

SOIREE AT ALEPPO.

(From a Correspondent.)

IN winter-time the *élite* of Aleppo society, inclusive of Europeans, native Christians, and Hebrews, assemble ever and anon at each other's houses just to help the long evenings on their flight and enjoy a little keif. They are dreary enough, in all conscience, without this circle; for though there is but little severe cold, and that only of brief duration, the temperature is moist and humid, with abundance of rain; and solitude and solitary cogitations might only be suggestive of suicide. Therefore, after we have done justice to the late dinner (usually at 7 P. M.)—for we shall get no solids to eat where we are going—we go through the necessary toilet, etc., give an extra twist to moustache or curl to whiskers—for all the belles of Ketab will be there—and, armed with a sensibly large umbrella and goodly mackintosh, preceded by a servant carrying a lantern (which is a precaution necessary, not only on account of the narrow, dirty, dark, and deserted streets, but to keep off the legion of half-starving curs that would otherwise devour us, and avoid the unpleasant alternative of falling in with the night patrol, who would forthwith put us into chokey until morning—it being the law of the land to imprison all found abroad after dark without lantern or light of some description), we walk forth into the night, and so towards the house of Howaja Nalah Fattalah Karalla, who has a reception this evening.

Our host and hostess are lineal descendants of one of the most ancient and respectable Aleppine families, tracing their descent easily as far back as the time when all the commerce of the Indies passed through Aleppo—the route via the Cape of Good Hope being then undiscovered, and when Venice had many princely merchants residing in this city. Before the earthquake of 1821 this family had a splendid mansion in one of the best khans in the city, where from generation to generation had accumulated the choicest and the rarest porcelain vases, etc., besides untold wealth in jewels and other gems and jewelry. At one fell swoop, even as it were in the twinkling of an eye, the house, in common with the greater part of the city, was levelled with the ground, and the fruits of years of toil and hundreds upon hundreds of miles of weary and fatiguing journeyings were destroyed and irrevocably lost. Our host found himself one amongst some thousands that had lost their everything and had a fresh start to make in life. Thankful, however, that

their lives had been spared amidst the utter desolation and sorrow that reigned around, they migrated to this suburban and pleasantly situated spot, called Ketab, and there constructed houses on a modern and lighter pattern, and built so as best to resist any recurrence of such a frightful calamity. With this prelude we arrive at the door of our host's house, which is brilliantly lighted up, and whence the hum of many voices issuing assures us that we are not the first arrivals.

"Allah! Salah mete salami!" This from our aged host and hostess, and signifying, in hyperboles, "You are welcome as the dews in summer," we are escorted to the further end of the room behind the musicians and ensconced amongst comfortable cushions upon a luxurious divan, receive and return the usual flow of compliments, and then fall to smoking like chimneys over a cookshop. Our position is an admirable one from which to scan the motley assemblage and see all that is going forward. The very pink of Aleppine fashion is rapidly assembling, and to do them special honor the hostess has procured the services of the celebrated Hadjih-Bashi and his band of musicians, who are tuning up horribly, with the intention of bursting forth into superb strains, such as shall astonish the weak minds of all strangers. The group is seated upon a Turkey rug, and the leader plays upon a stringed instrument something like half an *Æolian* harp laid flat upon the floor; he performs with the aid of a species of steel talon, attached thimblewise to each forefinger. So long as he restricts himself to this instrument, the melody emitted is really soft and pleasant; very soon, however, the guitar plays, throws his overbalance of discord into the music, and drowns the soft notes of the stringed instrument with his abominable twang-twanging, wholly regardless of accord as regards the timing of the two instruments performing, or tune, or anything else. What, however, can be expected from such a wretch with a dried old gourd with three strings to perform upon? In all conscience, the music is villanous enough at this stage of the proceeding; but it has far, very far, from arrived at its climax of horrors. The heartless vocalist throws in his contribution, in the shape of a sudden, loud, prolonged, and dirge-like yell, hanging on the last quaver so long and obstinately that he is obliged to hold his jaw with his hand for fear of dislocating it. In our opinion, the wailing at an Irish wake is far more lively; especially, varied as it is by an occasional fight. But *quot homines, etc.*, the old axiom stands good here

as elsewhere: the ancient in the kalpak, or cap of honor (a badge of high dignity, and a hereditary one enjoyed by some families whose ancestors did noted service to the state in bygone times), is evidently enraptured with the performance, and can hardly restrain himself putting in an extra quaver or two when the vocalist at length stops from utter exhaustion, pulling up as abruptly as a cavalry charger, and dropping his voice as quickly as a monkey would a hot potato. This latter method of abruptly terminating music is considered the very acme of vocal art; and, truth to say, it must be a difficult knack. If the ancient in the kalpak looks fascinated, the foreign refugee doctor of the troops in the city, who sits next to him, and whose first experience this is of Oriental melody, is lost in unfathomable surprise at the glee evinced by his neighbor, marvelling secretly whether really any human being with tympanum in healthy state could other than shudder at the performance just concluded. Next to this fresh importation, and utterly callous to everything else going on around them, are a couple of merchants, native and European, deep in commerce, and discussing in whispers projects of future specs to be undertaken in gallnuts and scammony. Not in so low a whisper is their all-engrossing conversation, however, but that the wary Hebrews near them are picking up useful crumbs of information which they will assuredly turn to account when occasion requires. In the background are congregated the small fry of the evening discussing the merits and dress of everybody but themselves. These are mostly small shopkeepers, and so forth, who, as a rule, may be classified as of the genus toadies.

But what can all this stir be that is going on at the further end of the room? Oh, we perceive the mighty man, the lion of the evening, has arrived, accompanied by his lady and suite, and preceded by six sturdy, silver-caned cu-vasses, who form a kind of avenue at the entrance-door, through which the pompous official struts with indescribable grandeur. This is Signor Console Generales of some Power that never carries on a ha'porth of trade with any part of Syria. However, in return for serving gratis, he is granted the dignity of a Baron, and sports a splendid uniform, with cocked hat and multifarious plumes, to say nothing of his decorations of the golden spurs, and divers others, amongst which, mayhap, is the order of the Mouse in the Mustard-pot. Our host and his son receive the lion with almost humiliating cringings in their endeavors to do him honor,

and it is delightful to see how urbanely he receives these attentions, smiling over his stiff cravat benignantly. Even the two French doctors, who are loudly argumentative on professional subjects, drop their noise and their gesticulations to do homage to M. le Baron; for M. le Baron has a large and wealthy family, and commands great influence; and, all said and done, these disputatious disciples of *Æsculapius* are but a couple of hungry adventurers, ready to grapple with and cure every malady, imaginary or real; if the former, so much the easier, and it is a complaint that oftentimes besets the well-to-do and indolent in their plethoric repose even in our own favored country.

The lady conversing with the Consul is of an independent, jealous kind of disposition, and little disposed to knuckle down to the lion and his party; and as for the Consul himself, being a salaried one and of private independent means, he can afford to sit and chuckle alike at the offerers and the receivers of fawning flattery; and so this couple smoke and chat together amicably.

Seated on a divan are the lady guests of the evening, inhaling alternately the perfumed fumes of the *margheel*, or whispering scraps and odds and ends of scandal, to be improved upon and retailed hereafter. The pretty and fascinating young daughters of the house are handing round small fingans of coffee to the assembled guests; a continuous supply of this refreshing beverage being always ready to hand, and simmering on the ledge of a well-piled-up mangal, or brazier of bright charcoal, which also supplies the coals used by the smokers of the long pipe, at the same time that it contributes a genial warmth to the atmosphere of the room, which is lighted by a splendid chandelier, adding brilliancy to the rich costumes and headresses of the lady guests. Contrasting wonderfully with the noise and bustle going forward is the faithful old house-dog, fast asleep, not far from the mangal.

By and by the Adonis and the belle of the evening (the latter after much coaxing and persuading) walk into the centre of the rooms with all the grace and dignity of people born and bred at court. Now step we a measure; the music at first is low, and the motions of the dancers, each armed with an embroidered handkerchief, slow and graceful also. Presently both musicians and dancers warm with the theme, till ultimately the music gets deafeningly loud and awfully rapid, and the dancers so excited that they whirl and twirl about—very gracefully withal—but so rapidly as to

perfectly bewilder and make one giddy. The old lady spectator is positively enchanted, and claps with her old wizened-up hands to encourage and urge on the dancers at such a rate that one can almost hear the bones rattling together. Towards the end, everybody assembled is expected to clap hands, till, just as the dance terminates, the old dog awakes from a trance of terror, and joins his wail to the equally discordant voice of the musician.

So the evening passes. Now a dance, now a song, very often amateur; then some wretched lunatic of a foreigner comes out of a corner with a fiddle, and scrapes out some national anthem or ditty. Sometimes a profusely moustached professor of the guitar gives an extract from some favorite opera, accompanying the music with a low bass growl, his voice reminding one of some fierce animal trying to make its way through a thicket. So passes the evening till nigh upon midnight, when lanterns are relit and cloaks resumed, the ladies enveloping themselves in white sheets up to the very eyes, and sailing out into the dark night like so many ghosts issuing forth from a vault. A glass of something hot before leaving, and a freshly-lighted cigar, and we follow in the wake of the departed, waking the still night into countless echoes with snatches of songs sung in far distant lands, and which are pleasanter to us as souvenirs than a thousand soirées at Aleppo, diverting, entertaining, and profitable though these better undoubtedly are.

LINES.

BY LEMUEL H. WILSON.

GENTLY close the heavy lid,
For the brightness all has fled
From the violet eyes;
Part the tresses from her brow,
It is pale and icy now;
Press thy lips to lips of clay,
For the soul is far away,
Wandering in the skies.
Fold anew those taper hands,
Clasped by tender, flowery bands
All unconsciously;
Deck with flowers the radiant hair,
She is wondrously fair;
Is it death, or is it sleep?
Press again your quivering lip
To those lips of clay.
Strong heart, where is now thy pride?
She has fallen by thy side—
Here thy joys end;
Ah, the world is dark! but where
Wilt thou hide thy deep despair?
For the sods are pressing now
Damp and heavy on her brow,
Where the willows bend.

Wander there at twilight hours,
Beautify the tomb with flowers
Watered oft with tears;
Feeble heart, thy boasted strength
Bows in agony at length,
For her smile you are denied,
And the world is dark and wide,
Shadowed deep with fears.

Heard ye not the cadence sweet
Of her voice, with song replete,
In the heavenly choir?
Saw ye not the violet eyes
Beaming with a glad surprise?
But the vision passed away,
Leaving on my path a ray,
Quickening desire.
Toil thou on with patience; "hope
Bears the fainting spirit up."
Thou shalt meet again
In a fairer world than ours—
Land where never-fading flowers
Grace the heavenly plain.

HOW TO REACH THE HEART.—We have found throughout a not very long career, but very extended experience, that kindness is the surest way to reach the human heart, and that harshness is a northern, frost-laden blast, hardening a current that should flow as merrily as a brook in spring. Kindness makes sunshine wherever it goes; it finds its way into the hidden treasures of the heart, and brings forth treasures of gold. Harshness, on the contrary, seals them forever. What does kindness do at home? It makes the mother's lullaby sweeter than the song of the lark, the care-laden brows of the father and the man of business less severe in their expression, and the children joyous without being riotous. Abroad, it assists the fallen, encourages the virtuous, and looks with true charity on the extremely unfortunate—those in the broad way who perhaps have never been taught that the narrow path was the best, or had turned from it at the solicitation of temptation. Kindness is the real law of life, the link that connects earth with heaven, the true philosopher's stone, for all it touches it turns to virgin gold—the true gold, wherewith we purchase contentment, peace, and love.

We should forget that there is any such thing as suffering in the world, were we not occasionally reminded of it through our own.

In order to deserve a true friend you must first learn to be one.

It is often better to have a great deal of harm happen to one; a great deal may arouse you to remove what a little will only accustom you to endure.