

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THIRTY YEARS IN THE HAREM: Or the Autobiography of Melek-Hanum, wife of H. H. Kibrizli Mehemet-Pasha. London: Chapman & Hall, New-York: Scribner, Welford & Armstrong.

The reader of this curious narrative is constantly puzzled, as he turns its pages, whether to accept the story as a true one, or whether to set it down as four-fifths romance and one-fifth fact. If it be the actual record of a life, it is certainly surprising that the newspapers had not long since seized upon and worn threadbare the remarkable career of Melek-Hanum, or, as she is particular to style herself, the wife of H. H. Kibrizli Mehemet-Pasha. Before summarizing the facts of her singular history, we should frankly state that there is something of poetical license in the title she has given her book. The work is not in the main an exposé of harem life, and the glimpses we have of this somewhat mysterious state of existence are only occasional, and will doubtless be highly unsatisfactory to those who buy the book from its title. Then, again, Melek-Hanum was married to Kibrizli Mehemet-Pasha in 1835, and was discarded by him in 1848, thirteen years later, and she does not complain that even during this period she was compelled to share the affections of her lord and master with any rival, so that her experience is at the most a very mitigated case of "harem life." As an exposition of Turkish life in general, of the despotism of the Turkish Government, and of the thorough rottenness of its foundations—though the autobiographer does not draw these lessons from the record she here submits—the work has a far higher value than it could possess if it were the key to unlock the door of the most crowded harem in the East.

As far back as Melek-Hanum traces her ancestry, she has something to tell of them which partakes entire of the tragic or romantic. Her grandfather, on her mother's side, was a rich Armenian banker, patronized by the then reigning Sultan Selim III. (1789-1807.) One day he received a warning that the Janissaries had formed the design of visiting the house to lay hands upon his treasures. Fear got the better of his courage; his reason was disturbed, and, ascending to the terrace roof, he precipitated himself to the ground. When he was taken up life was extinct. The report, which led to this calamity, proved to be false, for the widow, Melek-Hanum's grandmother, and her three daughters were left in peaceful possession of the estate. Women in Turkey are very often married at fourteen, yet as twenty-five Melek-Hanum's mother remained single, simply because she had the good sense and determination not to put up with an unsuitable match. The way in which she met her fate, since it gives quite a graphic picture of one phase of Turkish life, we quote:

"As my mother's house was situated in the native quarter of Constantinople, where very few Europeans made their appearance, those who did venture into that neighborhood could not fail to excite remark. A young European was frequently seen to pass, of tall stature and of graceful bearing, always armed with a long and slender sword. The ladies of that quarter amused themselves by looking at him through the wooden grating of their *djumbé*. One evening, when my mother had half opened the wicket contrived in the thick lattice, in order to obtain a better view of the stranger, the latter stopped to survey her, and was struck with the beauty of her countenance. Next day he appeared again before the window, and threw my mother a note in French, in which he avowed his passion for her. She caused him to explain himself through the servant of a Marseilles merchant, who moreover told her that she knew the author of the letter to be a Frenchman, named Charles-Dejean, living at Constantinople on the proceeds of a considerable quantity of valuables which he possessed and which he was selling by degrees. Satisfied with these particulars, my mother replied in a note, which she sent him the next time he passed through the street, that she accepted his addresses, and that if he would demand her in marriage of my uncle she was ready to marry him.

The next day the Frenchman called on my mother's brother, who could speak a little Italian; they came to an understanding, and my uncle being assured of his sister's consent, she was married to M. Dejean before the French Consul."

This occurred in 1810. Three years after Melek-Hanum was born. When she was fifteen years old she went with her mother to a ball one evening in Constantinople, and there made the acquaintance of a gentleman lately arrived in the city, who had been in the suite of Lord Byron in Greece. Rather against her mother's wishes, as this gentleman was a Protestant, he became a suitor of Melek-Hanum, and finally married her, according to the rites of the Greek Church. But the union was not a happy one, and at the end of five years they mutually agreed upon being divorced. Melek-Hanum left Constantinople soon after, took her two children to Rome, where she placed them under the care of relatives and remained there herself for several months. Finding the life there too quiet, for her friends were strict devotees, she went to Paris, and there she became acquainted with Kibrizli Mehemet-Pasha, then military attaché to the Turkish Legation at the Court of Louis Philippe. She declined a first and second offer of marriage through her fear of a harem, but a third offer proved irresistible. She accepted him, and soon after returned to Constantinople, whither her husband was obliged to accompany his chief Féty Pasha.

After her arrival at Constantinople she took up her residence at the palace of Haiden Effendi until the close of the Ramadan the Mussulman Lent, when she was married.

Soon after the marriage her husband received the title of *Bey*, and three or four months subsequently that of *Liva*, or General of Brigade. On this occasion Kibrizli Mehemet Bey received a visit from his General of Division, Gueuzluklu Réshid-Pasha. The special object of this call was to induce the Madame to assist him in selecting a wife. Her husband, in accordance with the General's wishes, called her close to the door, so that without being seen she could hear what he had to say on this important subject. He expressed his wish that his future wife should be tall and slender, as Europeans generally are, and that she should moreover have an agreeable expression of countenance. Mme. Kibrizli promptly entered upon her campaign. Numerous unsuccessful visits were made to families in which there were marriageable daughters; for twenty days she "assailed the houses of the Ulemas, the Generals, the Ministers, and all the high dignitaries." But the General was fastidious. In one case he found too many relations in another, not sufficient fortune; the one was built on too large a scale or had blue eyes when he preferred black; that one was too old. Finally Mme. Kibrizli determined to speak on behalf of the Pasha to the very next dame whom she happened to visit. The General had sent her, with this view, a bouquet enriched with a magnificent diamond. Intruding this to a Circassian, she went to the palace of Hafuz-Pasha, at Stiniah, on the Bosphorus. After a brief conference with the mother, the daughter shortly appeared. She was tall, full of health, with regular features and fair complexion. She had a beautiful hand and arm, but her hair and eyebrows were red, and her eyes were of a light chestnut color. Her fortune was considerable; and notwithstanding the fact that she was far from filling the Pasha's bill, M. Kibrizli proceeded to carry out her reso-

tion to seek no further, lest she might fare still worse. So she placed on the head of the girl the present she had brought her, saying that his Excellency took her for his wife. When she returned home she rendered an account of her embassy, taking care to say nothing about the red hair of the betrothed maiden. Some days after an apartment, superbly furnished, was prepared at the residence of Hafuz-Pasha for the future bride and groom. Mme. Kibrizli went to see the young lady to make sure that she had procured suitable wedding attire. She took with her a skilled Greek woman, who dyed her hair, eyebrows and eyelashes black, and this, she tells us, added to the natural fairness of her skin, gave her a very agreeable appearance. Notwithstanding all these precautions, Mme. Kibrizli had serious doubts as to the result, for the fastidious General had threatened to discard his wife after the very first night if he did not find her to his taste. To Mme. Kibrizli's great relief the Pasha called on her the next morning to express his great satisfaction with the choice she had made. Some time afterward, having been appointed to the command of an expedition to reduce the Koords to submission, he took his wife with him. Mme. Kibrizli frankly adds he was so well pleased with her "that he never cast her off, nor took any other wife in addition." On his death, which occurred at Bagdad in 1864, he left her a considerable fortune. So much for the way they do such things in Turkey.

But the departure of his superior left Kibrizli Mehomet-Pasha without any friends at court. The Sultan Abdul-Medjid had lately come to the throne, and was earnestly desirous of reforming the great and growing abuses which he found extending their ramifications through the Empire. In this he was bitterly opposed by the Mussulman party. His Ministers, instead of aiding him, tried to make him forget in sensual pleasures the reforms upon which he was intent. They furnished him all the money he wished, knowing that as long as he confined himself to his palace he could learn only through their reports of what was going on out of doors. The Sultan's wives took advantage of his love for them to gratify their caprices by obtaining from him the most costly presents. "Covered with diamonds and attended by numerous slaves, almost as sumptuously attired as their mistresses, they drove out in carriages, each of which with its equipments cost about 900,000 piastres, (\$40,000.) Their apartments were constantly replenished with new furniture and in the space of two years the seraglio was furnished four times over and in the most expensive and luxurious manner." Instead of recompensing their master by their fidelity, they were constantly seen driving about, and conversing with young men in the most shameless manner. "At night," writes Mme. Kibrizli, "sitting at their windows, they accosted the passers-by, and introduced them into the palace. Those who were without paramours formed quite the exception. Frequently the favors of one of the Sultan's wives, or odalisques, were attended with presents and bounties big enough to make the fortune of him who received it. In fact, these women were utterly regardless of the costliness of what they bestowed—it was a regular case of pillage." Indeed, "the Validé Sultan, the mother of the sovereign, was the most powerful of all, and far surpassed all the other ladies of the palace by her libertinism and thirst for power." Very naturally, the consequences of this demoralization were felt through every department of the administration.

Mehemet-Pasha suffered with the other officers of the Sultan for the capricious manner in which public affairs were managed. At one time he was degraded in company with twelve other Generals, simply because his rivals had succeeded in gaining power. For two years he and his wife suffered from want and were driven to desperation; then, through the persistency and boldness of Mme. Kibrizli, he secured the appointment of Governor of St. Joan d'Acre, and afterward of Jerusalem. Determined to compensate herself for what she had suffered, and with the deliberate intention of guarding against a future reverse, she did not hesitate to make use of her position as wife of the Governor to receive presents on the score of her influence with him. Mme. Kibrizli tells us without any reserve, and, indeed, as if it were creditable to her shrewdness, that on one occasion the wife of a Judge who feared removal made her a magnificent present worth upward of 40,000 francs. "In a short time," she says, "I amassed property to the value of upward of 400,000 francs, partly in specie, partly in jewelry, and in trinkets of every description," and she naively adds, "This course of action was suggested by the remembrance of previous reverses. It appeared to me that at any moment we might find ourselves anew in the painful situation from which we had emerged so suddenly. In a country where one has no recognized rights and no security, it is necessary to take precautions against the reverses of fortune." Such a frank avowal as this gives us a slight idea of the terrible extortions from which the Turkish provinces have so long suffered.

After a time Mehemet-Pasha was recalled from Jerusalem and appointed Governor of Belgrade. He spent but a year at that post, and on his return to Constantinople was made a Field Marshal, and, in 1848, he was appointed Ambassador to the English Court, intrusted with the important mission of forming an alliance with the West to check the aggressive movements of Russia. The results of these negotiations have passed into history, and we need only allude to them here. Mehemet-Pasha, on going to England, was compelled to leave his wife behind, and here opened the strangest chapter in her sadly romantic career. Shortly after his departure, his eldest and only surviving son gave signs of failing health, and knowing what a fearful blow his death would be to Mehemet-Pasha, and fearing that he might take another wife, she conceived the idea of feigning a confinement, à la Cunningham-Burdell, so as to palm off upon her husband a second son. Her account of this attempt is exceedingly confused and contradictory, but the result was that some of her attendants, whom she was compelled to make her confidants, betrayed her. An outbreak in the palace resulted in a murder of one of her Arab attendants, and shortly Melek-Hanum found herself imprisoned by the authorities and discarded by her husband. Meanwhile her son, whose failing health had provoked her to this criminal attempt, recovered, and to revenge herself upon her husband she threw doubts upon the paternity of his heir. The account of her banishment to Koriab, in Asia Minor, and, after a year's residence there, of her escape and return to Constantinople, and of her second banishment to the same place, in company with her daughter, and of her second escape and second return to the capital, with her flight to England, makes up as thrilling a chapter of adventure as any woman ever need hope to pass through. It is impossible to read

the narrative without being puzzled to decide whether the facts, so soberly and circumstantially stated, are not the romance of an unbalanced brain; and yet there is too much coherence about them to make that supposition a certainty. The six years spent in England—she escaped from Constantinople in 1866—Melek-Hanum says have been so many years of martyrdom. She declares that herself and her daughter "have suffered persecutions of every kind, conducted with an ingenuity meriting the epithet of diabolical, and presented with a degree of perseverance which indicated the intensest hatred. The object has been to discredit us everywhere; to isolate us from society; to drive us to despair—even to death." And the story of these vicissitudes, which have been of the most extraordinary kind, she promises to make the subject of a sequel to the present recital. The volume of which we have given this brief summary we notice is announced for early republication by Messrs. Harper Brothers; so that "Melek-Hanum, the wife of Kibrizli Mehemet-Pasha" is to have an opportunity to tell her story to the American public at large. Meanwhile, those whose curiosity cannot be restrained may have it satisfied through the handsomely-printed London edition.