

## SOME MOORISH TEA-PARTIES.

By the Author of "A Californian Story."



LEVEN o'clock in the morning seems rather an unusual hour for a tea-party, but then there are a great many odd things in this part of the world, and

when I was invited to alight from my horse one lovely hot day in January last, and partake of this refreshing beverage at a farm belonging to the household in which I was a guest, I was not at all unwilling to accept the invitation, for I had been riding since eight o'clock. My attendant—I cannot call him a groom, for the name seems unsuitable—conducted me into the enclosure in which the house was situated as soon as I had signified my assent to the proposed visit (the invitation having been shouted out to us at some distance), and at the threshold of the long, low room which composed the house I found my host standing ready to welcome me. He was a grave, dignified man, a perfect gentleman in manners and appearance, and at the same time a most picturesque object as he stood with his hand slightly extended, so as to enable me to touch it with mine without showing my fingers (this being a highly improper proceeding), and as I touched it it seemed to me to be a hand which had never done any work, although he was a farmer. He then pointed to the cushions on the floor, on which I seated myself, retaining one for my elbow, and left the room in search of his wife, thus giving me the opportunity of looking about me a little. I was, of course, dressed as a Moorish lady, veiled from head to foot, only my eyes visible, and no more comfortable costume exists when you once get used to it; it would be impossible to live in the interior of Morocco unless you adopted it, as everyone who met you would curse you, and show other disagreeable signs of disgust at the presence of the hated Christian, if they did not proceed to open violence. But to return to my tea-party.

The floor was thickly carpeted with the bright-coloured fabrics of the country, and in one corner of the room was a heap of bedding, with a sack of flour and other provisions. Holes were cut in the walls which served as cupboards or shelves; in one was a curious green lamp, in another a beautiful brass tray, a basin of European make, some tiny glasses, and a teapot. My hostess shortly entered (a great contrast to her husband), followed by her daughter, a pretty girl of about fourteen. Both were dirty-looking, shrouded in coarse muslin garments of dubious shape, and bare-

footed. My attendant, being a Jew, was considered of no account, and the women, therefore, uncovered their faces and hands before him. The tray with the glasses was given into his hands, and a canister of green tea being produced, some was thrown into a glass and carefully washed with boiling water from a large kettle resting on an earthen pot full of charcoal; then the tea was made in European fashion, to suit my taste, as indicated by my Jewish boy, and some delicious fresh milk out of the basin added to it. Presently the host brought a large sugar-loaf to the doorstep, cracked it, and handed us some enormous lumps. As soon as I had drunk all I wished for, tea was made in proper Moorish fashion for the rest. It was carefully washed in a tumbler as before, a quantity of sugar put into the pot, then the tea and some leaves of mint and verbena, and the water added; this decoction was imbibed with great relish by all. Presently my hostess inquired if I should like some bread and butter, and as I wished to see what she would produce, I accepted the offer. She carried off the sack of flour in the corner of the room, and disappeared for about twenty minutes; at the end of that time she re-entered, bearing a wooden tray in one hand, on which was a flat-looking pancake of flour and water, and in the other a basin filled with lumps of butter. She tore off a piece of the hot cake and handed it to me, pointing to the butter. No knife was forthcoming, and I saw, alas! that I was expected to use my fingers. I tried to fish up a piece of butter with the aid of the cake in my hand, but they were too large to eat, and the excellent woman, seeing my difficulty, immediately divided one of the lumps with her fingers for me. Things were getting worse and worse, and at last, in desperation, I managed to enfold another lump in my piece of cake, and swallowed it hastily, trusting it would not make me ill; but I did not like to hurt their feelings after they had taken the trouble to make so many preparations, and I then signified, through my Jewish boy, that I had already breakfasted that morning, and did not wish for any more. After much discussion and renewed pressure, the viands were at last taken away. The Moors like their butter rancid, and bury it for a long time in the earth before eating it—sometimes for two to three years.

I could not speak Arabic, but from their tones and gestures it was very easy to understand the gist of their remarks; and after they had carefully examined my hands, and pushed up my sleeve to look at my arm, they directed their attention elsewhere, and I became aware that I was expected to let them see my foot, on which was a European shoe, which I had not removed as I ought to have done on entering the house. A glance of mute supplication seemed to indicate a wish that I should take it off, and the murmur of satisfaction which followed that I had interpreted the wish correctly. After they had exhausted my *chaussure*—a large number of women from the village having added themselves to the audience by this time—they turned to my hair. I allowed them to take off my *háik* (the long bournouse always worn by the better class of Moorish women), and the pieces of muslin which covered my forehead and face, so that they might see my plaits; and when this had been done, I dressed myself again in a very decided fashion, by way of intimating that I could not go any further, and then presented the mother with two safety pins, which she received with much gratitude. A baby was

then brought in and offered to me; but I declined to take it—it was too sorely in need of washing—and they thought I was afraid I should drop it. Fortunately, just then, my Jewish attendant came in, and I intimated that I must be going, mounting my horse from a mound of earth outside. Just as I was starting, my host came up with a fine young cock from the farmyard as a parting present; and, after bidding them all farewell once more, I set out homewards.

Another tea-party which took place a few days ago was managed in a more civilised fashion. Just as we were thinking of making our own afternoon cup, two Moorish ladies, mother and daughter, announced themselves. The mother had just returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca, and was consequently a very important and enlightened personage, and quite understood how to sit on the drawing-room chair which was offered her, though she was evidently very uncomfortable all the time, and the daughter very much more so. As soon as they were assured that all the gentlemen and men-servants had gone downstairs, they took off their *háiks*, and displayed gorgeous under-garments, and very wide, stiff, handsomely-embroidered belts. The elder lady described the perils of her journey in a most emphatic way, dilating much upon the sea-sickness from which she had suffered; and as soon as a convenient pause occurred in the conversation, they were asked to come into another room for tea. But they had heard footsteps on the stairs—male footsteps—and declined to move. Just then an English visitor staying in the house entered—out of pure mischief, we fear—and each lady seized a piece of her voluminous garment and carefully covered all of her face but one eye, out of which she glanced furtively at the intruder, who had to be bundled off as quickly as possible. At a town some sixty miles from where I write women may only show one eye; here, a very thin slit may be left for both eyes.

After the coast was clear we managed to get our tea, and filling each cup nearly full with sugar for the two visitors, poured a little tea on it, and they drank it without many wry faces; the English biscuits which accompanied it were much to their taste. Presently a small child came crawling up the stairs, a caricature of a man, in a tiny bournouse with a pointed hood; and this was filled with biscuits for the infant himself, who rejoiced in the name of Sidé Mohammed, and his brother, M'Hammid, who had been left at home. Soon after our visitors took their departure, and then the servants of the house in their turn took the teapot, and had a private party in the kitchen. When they take their meals they all squat on the floor, and eat with their fingers out of a large bowl; but as this, fortunately, cannot be done conveniently when the tea-pot is in question, they place the tray on the floor and pour it out into glasses.

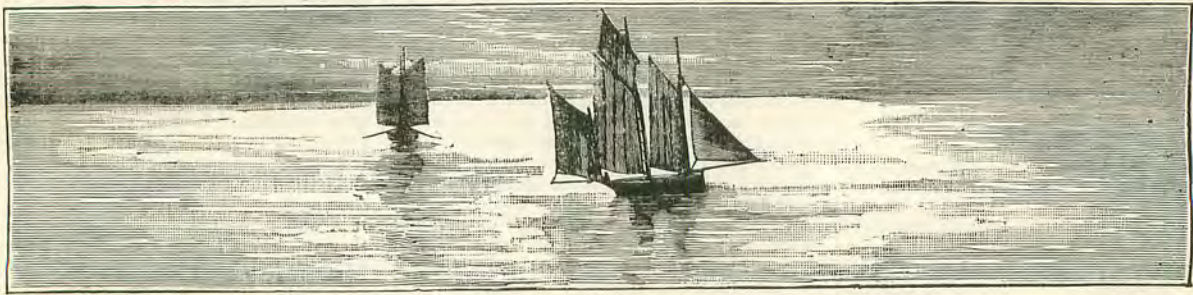
As I write I am looking out over a vast expanse of country, with beautiful snow mountains in the distance, and a strange old city, studded with many a tall minaret, in the valley at my feet. I must, however, keep well away from the window, so as to see without being seen; for should any of my neighbours notice me they will think I am prying into their concerns, and be highly offended. The call to prayer has just *resounded*, and from every minaret the white flag has gone up; a hooded figure is walking round the terrace, calling on all the faithful to come and worship at the Mosques. The orange and lemon trees

in the garden are laden with fruit, the sun is shining hotly on this bright spring day, and the fruit trees are beginning to bud. There is a stork who has a nest on an old deserted minaret near my window, which affords me much amusement; and little sparrows, and other brown birds with crested heads, come up to me boldly and perch upon the bars, not in the least afraid of the scratching of my pen. The mules and horses are pulling the weeds and munching the grass down below under the orange trees with much delight; for some heavy showers fell a few days ago, giving sorely-needed refreshment to the dry, parched earth. The prickly pear hedges have still some crimson fruit on them here and there,

and between the rows of olives the tomb of a Moorish saint peeps out; beyond is their cemetery, thickly strewn with stony graves—in truth, a strange scene, and a wonderful contrast to the one on which my eyes looked down this time last year—the shores of the blue Pacific.

In the courtyard below the Arab servants are squatting about, helping each other to do nothing. Two black slaves are working in the garden, but their labours produce but little result. Their home is in the desert, a long way the other side of the great range of mountains in the far distance. They are fine men, and their silver bracelets seem to glisten on their polished black arms like diamonds in

the sunlight. They are well cared for here, and have become somewhat lazy and overfed. They speak a strange language, which is not Arabic, as they talk with each other at their work. One is old, and stricken in years; the other, young and strong, and with beautifully-shaped hands and feet. But the shadows are growing long, and the sun is setting, a sign, perhaps, that I should bring my musings to an end; the short twilight will soon be over, and the silence of night will fall on us quickly. Perhaps the old brown city looks its very best under the silvery light of the African moon, though the blazing crimson and gold of the early morning is wonderfully beautiful too.



## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

**POPPY.**—You can obtain "The Girl's Own Indoor Book" at our publishing office (56, Paternoster Row, E.C.). Do not place your confidence and hope on your "frames and feelings"; they are perpetually changing and unreliable. There is One who "changeth not." Put your whole trust in His atonement and in His promises: "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Remember, also, that He has said, "Why call ye Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things that I say?" If conscious that you belong to this hypocritical class, the more uneasy you feel the better.

**MISTLETOE.**—We could not recommend any description of medicine to put you to sleep. Only a doctor, who knew you personally and the circumstances under which you desired it, could prescribe it safely. You might never wake up again, or, at least, you might give yourself a terrible headache, and upset your digestion.

**DOROTHY.**—We should think that you might possibly find employment in the new and valuable "Ladies' Guide" Club. The work undertaken by the members is of a varied character. As a full account of it will appear in our series on Women's Clubs and other institutions, we need not enter further into the question here.

**MISS MARY CH.—E.**—Many thanks for your letter. We have looked further into the subject of the "bawbee," and find the first issue was dated 1559. Thus, according to Lindsay, it belongs to the second period of the coins of Queen Mary, that of her marriage to the Dauphin, from 1558 to 1560. The word means, as we said, a debased copper coin. The original probably was *bas-pieces*. This disposes of the pretty Stirling tradition of the bawbee being struck during Mary Stuart's infancy.

**PEGGOTTY.**—Even if "Barkis is willin'," we think you would be a very foolish woman to marry a young fellow so much your junior as seven years. He is evidently anxious to marry you for your income. Do not give up a comfortable home and situation, but wait for someone nearer your own age, who will value you for your own sake, and not for your money.

**MARIE.—1.** We read your letter with much sympathy and regret. We see no hope for your relative's cure, save in some well-managed home for inebriates, where she could be received for several years, until the acquired habit had worn out. 2. With opium and *landanum* this is sometimes the case, we believe.

**SNOWDROP.**—Forgetfulness and a bad memory are too often due to a fixed habit of inattention to what is going on around you. If this be the case with you, you must keep yourself awake, interested, and attentive, and avoid dreamy, idle habits of mind.

**MIRIAM.**—"Peameal" and "Peaflower" are identical.

**IVY.**—The various ladies' dwellings are advertised constantly in the daily papers and elsewhere. If you had told us where you lived we could have advised you.

**MIDGE.**—The late wife of the Duke of Cambridge was not recognised as a "Duchess," simply because, though the marriage was personally binding, and the sons recognised as legitimate, it was not in accordance with the Royal Marriage Act, passed in 1772. This Act was passed in consequence of the marriages of their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Gloucester and of Cumberland, who married subjects. By this Act none of the descendants of George II. (unless of foreign birth) can marry under the age of 25, without the consent of the Sovereign. At and after that age the consent of Parliament is necessary to render the marriage valid. Thus, the marriage of the Duke of Sussex with the Lady Augusta Murray (1793) was pronounced illegal in 1794, and the claims of their son, Sir Augustus d'Este, declared invalid by the House of Lords, 1844. He married the Lady Cecilia Underwood, afterwards Duchess of Inverness. Special marriage laws were indispensable with reference to the Royal family, to prevent serious complications in reference to the succession to the throne. The marriage of Prince Alexander of Battenberg was a "morganatic" one; and her title of "Countess Hartenau" was conferred by the Emperor of Austria.

**QUEEN ESTHER.**—All surnames, such as James, Thomas, and Stephen or Stevens, are taken from Christian names originally.

**AN UNATTRACTIVE GIRL.**—The following recipe for dandruff was lately given us. One ounce of quassia chips, price one penny; one teacupful of cold water. Let it stand a day; then apply to the roots of the hair with a small sponge, brushing it well in. A solution of sulphur and water will also remove dandruff, if rubbed in every night.

**ANXIOUS ONE No. 2.**—In "Toilet Table Elegancies," vol. vii., page 598, "Medicus" gives the recipe you require.

**D. E. J.**—We think you had better speak to the young lady's father and mother. If they be straightforward, honest people, they will help you to obtain a satisfactory answer.

**EVELYN WRIOTHESLEY.**—Although we do not consider your poem, "Enone," is suited to our magazine, we are happy to say it is poetry. It is superior in merit to the others. "The Song of the Sea" needs revision. The number of feet and the beat in the several concluding lines of the six verses do not correspond. Nine feet in that of the first verse, then eight, and in the last verse ten. Beat out the number of feet in the lines that correspond one with the other with your fingers, and accentuate the emphasis in each by a stronger beat of the fingers. It is necessary to count thus. You will do well to persevere.

**RICHMOND.**—You should say, "No more, thank you," or, "I have quite finished," or merely, "No, thank you." Simple phrases are always the best.

**QUEEN OF THE WUNKS.—1.** We should like to know who the "Wunks" are? Possibly cannibals. Alas! we must deal a cruel blow to this royal lady, for we could not venture to accept a story written by her, although her courtiers have "told her she could write one good enough for us." 2. Yes, sermon paper would suit quite as well as foolscap for her to practise upon.

**ANNA MARIA and JEMIMA.**—We think that A. M.'s writing is rather better formed than Jemima's. It is easier to answer this question than the second, viz., whether we think that these two girls "will be old maids." Do they think we are wizards? and do they think that being "fond of kittens" seals their future fate, and leaves them to enjoy their freedom, and more leisure to employ themselves in any useful way? If so, we congratulate the little sisters, and hope they will long live happily together.

**FAITHFUL READER OF "G.O.P."—1.** When a hen eats her eggs she is fit for nothing but the table. If old, she would do for broth. 2. Slope your writing more from right to left.

**LYDIA.**—We could not prescribe for you. Your medical adviser should see you. As a rule tonics should be left off gradually, not suddenly.

**MRS. CLARKE TRAVERS.**—The only books we know on perfumery are Cooley's "Toilet and Cosmetic Arts" and "Piesse on Perfumery."

**CONSTANT READER.**—At an afternoon tea you need not remove a glove unless there be hot buttered cake or muffins, or you take bread and butter. You must know that it would soil your glove to touch what is greasy, and so, if troublesome to take off your glove, take what is dry. When speaking in a formal way to strangers, it is well not to give yourself the same degree of license in abbreviations, etc., that would be permitted at home. The case is the same as regards letter-writing, for you should not abbreviate at all, except in addressing members of your own family or a very intimate friend. It is disrespectful and ill-bred.

**"DEAN'S HERALDRY."**—Do not trouble yourself further about the man you named. You need not return the presents, but if you dislike such souvenirs, give them away.

**PERPLEXED PRUDENCE.—1.** The word "unmitigated" means not qualified, or moderated by other circumstances. To "mitigate" is to soften, to alleviate, to assuage—as to diminish suffering or sorrow, to moderate severity. "Figurative" means to represent by a figure, by resemblance, typical, metaphorical. Our Lord's parables were "figurative." If you have a good dictionary you should look out all words that you do not understand. 2. As to your being too fat, we advise you to take moderate exercise daily, and leave Nature alone.