to Egypt every year. She was the ex-Empress Eugénie. Her first visit was to Ismail Pasha's widows. The Empress and the Grand Princesses were united in mourning for one man, just as, in their youth, they had been bound together by the love they bore him.

Ismail Pasha's widows with all the royal harem travelled to Europe every year. They retained their vital interest in life and wanted to see new countries and towns and fresh customs. But not even during their travels did they modify the course of their daily life. It was not only their strict observance of religious instructions and traditional forms that determined this course of action; stronger than any other influence was the lively memory of the glorious Khedive, Ismail the Magnificent, who had





done so much for his beautiful Circassian slaves. The old princesses used to stay in a separate part of the hotel with an entrance reserved specially for their use, while they were residing in Paris. The service was the same in Paris as it was in the Zafarani Palace in Cairo. The harem was simply transported: eunuchs, slaves, secretaries, and servants, gold dinner services, linen—everything.

Every afternoon a closed coupé rolled along the Champs Élysées to the Bois de Boulogne; it was the most elegant of all harem equipages. Next to the coachman there was a black eunuch in a stylish redingote, and the two hanums, their faces hidden by white veils, sat in the twilight of the closed carriage.

Ismail Pasha was devoted to his grandson, Abbas Hilmi. In the dynasty of the Khedives succession is from father to son, but family love always misses out one generation and the grandchild takes the son's place. The father's careless, almost hostile indifference to his son does not seem to arise from jealousy or from feelings of anticipated rivalry, for the grandchild will succeed to the throne as surely as the son. Possibly the origin of the intermission of family love is determined by an inherited characteristic which lapses in one generation and regularly appears in the next.

The Khedive stores the weapons he received from his grandfather in a locked cupboard in the Kubbeh Palace. When he showed them to me he handled the mementoes with unaccustomed tenderness, almost with filial piety. That day he gave me a little gold matchbox that the Empress Eugénie had given Ismail Pasha. It lies beside me as I write,





and on the delicately graven border I see the intricate monogram of the ruler who knew the secrets of love.

Perhaps I shall yet regret that Ramadan lasts for only thirty days, for I have grown accustomed to write down my thoughts every day. I should not persevere so steadily at my task were I in Musturut, for the great black piano would tempt me too much. But here in Chiftlik I am in the midst of a stimulating loneliness that I should not feel if the external environment were altogether sympathetic to me. The Khedive chose the *décor* of the chalet with me, but our selection was influenced by the knowledge that none of our visits there would last for long. On account of this indistinct background I feel free and unencumbered, almost as if I were a passing hotel guest in the summer season. At Chiftlik I can easily write down opinions that I could not express in Musturut. They would seem weightier there than here. In the chalet I am a creature that recognizes no responsibilities. I am like a moving wisp of spirit that owes no allegiance to the ego that stays behind at home. Perhaps I shall never read these pages again, for I feel repelled by memories when once they are written down. I do not read even the Khedive's letters, although I have preserved them all. Words and letters are bound up with a certain date, and if they were inspired by a definite occasion they are left behind with it. Besides it has always irked me that one must set down an idea in writing in order to define it.

One morning I received an unpleasant note from the Khedive. He was already in the Abdin Palace





where he was holding an official reception, and I was still at home in Musturut and had intended to meet him for the first time at our luncheon in Abdin. He complained in the note that I had invited some ladies to tea on the previous day without letting him know. (The Khedive has never liked me to receive company, not even other women. He would be delighted if I could grow bigger or smaller, according to his immediate wishes or needs, so that he could put my tiny form into his pocket when I cannot go with him in my right size.)

But I had not invited any ladies to tea: the Khedive had been misinformed, as so often happens. When I arrived at the palace he received me with beaming smiles, for as soon as the letter was signed and sealed my wretched tea-party had passed out of his mind. But his orders had to be carried out to their conclusion although his interest in the matter had waned long before I read his letter. My dear—I have had love letters from You too. Do You still remember that I sent You an official communication which had an absolutely personal postscript at the end? You wanted to read that aloud with the rest of the letter, but after a few words You realized the nature of the message. You did not care if the audience were puzzled by the inconsequence of the last few words.

Do You know that although I have lived with You for so long I still cannot predict exactly what things will please and what will annoy You? It is because You suspect that hidden meanings lurk behind quite trivial events that have no such significance. You can sulk all day long like a child if





CSL

## LEAVES FROM A HAREM DIARY 29

anything annoys You, and perhaps it will be months before I hear what lay at the root of the trouble. Nowadays, when You come to Chiftlik in the evening, You cast suspicious glances at the ash-tray. But You do not know me. If I smoked in Ramadan I should tell You. I have not to satisfy Your conscience but my own, and even if it acts differently from Yours, still it has the courage of its convictions.





## CHAPTER VI

## MODERN STAMBOUL

So everything lies behind me—veil, harem, marriage, Egypt. And yet I am as far as ever from being free. Everywhere I come on things I should like to avoid, but my daily life relentlessly hurries me into them. My old enemies, Loneliness and Strangeness, have laid hold on me and mockingly reveal the growing emptiness within me. I can see my way no longer. I feel like an unmasked dancer that has come to a fancy-dress ball unprepared, borne into it accidentally by the senseless noise and bustle of Carnival.

A new life . . . with this misleading phrase the idea of tense, self-confident assurance comes involuntarily to my mind—the idea of a man with head erect, advancing with firm step to meet new opportunities. But this would be a picture of an insolent self-centred world. In real life we slip into garments that are already prepared and adapt ourselves to their shape by imitating what has gone before. It is only by so doing that we can deceive ourselves into believing that we are not alone. But at midnight, at the beginning of a new day, comes the unmasking. Even if we prefer to leave the festive scene, to keep the disguise and go home, still we know that time has unmasked the domino.

The *charshaf* and the veil lie folded together in a closet, their day is over. Over? . . . Many years of my life lie in those soft yielding folds, woven into the silky threads and caught in the transparent mesh of the veil that used to hide my face. Did not





the drapery cling to my own figure? Did it not cover my own face? Or did the garments evoke a new ego which cannot now break away from its accustomed coverings, while the clothes that called that ego into being will not set it free because, lying in the depths of the dark wardrobe, they fear to face a shattered dream.

Dreams fade—people must remain. Since when have souls been governed by dead things whose vitality depends only on the will. Or did some power other than my own direct this pantomime of souls which has obscured my real ego for so long that it has faded away. My inner emptiness sinks to hollow depths; its vacancy oppresses me more than the heaviest burden.

Emptiness is my enemy—I cannot bear it. I must fill it to the very limits of my capacity for perception. Every memory that might remind me of the nothingness that has been must be replaced by a new abundance. My dreams can only come true when I have discovered and recognized “myself” once more. But first I must tear out every thread of my life from the idle loom of the past.

A fresh burden of pain weighs down every hour. My home lies behind me—and no fatherland is waiting to receive me. I have abandoned one world so as to adopt another, and now I must bear its revenge for my desertion. I must learn anew how to think, to learn and feel. I must get used to the streets, to contact with people, to daily life. I must overcome my shrinking protest when the pressure of existence seeks to destroy dreams that have always been carefully guarded. I must consciously and wilfully come to terms with things that would





have been ignored in my earlier remote life. I must finally decide to walk in the streets with my face bare, telling myself that no one can see or learn anything by merely looking at me, and that an unveiled face reveals just as little as a veiled one.

I was still in ceaseless conflict with myself when my personal life was overwhelmed by a shattering world catastrophe in which every individual fate lost its value and significance. The War hurled everything into chaos; it plundered, banished and dethroned. Abbas Hilmi II was no longer Khedive of Egypt: he had lost his throne and his country. The spirit of his ancestors bade him face abdication and loss, and the lure of power could not silence the demand. Turkey had been the native home of his dynasty, and as Turk and Moslem he could not range himself against his own country and his fellow-believers. So the Sultanate and Caliphate ended with the last Osman ruler, and Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, gave Turkey the freedom of a republic. The spirit of the times tore down walls, gratings and veils, and the harem made way for women's rights to self-determination. I had a strange feeling as if the freedom of the Turkish women were a personal gift to me. And through this feeling I became aware of the threads that bound me to them, and made nothing of all that separated us, in spite of our differing personal experiences. Gradually the threads multiplied and grew stronger, always insistently drawing me back to the changed, the liberated world. My longing was reawakened.

Then came a summer evening when restlessness drove me out into the warm blossoming night.





There was enchantment in the air. It was as if the summer night had granted me access to a far-distant friend who spoke out of the darkness and reminded my heart that somewhere a part of myself was waiting to welcome me on my return to the world. I walked slowly, listening to the call, not feeling the ground, because my feet longed to tread that other ground where expectation led me. The dark leafy tree-tops whispered persistently, but they did not tell the tale of their own life—they voiced a distant wish. The bushes seemed to bow and change their form; a heavy compelling fragrance drew everything closer together, binding all these flowering trees into a vast lengthening sheaf and covering them with a web spun of moonbeams. There were trembling shadows on the ground whose outlines had been decreed by the contours of far-away objects. Visions arose . . . the sea, the shore, the mountainous desert—all pervaded by the sharp scent of blossoming broom.

When, a few days later, I climbed into the train to go to Stamboul, I fulfilled my dearest wish, and during the journey I had a pleasant feeling of happy independence. My thoughts were in harmony with the sound of the rolling wheels and seemed to share their rhythm. The long distance that separated departure from arrival was lessened with every kilometre, and with it the interval of years that lay between this journey and the one before it. I was soon standing on the very platform where the Khedive and I had been used to get into the train together to start on our yearly summer tour. But the absence of the fez and the presence of unveiled women warned me that I must not look back.





At first it was hard for me to identify Stamboul with Constantinople. In my visual memory of the earlier picture of the streets I had retained the glowing red of the tarboosh and the muffling black of the women's clothes, and against them the startling white of turbans. And although I had followed from a distance all the phases of the reforms, including the suppression of national dress, I had to accustom myself to the altered appearance of the street crowds, now that they were dressed entirely in European clothes. The rare sight of an isolated *charshaf* without a veil did not belong to the general picture. The black silhouette seemed like a pattern that had no value, like a useless antique that was so faded and depreciated by age that it did even bring me a vital memory of the closely veiled *charshaf* I had worn myself. And always the face that looked accusingly out of the black silk folds was the wrinkled face of an old woman, like a story written on old parchment. The young people smiled sympathetically as they hurried by. Even if their childhood had been spent in the seclusion of the harem, still they had known freedom during their adolescence, and their development had not been impeded by barred windows and guarded doors, enclosing walls and hampering prohibitions. At last the ineffective ambition that had been repressed for so long in earlier generations of women concentrated its strength and drove this new generation forward, not only to reach new goals, but also to make up for the past. The women of Turkey pledged themselves to bear corporate witness to the strength of the will which had been held captive in their veiled ancestors.





The modern hanums have soon settled down to their liberty, for all of them realize that it is a gift that brings great responsibilities with it. Men and women work side by side in offices and banks, behind post-office counters and at the telephone exchanges, and everywhere the women's work has achieved for them the equal opportunities and equal earning capacity that the harem withheld from them for so long. Every day the numbers of women students increase, and they move confidently in their student caps to their examinations. Young people are sent abroad every year and furnished with means for their residence and their studies, and bad results in examinations often lead to the same despair as used to attend an unhappy love for an unknown man who had been seen only through a barred window. But to-day there are no muddled cross purposes in a woman's life. Self-conscious and prudent, she decides for herself not only her professional work but also the fulfilment, or the disappointment, of her love. The woman's kismet, in the guise of love, marriage and divorce, lies in her own hands at last.

Sometimes one sees truly feminine coquetry in the unveiled city—a woman who wears the suggestive old-world veil—for in spite of short hair and short skirts many women would like to be recognized as hanums. In their new phase of development this status seems much more interesting and attractive than the long-established and proven freedom of the European women. And so women's fashion veers between the European hat and the cunningly wound swathes of a turban-like headgear that demonstrates the wearer's skill. With





fascinated curiosity one follows the subtle intricacy of the folds that the hanum binds round her head, for they symbolize women's freedom in women's fashion. But in spite of a certain poverty of colour and pomp, Stamboul has retained the delicious atmosphere of Constantinople.

The city that stands on the romantic shores of the Bosphorus, with bizarre steep streets where there are surprises round every unexpected turning, remains inimitable. It will for ever surpass all other cities—incomparable, unique, alone. There seem to be different laws here for the sun, for nature and for humanity. There is a transforming influence in the radiant moving air that manages to impart liveliness of form even to men's sober and prosaic clothing. The most irreproachable frock-coat and polished top-hat seem here to contain possibilities that take away the standardized appearance from conventional European clothing. Individual vitality triumphs over uniformity of cut, even while making uniformity serve its purpose. There is a feeling of genuineness and freshness everywhere—everything is unique.

Even the street vendors have a vital sympathy with their wares. By six o'clock in the morning their tumultuous cries break in upon sleep and meditation. The gherkin seller's cry has a full green resonance; the pumpkin vendor praises his wares in a rolling tone; onions are offered without much ado, but lark-like trilling accompanies the sale of fersh almonds. Salad, cherries, apricots, pistachios, yoghurt—all have their distinctive cries. It is satisfying just to hear the cries, while a sight of the wares puts one in a good temper. Shopping is very sensibly simplified in some quarters of the town. Round





baskets are let down by cords out of the windows, the trader puts the desired goods inside, and they are drawn up. He gets his money only when the contents of the basket have been examined, and sometimes the goods fly down to him again without waiting for the basket. But the only customers who play him this spiteful trick are old women who nurse a grudge because they can no longer hang the deceitful veil before their faces. For in Stamboul housekeeping is not a burden that ruins the temper. No complicated demands are made on the marketer's memory for one can buy anything from early morning until late at night, and statutory closing hours hold no terrors. It is convenient to leave the last performance at the cinema and be able to buy one's fruit and vegetables in an alley or an archway; if one goes home laden, the useless cinema ticket is forgotten among the useful purchases.

Every day I felt more at home in my new life, and now for the first time Constantinople revealed itself to me. In the past I had spent my time here in the confines of exclusive luxury. I went from private yacht to motor-launch, then in the car from palace to chalet . . . and to-day I was embarrassed when the police official who was examining my passport wanted to know the name of my husband. When he heard it, he asked with dubious curiosity why we were not living together any longer. But it is always a hopeless task to explain anything to a police official, and on this occasion it would have been more hopelessly grotesque than usual. "Our private affairs are no concern of yours," was the only retort that occurred to me. And after that he was confident that he had





seen through me and that I was lying. Certain names lose their credibility when they are heard in incongruous surroundings by a policeman whose simple psychology can comprehend only primitive conceptions of right and wrong. I envy people whose mentality rests on such sure if shallow foundations, far from psychological whirlpools and rapids.

In these short summer months there were days when only the sun triumphed within me, consuming and overcoming the thoughts of what had to be and what I had to do—days when my greatest ambition was to tan myself dark brown without letting my skin peel. . . . Floria was a perfect place for my purpose. This beach on the Sea of Marmora seemed endowed with all the positive and negative virtues. It obliterated all that one longed to forget and gave freely what one must have and hold—youth and strength. The sunlight there did not consist of ultra-violet rays only but was able to penetrate into the most secret cells of the body and purge them of everything that should not find place in a summer dream. A row of Lilliputian houses stood on the shore. Each of them had two tiny rooms and the luxury of a shady terrace bordered with green grass. They were week-end caravans, a line of railway carriages without wheels, which had been converted into simple summer bungalows. A practical idea had occurred to some Russian emigrants who had held the monopoly of the beach for some years, and they had equipped it with bathing huts and a restaurant. One could buy wonderful ice-cold kvass and caviare that was sustaining in long-distance swimming.





I lay dreaming on the beach at Floria, and felt myself freed of all my past wishes. At last I knew how vain most of them were, and how futile. Hesitation and doubt slid away from my soul just as the fine sand ran off my body; all that I had longed for still belonged to me. The melodious depths of the wide sunlit sea, the white sailing ships that disappeared like flying birds into the blue distance where earth and sky met. Each wave and each ship was mine. And ship and wave bore me over unknown depths towards rich experience. But while I skimmed to the horizon resting under a curved white sail, still I lay on the glowing sand of the beach. I had vanished, yet I was there—one with the hot earth—my whole body felt her life.

I lay motionless, my hands empty and still. I need not stretch them out to take, for all that my mind had known was already in my power. I have taken and used it, yet I am not slavishly dependent on my pleasure. Wishes come true. The brain stands reproved—its time is past. The wretched captive cells that lie dully in the grey matter have never been touched by heat and desire. They feed their spongy tissues on self-denial, and then formulate hard dead laws. . . . I must end this trance—it is the sun that holds me captive. . . .

The next day I had forgotten all the resolutions that were intended to simplify my life, the enemy that lurked in my mind drove me to make new researches. I could never be a simple soul and live only to satisfy my hunger. My new fancy bade me visit all the photographers in search of the best photograph of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, but none of them set my mind at rest. Although I had never





seen him I knew that the quality of his expression could not be captured in a photograph. . . . It is disgraceful that one can go into a shop and buy—faces; they are delivered into one's hand without hope of escape or concealment and must reveal every feature.

I spent many hours thus, *tête à tête* with the Ghazi. I was not sorry that he did not know it. But as I read his features I thought he could scarcely react to waves of thought, for he was filled to the brim with thoughts of himself, as are all men who present a strong blend of spiritual strength and animal desire. The eyes attracted me. They always lie nearest to the brain and are swiftest to obey the command of thought and the influence of the uncompromising will, while the feature least under control is the mouth. It feels safely hidden under the overseeing eyes, sure that their glance will divert attention from it; besides its original form has been modified and concealed by its various functions. The mouth eats and smiles, it laughs, speaks, kisses, curses and prays. It is the outpost of the senses. The eyes rule the intellectual aspect of the face and the mouth rules its instinctual aspect. The nose bridges the gulf between the two worlds and acts as a frontier between the cheeks, while the ears serve as sentries, and the chin is the foundation on which all stands, and which determines the stability of the whole structure. Wishes, dreams, fancies recline on the peaceful calm of the forehead, and withdraw into the recesses of the temples. This idea comes to me whenever I study any face closely.

The pictures lay before me. I longed to know the dreams of the Ghazi. Not those that had been





realized by now in the external world, and not those whose practical opportunities for fulfilment were already being considered, but those of his dreams that rose beyond the realm of thought. The Ghazi could not have dreamed long peaceful dreams—a conqueror has no time for that. The longer I looked at his picture the more I desired to see and speak to him, and I trusted to the strength of my wishes, as I had often done before.

For days on end I wandered about, unaware of the passing hours, learning again all that I had known long ago, and which at last I saw in a new light. I sat in the great Bebek garden, beside the shining Bosphorus, and after a long interval I heard the muezzin's call to prayer. The resonance of the long-drawn-out cry contrasted strangely with the syncopation of jazz music, and I followed the sound along the peaceful moonlit shore, until I saw a dark silent figure standing by the tall entrance gate of a white palace. I scarcely believed my eyes, but there could be no doubt, the watchman defied the passage of time and wore the forbidden fez! In this palace there lived Her Royal Highness the Dowager Khedivah, Abbas Hilmi's mother.

The muezzin's call was stilled, but in the distance I heard the popular refrain, *Ali Baba*. The banks of the Bosphorus were lighted up, one by one the lamps shone out until the sparkling chain was completed, and red ship lanterns burned like fiery eyes between the glancing lines.

The last river boat! I threw myself bravely into the press, among crying children, stumbling women and laden porters. I made my way under trays of





10  
cakes rocking on heads that dripped with sweat and past bottles of lemonade—always moving on in spite of the smell of garlic and musk, for only the first aboard would find seats, and the Bosphorus is long. But the wonderful night journey did not last long enough. The students sang melancholy songs, but their eyes were not dreamy. They had a direct matter-of-fact expression, often exaggerated by spectacles, which was incongruous with the yearning melody they sang. Some eyes awakened regret in my mind, for I could see no searching depth under the long dark lashes. Horn spectacles had brought objects nearer to them and made them more clearly defined, and hard facts had changed the dreamy glance that may have been unpractical but was always bewitching. Opposite me sat a delicate girl student with a porcelain complexion and spectacles that made a startling contrast with her glowing red lips. It seemed as if her face spoke to me clearly: "I might have been one woman, and now I am another. Always I must be practical and nerve myself to meet the claims of my daily life."

I spoke to an old pasha about the girl, and he smiled sympathetically as he said, "If young people want to find happiness they can find it only in love." Allah let him keep this faith of a Firdausi!

The kindly white-bearded pasha was still rooted in the age of romantic reflection. But as he sat, remote and yet observant, fingering the amber-yellow beads of his rosary, I could almost have envied him his belief in love—if only he had not been so old. For love had not protected him from old age. Perhaps, also, he had set too high a value on love, and for that reason had never met her





face to face. Love did not wish to undeceive him and she hid herself so that she might keep her glamour.

All knowledge leads to disillusionment, as every stray dog in Stamboul knows well. An inconspicuous new race of street dogs has been brought up on this knowledge, whereas the old breed that has been exterminated was burly and warlike, as if they were the last remaining hounds of the janissaries. As I walked about the streets I saw slender little dogs with tails like acorns who had no other striking features, for the fate of their forbears had warned them not to attract attention. There were not many of them, and they seemed prudent enough to limit the reproduction of their species as if they knew that men would always contrive to make life hard for animals. The cats that slunk along the walls were often so thin that they seemed like empty bags of fur. They were companions in misery, united by a common hunger. And their behaviour to one another was irreproachable when they met by the great garbage heaps that lay scattered on the ground in the mean streets beside the middens. The long dumb martyrdom of animals has not yet reached the "civilized" average, and their suffering so tortured my nerves that it almost made me greedy for money, so that I could help them. I often used to stroll through the streets by night, for the animals' hunger seemed less acute in the dark. In my own quarter of the town I was soon recognized as a nightly apparition that might be trusted by all the cats and dogs. My favourite friend lodged beside a tumble-down wall where a dervish's cloister had once stood. She was a clever





32  
black bitch who used to recognize my step from far off. A secluded stairway led down to the deserted place where she had hidden her puppies among the stones. It was a full moon. I sat on a shaky stone step, the black dog beside me, and the things I said to her must have won her confidence for she slipped away and came back carrying a puppy which she laid in my lap. The mother watched all my movements intently and then repeated her performance, each time returning with another tiny, warm puppy, until eight little heirs to the misery of the streets snuggled themselves against me. . . .

Turks are not by nature more cruel than any other people. But they live so hard a life themselves that they have grown indifferent and careless of their animals' needs. Their pack-animals go panting and sweating through the uneven streets, so hidden under mountainous loads of house furniture that they look like moving bales of goods. Daily misery has so taken possession of their exhausted bodies that they do not feel acute suffering any longer.

What is the use of feeding beasts that are doomed to destruction? When one cannot even hope to make such rickety skeletons capable of breeding young, would it not be better to attack the problem directly, rather than to pass a series of timid by-laws and regulations—to sentence misery to death rather than the miserable animals. Their bellies cannot be filled with sighs and remorse, only with food.

But the sun lured me on. Not a sun that made the asses' burdens heavier to bear, but another that sent out kindly holiday beams. Beside the Galata bridge a double row of inviting pleasure-boats lay





Waiting to carry the painted and powdered crowd of holiday-makers over the glassy smooth sea-water to country inns standing in scented woods, or to peaceful coves, or across to one of the flowery islands. The boats had the right holiday atmosphere, which contrasted pleasantly with the *bourgeois* utility of ordinary days. With every turn of the paddle the passengers were carried farther from the troubles of workaday life. Their year-long routine and discipline and all their worrying fancies and memories were left behind on shore, and a day of perfect happiness lay before them.

How can a single day counterbalance perpetual poverty? How can one justify oneself for getting away from the misery of people who have equally good reasons for going, but who cannot get away? How can one eat appetizing food among a spend-thrift holiday crowd when at the same time, and only a stone's throw away, desperately hungry people crouch panting on the streets, craving for food. Even if one cannot believe in human kindness any longer, at least one can appeal to a reasonable sense of order that expresses itself tyrannically enough in the immediate home environment of every individual citizen. Inanimate objects are kept clean and in good order; everything is thus made easier for the next undertaking and a clear road is prepared for it. It would make little difference to poverty if it were abolished because pity stimulated us to make reforms, or because we wanted to clear obstacles out of our path.

How abysmal is the failure of our human perceptions if a neighbour's despair does not disturb our peace! And how ironically misleading is the





conviction of our own right to exist if we can look on at the most primitive needs of others without missing a heart-beat. A travesty of life dwelt in the houses of Stamboul, and a travesty of death in the streets, and nothing—neither sun, sea, nature, thought, remembrance nor piety—could wake these isolated individuals out of their sinful lethargy. Nothing is impossible until it is stamped as being impossible. At the moment when one man feels the suffering of another as if it were his own he feels also the necessity to help. I can never be an observer, for what happens to another happens to me. My soul and body multiply themselves so as to experience every suffering, and nothing is foreign to me, neither man nor beast, poverty nor hunger. I feel all tortured creatures in my blood, my brain and my heart, in a double intensity, as themselves and as my own ego. And this feeling gives me courage to hurl myself against any superior force when I see men trying to drive senselessly overloaded carts, while they rain blows on the trembling foam-flecked animals between the shafts. The police have strict instructions to intervene in any case of cruelty to animals, but often there is no helpful policeman within call. The licensed method of transporting poultry from place to place reminds one of a medieval torture. Hundreds of birds are crowded together in a great wooden box, and under a burning sun are carried to and fro rocking on a porter's back until death releases them from their long torment. The wooden box is thrown on the floor before each customer, a brutal hand gropes in the living feather-bed, seizes several specimens, and throws them down on the pavement like dead





things. After the chosen bird has been snatched from one hand to another, and the haggling and paying are completed, the other birds are pushed back into the crate without any attention to their heads and feet, which often remain stuck between the wooden bars. All their beaks are gaping with thirst and the parched tongues stick out of the mouths; finally the birds that cannot be sold on one day are trailed along on the next. Compared with this agony the usual painful method of holding fowls by their feet with their heads hanging down seems a happy fate.

For more than an hour I followed a man who was carrying a puppy in this way, while he dragged the weak old bitch after him on a heavy chain. I kept speaking gently to the man, and reinforced my pleas by offering him cigarettes until he agreed, and I set the dogs free from their intolerable position and laid them in their master's arms. But scarcely had he made off when I saw the dog struggling after him on her hind legs once more. My anxiety was allayed when the man boarded a ship—but the dog's misery went on.

I have seen oxen whose ears had been half cut away, "on account of the heat," as the driver explained, and it is quite usual to beat animals along with iron staves and shovels or sticks studded with nails. I have often hesitated to interfere lest the animal should afterwards be punished with redoubled fury, and then I realized that the man who owned the cart was no better off than the animal between the shafts. One miserable creature belonged to another. But the misery of animals is a more insoluble problem than human distress, for





16  
Dumb animals have no strength to shake off their bondage and no aims of their own. They are utterly defenceless against their master's cruelty although they are his best allies. We are all to blame that this state of affairs has lasted so long.

Some reforms are being made nowadays in the schools, where the ghastly results of thoughtless cruelty to animals are demonstrated to the children by educational films. Many pamphlets are written on the subject, and the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals are actively seeking new members. But still these remedies are not drastic enough successfully to combat the public lassitude and unconcern, and the heartless proverb, "Every man is his own neighbour," is put into practice in the peaceful warmth that is able to soothe the most troubled conscience. A widespread emotional passivity exists which after a time can numb even newcomers to the city. Somewhere in the atmosphere lurks the vengeful inhibiting influence of past ages. Lifelong habits, dying traditions, uncontrolled impulses, new possibilities and old-established faults wrestle and strive with one another, and external forms that have already been discarded still lie rotting in the last stages of decay.

For the second time in my life I regret that I am not a man who might justify his residence in Turkey not only by identification papers but by deeds and labours. Although a measure of equality between the sexes now exists all over the world, there is still a dividing line which separates the men's from the women's camp, in spite of the work and the responsibilities they share together. However narrow the division, it results in the assump-





son that qualities of objectivity and impersonality, still more the power to subordinate a whole life to one idea, belong to the masculine camp. But the qualities that are labelled masculine and feminine do not stand in opposition to one another, they are complementary traits. And when we come to determine the general utility of an individual to the human race we can know only by an acid test whether the component characteristics, masculine and feminine, are present in equal concentration.

From day to day I felt more strongly the enervating menace that brooded over Stamboul. It was difficult to keep purely spiritual aims clearly in mind in such a rich sensual atmosphere. Misty peace emanated from deserted palaces and overgrown gardens, from the uneven yielding outlines of tumble-down wooden houses warped by the sun, and from ruined walls destroyed by fire, where brightly coloured wild-flowers covered the emptiness of roofless rooms. Inhabited and uninhabited, solid and ruined, useful and useless, all were inextricably mixed together. Useless things dwarfed the importance of those that were most necessary, and the solidity of any practical structure seemed dreamy and unreal in the fading atmosphere of the past. The banks of the Bosphorus are thickly sewn with the eternal perils of fairyland. Magic stirs in the waves, rustles in the dense green forests and rests on white-cliffed islands and in creeks scented by pine-woods.

The sea and the sun are the real conquerors. They flood the waiting city with a dreamy bliss that pours into the streets and houses, and takes possession of the inhabitants, even of the poor and needy. A





fragment of this unreal dream-world pervades every breath that is drawn and controls every beat of the heart.

The Ghazi understood the danger, and realized that even victors cannot join battle with nature. He chose a bare, lean spot for the seat of his new government, like a permanent quarantine station that was not permeated by the dangerous infection. In Ankara—the city of the future—this lethargic reactionary influence would not be felt in the very bricks of the houses. The dictates of the New Era would be expressed in new streets and houses, new buildings and monuments. And from Ankara Stamboul would be governed.

New laws secured the lion's share of financial opportunity to Turkish subjects. An order was already in force which provided that only Turks should practise in many professions, for instance, as doctors, dentists, midwives, chemists, engineers, lawyers, bakers and ships' pilots, while the only exception was made in favour of those foreign dentists and doctors who already had Turkish qualifications. New by-laws were passed to speed up the traffic. Traffic police were posted on raised islands in the street, where their patience was tried to the utmost by all sorts of different conveyances, laden asses, mules and horses, and by careless foot-passengers. A new race of chauffeurs was soon on the streets, for the necessary driving licence was issued only to Turks. Their self-confident despotism was soon modified, and they no longer dared refuse to take a fare on the ground that the distance was too short to be worth while. These chauffeurs were wonderful drivers, and drove down the most pre-





capitous hills and up the roughest mountain roads with the same casual equanimity, or picked their way through the obstacles of the typical Turkish streets with playful, noisy dexterity. But perhaps all these alert and skilful chauffeurs would have failed completely on the smoothly polished surface of the *Sieges Allee* in Berlin.

While I was in Constantinople a fire broke out in the neighbourhood of my hotel, and the fire brigade of four gigantic Benz cars equipped with ladders that reached almost to heaven were on the spot within a few minutes. But in spite of the driver's skill it was half an hour before the long bodies of the cars could pass the hair-pin bend in the street. I had to think of the former firemen, the *tulumbadjis*, whose vague incompetence had been the only available help whenever fire broke out. I could not imagine that the ramshackle brigade had functioned more efficiently centuries before, when the law demanded that the sultan be present in person at every fire. Probably the presence of the dreaded sovereign had a paralysing and bewildering effect on proceedings, for his help did not consist only in his superfluous presence, but in threats to decapitate the unlucky firemen—and that in itself would be enough to make them lose their heads. Involuntarily I compared two scenes in my mind's eye: the picture of this antique tragi-comedy and of the fire that had lately raged in Ankara, where the Ghazi had directed operations from two o'clock in the morning until the next evening without a single interruption. On account of the great fire in Ankara all the festivities which should have celebrated the Constitution Day on the twenty-third of





July were cancelled. Only countless flags decked the crowded streets.

My thoughts go back to the night when the Chibukli Palace was illuminated and for the first time the full strength of the dynamo was used, an electric power which was sufficient to flood the whole Bosphorus with light. Thousands of electric bulbs were burning at once and made a glowing chain on the panelled ceilings of the long galleries. Every window and door was opened, and light streamed out of all the houses and palaces and uniting them in the joyful night air.

The entrance gate of Chibukli stood wide open, so that anyone might come in. Cushions and seats had been erected under the ancient trees, and rugs were spread on the lawns, while hurrying servants passed round refreshments. The atmosphere of seclusion had suddenly been changed, and new links with the outside world were forged as the guests surged in. One felt that the old régime of isolation was over, although many barriers and restrictions still remained. It was as if the passage of time was arrested no longer and that its steady march would do away with all futile and burdensome conventions. The confining head-cloth would not hold its own for long before the great wind that had begun to blow away all veils and concealments. And the centuries-old shadow in the background—the harem—was losing its dark contours while its right to exist disappeared in this festive illumination.

All this happened on July 23, 1908, on the day when the disastrous rule of the autonomous sultanate finally gave place to the constitution. Turkey's path had led through centuries of





harem, and now it emerged on the way towards liberty. A free Turkey rose from the dying Osman empire. The crisis brought to light a man who incorporated the *viribus unitis* in one person. He was not a man striving blindly after success—he seemed the very incarnation of triumph. On October 29, 1923, Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, was unanimously elected President of the Republic.

And at last I was to see the man who had made no promises but had achieved miracles that exceeded all promises—the man who felt his will to be so compelling that traditions of thousands of years' standing were to him already a defeated foe as soon as he challenged them to active combat.

When I saw the Ghazi for the first time, this "seeing" was so personal a matter for me that I find it hard to distinguish between the series of pictures that passed before my eyes. I was on the beach at Floria, one of a crowd of tanned bodies lying on the hot sand. The smooth sea was crowded too, and white sails glided slowly by as the sun was sinking. Two boats were drawing near, and the Ghazi's flag flew at the mast-head of the bigger ship. A shout from a thousand throats echoed over the sea and flooded the beach, the tents and all the little cabins and summer-houses: The Ghazi! The Ghazi!

I sprang into a boat in my dripping bathing-costume, dragging my friends after me. "Quick—row out to the boat." I have usually been afraid of rowing-boats, but my fear left me then. I must see him! The same wish inspired thousands of other people; each face was beaming and each body





2  
tense. Suddenly we all felt strong—and always we were drawing nearer to the ship.

Then I saw the Ghazi! He sat at the bow of his boat in an open white shirt, his escorts standing on each side of him. At last our boat laid to beside his. He turned his head slowly towards me, for my tense expectation had attracted his notice, and for a second I felt the power of his eye and realized the stormy vitality of his will. My friends clapped their hands; I scarcely recognized them as the thoughtful men with whom I had discussed psychology for hours at a time. The boat drifted, for the oars swung idly with the tide and all hands were used for better things—for clapping.

I was not conscious of the cold clasp of my wet bathing-dress, nor did I worry for a moment how I looked—all my heart was in the clapping and shouting. The Ghazi smiled and graciously stood up to bow; suddenly we felt he had done us an honour. That a ceremonial gesture of courtesy should have affected us thus at the present day witnessed to the power of his personality. Each man realized what the Ghazi had achieved. But one does not choose the moment when one sits shivering in a bathing-suit to direct one's energies to estimating the value of great deeds. In this *déshabillé* the primitive veil of the bathing-dress divides perception from comprehension, and pure intuition is all that is left one. Moreover the power that the Ghazi conveyed in a single glance belonged to the realm of elemental forces.

Meanwhile the Russian band had seized their instruments. They ran down to the sea and threw themselves into boats, and the Volga Boat Song





echoed over the sea as the sun went down. They were emigrants who sang the song of home and perhaps their voices rang out with more longing than usual because the hero in whose honour they were singing embodied their ideal of success and liberty. The emigrants had sacrificed all—their country and the home of their birth—for the sake of their belief in freedom and their confidence in their leader; and now, in a strange land they sang to a leader that had never disappointed the belief and confidence of his followers.

The Sea of Marmora was altered until it looked like a Venetian lagoon, and in the midst of all the other boats floated the boat with the Russian singers. A naïve country girl asked the Ghazi to board the little skiff she was rowing, and he went down his own white ship's ladder and simply and graciously took his place beside her. An adjutant followed him, for adjutants and escorts have to justify their existence by preserving a certain decorum. But the girl's arms were not strong enough for a boatload of three passengers. Another oarsman had to come to her help before the President's impromptu boating-party could glide along the Floria beach, past the close rows of people and through a continual storm of applause, back to his own yacht. Music followed him all the way.

The next day I was possessed by a more urgent fancy. In a temperature of  $104^{\circ}$  in the shade I undertook a tour of investigation through the new public works. The electric power station in Silidar proved that machines are more tractable than men. In spite of racial differences, all nations, Germans, Hungarians, Czecho-Slovakians, French and English,





united to serve one object: to supply the Bosphorus with light. Twenty thousand volts, three hundred employees, explained my guide. I was not attracted by the infernal noise and the many painted skulls, and was glad to see the smooth peaceful sea again. My longing to get cool drove me into the ice factory near Sutlidje, into a wintry atmosphere. The frosted pipes looked like snowy boughs. There were great ice-rooms for meat, eggs and butter. Engines were working all the time, and the smell of ammonia was so strong that one could scarcely breathe. I saw thousands of long transparent blocks of ice being made and my brain began to freeze. "Three of our employees have been killed here already," comforted my guide.

In the open air again, my eyes lighted on the far side of the Bosphorus, where lay Ejub Djami, the mosque in which the former sultans were girded with the sword. A white cloud fluttered round the slender minarets with quivering brilliance—it was a cloud of thousands of doves. I prayed that they might be doves of peace. The newly-wakened land needs to concentrate all her strength upon her intensive national development, although there are no people who can bear perpetual privation with such quiet and smiling patience as the Turks. Their beautiful words of farewell—*güle, güle gidiris*, "laughing shalt thou go," should assure them of a time in the future when their smiles will be free from care. But the more a nation endures the more is laid on it. Only a strong body can survive a dangerous illness that cannot prove its strength against a feeble subject. Illness is not a sign of weakness; the critical test is whether the patient





recovers. Visitors and outsiders who are not concerned with the illness may be attracted by the secluded protection of the sick-room, but the patient would rather forgo the interesting glamour, and get well.

Even to-day, in spite of the progress that has been made, there are many neurasthenics who crave after the old traditions, and who weep tears of regret for the red of the fez and the mystery of veiled women that have disappeared from the streets. The Cook's tourists that fill the caravanserais imagine that romance is included in their tickets, and that a whole people exist for nothing else than to present a picturesque colourful scene to stray travellers. But the enthusiasm of tourists does not go far to support a nation in happiness and prosperity. The country exists primarily for the welfare of its own people and its destiny is theirs. I can well imagine that sages, afflicted with the perpetual cold of old age and used to poring over old parchments, feel that their noses are offended by the purified atmosphere of modern schoolrooms and the new Turkish script. There are others who yearn for heavy plush curtains and who have their teeth set on edge by jazz music. But after all, it does not matter how one writes a name, what is the first letter or the last, or even whether the exact sound of the old Turkish pronunciation can be reproduced by the modern Latin alphabet. The name exists only in order to convey a meaning. It is not primarily concerned to make an attractive combination of letters on paper or to ring true to its original etymological pronunciation—but the man who bears the name must endow it with another meaning, with





the quality of his own worth. Whether the prefix or suffix contains a hard or a soft consonant is not worth consideration, for here too there is a useful law: *La recherche de la paternité est interdite.*

The most glorious fate of all is for a man to lose his name altogether. But this can happen only when the whole nation unites to erase the name that was given him at his birth and to call him by a title he has won for himself by his outstanding personality and great achievements. His Excellency Mustapha Kemal Pasha is nowadays called only the Ghazi, "the Victor," and that satisfies both him and his people. Even if in the instability of modern spelling his name is spelt now with an "s" and now with a "z", still the Ghazi remains the Gasi.

The free education that is available for everyone has transformed the artificially elaborate calligraphy of the former script into the simple Latin letters that make an international tie between all nations.

In houses where the owner's professional occupation is to read her clients' fate in coffee dregs, the alphabet in larger print hangs on the wall, but it hangs like a double warning, for fortune telling is forbidden also. But how can women pass the time when all that they have learned to do has been to dye their hair with henna? So two old veiled women still crouched on a low divan, smoking their cigarettes, and a glimpse of fairyland glimmered through the dark lattice-work of the barred window behind them—pine-clad hills sloping down to the sea, and the shining dome of a mosque. The two old women sat opposite me like relics of the past, and their mournful voices echoed through the little wooden house which they still felt to be a sheltering harem.





"And are faces prettier now that they are not veiled?"

I felt unpleasantly taken aback, and if the remark was meant as a compliment it utterly misfired. "Are men better now that they pray less often?" "What is the use of divorce rights for women when there are so few men who marry?" I drank my coffee quietly. One can easily give answers to such questions, but not to old soothsayers. Two pairs of eyes studied the coffee grounds that were left in the little cup. The first reaction was a dramatic and alarming shaking of heads. "Allah! Here are dangers—tears—sorrow. A man that has loved you dearly hates you now. He is not here, but far away—he is very rich. You will see him once again in your life, but by that time your hair will be white. . . ." That would be somewhat late, I thought. "You have great plans—and you will be a writer—but your heart is full of sorrow. You stand on a bridge that leads to no shore."

A wrinkled trembling hand took the cup away, and four eyes watched me closely. Suddenly I was disconcerted by the low, barred room. The official prohibition is wise—one should not go to soothsayers. The two old women seemed to have entangled the influence of the harem in the swathes of their *charshafs*. Out of their eyes blazed hate and revolt against the younger generation whose free, noisy laughter reminded them of the suppressed whispers and constrained toneless voices of their own youth. When they spoke of divorce their faces were animated as if by a long-withered desire.

As I went away I reflected how ghastly it must be when freedom comes too late. If it stretches out before one as an open road that one cannot follow,





a concourse that is free and open to everyone, and yet one can find no place in it, either as a woman or as a human being. There was no womanhood now in these wrinkled parchment skins and tremulous bent bodies. And the withered narrow minds that had comprehended only the purely physical aspect of life were as dry now as parched river-beds.

If the two old women knew that their lives meant nothing at least they were surrounded by many women whose disappointments were of the same pattern—renunciation has always been the lot of women. But the sensations of young flexible bodies and the feeling of longing that bound them to life had obscured the coming disaster. Now when they looked out on the sunny streets, through the broken and rickety wooden lattices of the decayed window grating, they saw the challenging, scornful, short-skirted strength of youth, and followed the progress of light confident feet with old sad eyes.

They had been left behind in the past. Perhaps they had been married to the same man long ago. Perhaps his love had wavered between the two women; it had been a mediator between them and had reconciled each to the other, so that at his death they wept together. Even the husband's death had not been an individual loss—it was an experience they shared as they had shared his life. And as they continued their double, demi-existence, a single amalgamated life arose out of their former jealousies and mortifications. But the two weak old creatures could not meet the demands of daily life when once they had been dislodged from their place in the old world they knew. Hate was the only force that their





Useless freedom had given them. They described the young faces framed with curly hair in scornful words that had little in common with old-fashioned benedictions. And because they could find no means of communication with the world outside and no use for their new life, they were deceived by futile thoughts of an ideal past. The hostility of the present-day atmosphere drove the old women back to an imaginary world that had never existed in reality, and the merciful mirage allowed them thus at least to mourn for a past happiness.

My step quickened as I thought about the two women, until several corners and windings in the road lay between me and their little barred window. But still I felt as if their eyes followed me, piercing through me and driving me forward to a certain goal. It was as if I was governed by a wish I did not recognize, but which still urged me on. The wish was transformed into a yearning. Through the concealing shadows its message was so clear that it did not vanish away in the burning, melting sunshine. Gradually I came to see clear forms and sharp outlines across my path even in the brilliant light of day. . . . A landing-stage—an archway—a garden—through the trees I caught a glimpse of a house. I knew that I must see the Chibukli Palace and the chalet of Chiftlik once more.





## EPILOGUE

I sit on the deck of a ship that steams along the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, and I listen to my thoughts while I wait. At last the outline of the Palace of Chibukli looms up. The trees come nearer, the paths, the landing-stage—the magnolias are blooming in the garden below. I recognize their different colours and the species of each tree. Memory takes me to a silent locked house, where blinds darken the windows. I grow cold in spite of the burning sun. I have known this piercing emotion in dreams; but when empty longing overcomes me in a dream, I can calm myself by saying: "Don't be afraid—you are only dreaming. . . ."

But I am not dreaming now. I am awake, and no soothing voice can deceive me. Everything I see as the ship sails up the Bosphorus calls up memories of the past. It is a cruel journey. I sit quite still, but in my heart there stir strange feelings that chase one another like breaking waves. Each rises to a crest and then falls in a foam of waters as my thoughts drive them on.

I stand in the presence of the past. In other places I have been able to master my emotions, but here former years lie unfaded and unchanged before me. Memories rest beneath tall flowering trees and on the sun-flecked paths; they have climbed into the deserted house above me and rest in the dark silence of its closed rooms. The ship sails on.

My shivering body seems like a second veil that is spread under the fabric of my cloak. A fixed stare has come into my eyes instead of absent-mindedness.





Surely as a child that walks in his sleep my soul has found again what it was seeking—the emotions, hopes and desires that each of those far-off days gave or took away from me. The ship sails on, but my thoughts do not go with it. I stand on the great marble terrace that encircles the white palace, and watch it disappear. Long ago my eyes followed other ships as they sailed past, and often I longed to sail with them. But to-day I am on the ship that passes and my longing rests where only my body used to stand. The laws of longing are inscrutable and the laws of life are cruel.

When I disembarked at Beikoz a stark loneliness took possession of me. I walked over thickly wooded mountains and steep slopes covered with wild broom—hidden streams run through the under-wood in the deep valleys, and here and there a tall tree spreads wide branches, its yellow-white clusters of flowers smelling sickly sweet. The scent is so intoxicating that the longed-for shadows lose their cooling effect wherever it penetrates. The stone path glows red under the brilliant sun and winds its way between the big blossoms of the convolvulus and wild thyme into the lonely wilderness. Not even a bird's note breaks the oppressive silence. Heavy tortoises creep noiselessly forwards as if brown patches of earth were shifting their position. The hard outline of my shadow looks uncanny as it falls on the ground before me. I should like to creep on hands and knees so as to be nearer to the earth, for my self-confidence is shaken in this loneliness.

I walk unconsciously along a path I have known before, until the Chiftlik Chalet lies before me. The





paths are neglected and grass-grown, the scattered spots of gay colour that liven the thick green weeds are modest wild-flowers that have crept in from the wilderness outside. All the windows of the chalet are shut. Near the entrance there stands a tall tree which was a sapling when I saw it last—I planted it myself. All these trees grow towards the sun without troubling themselves about the hand that planted them.

All nature is simple—every power can develop freely. Suppose trees were married, one would not cruelly entangle the other's roots. Only the tree-tops would whisper together, and each one would grant the other free growth and a free life. In autumn the withered leaves cover the ground with one carpet, and the bare boughs dream through their winter sleep together. One earth nourishes them, one sun opens their blossoms and the same storms shake their branches. They have the same source and live the same life. Their shadows fall beside one another on the path and the darkness of night embraces them in the same green dream. But no other tree stands near the one I planted. It has remained a solitary guardian of the deserted house, and it towers above me, self-sufficient and unconcerned. What has it to do with the affairs of men? Birds nest in its branches and their songs unite the tree to its fellows. I walk slowly past the deserted house and down the broad yellow path that winds towards the sea.

I will never come here again. If we try to bring dead things to life they withdraw us from life. But we belong to life, because the need to live is rooted in the dark depths of our nature. Life means noise and turmoil. It deceives and betrays us, but we love





It is an eternally unexplained mystery that we carry within us. It guides and misleads us, it quickens the step and the heart-beat and always finds a fairy-tale to drown the hostile voice of doubt and to answer our yearnings. The path stretches endlessly before me. . . .

I have lived through years of memory in to-day's hot wandering. The shadow that made them seem real has vanished under the blazing sun. Much that has happened is as if it were lost, yet it remains somewhere changed but assimilated and a vital part of me. Past and present are strangely mingled. Then, too, within me, hidden from my comprehension, is an unknown third—the thing that is to be, the future—waiting like a germinating seed. New forces will take shape, develop and come into being, other thoughts will beat on the walls of my mind until they find expression and new wishes are fulfilled.

I stand and look back. . . . The shutters are not closed any longer. All the windows stand wide open, and soldiers of the guard pace up and down in front of the house. A red blaze of flowers blooms on the long carved balustrade of the verandah, yellow gravel gleams on the paths. I see the former scene at this moment through the green trees that hide or reveal it. The tree has recognized me after all. One may look back if one yet moves onwards. And now the sea lies at my feet.

I sit again on the deck of a ship as it sails up the Bosphorus. It is no longer a voyage of agonized memory, I am aware only of a steady movement that assures me of progress. Not to a stagnant, sleeping safety, not to repression of emotion or of conscience, not to deluding security or vacancy.





We thought to feel that each day and hour we live is part of an eternity that determines all and is responsible for everyone and everything. We may not seek after aims that will sever us from the great living circle to which we belong and to which we owe tribute, for we must supply it with new light and new strength. We must not bear a rigid, dead faith within us, for there is no formula for goodness that can be written down in special hieroglyphs. We must mistrust and refuse any peace that offers us the safety of seclusion, that juggles with the duties we should fulfil, and lands us in a lethargic calm that is not justified before our last breath is drawn. We must free ourselves from burdens and impediments; with a strong hand we must cut all the cords that would use us like marionettes in a futile show. For we need all our strength not only for ourselves, but also for those who are weaker than we are. Humanity demands that we shall be humane. It is not enough that veils and bars should be torn away and that woman should have the dignity of liberty. This company of free women would be small, however many captives had been released from the seclusion of the harem. Separating walls must fall wherever unhappy beings live and wait while the weary minute hand moves round the clock of care. We need no sheltered sanctuary, but there should be a refuge within us for anyone who calls for sanctuary—the holy indestructible sanctuary of Humanity.

One thing only is unlawful, illicit and prohibited: the criminal indifference that cuts us off from the generous heart of kindness. This is the Law of my world—the corner-stone of my Harem.

CSL-AS-  
AS001421

-54(R)

4213

392 6 HAN-H