

THE MARRIAGE OF LUTFULLAH.

Some Lively Moralizing Anent the In-
genuous Moslem.

BRANTFORD, Canada, Aug. 12.—I have not quite done with Lutfullah. His matrimonial ideas and experiences are entirely too funny to be ignored. After relating the ills of his bachelorhood he chronicles his marriage, with this pathetic statement appended: "In overrating small evils we generally bring upon ourselves heavier ones." His previous acquaintance with his bride having been limited to the opportunities of the customary loophole, he was unhappily unaware of the "pettish and hypochondriacal temper" afterward displayed by Mrs. Lutfullah. A monogamist from considerations of economy, however, he was obliged to submit to the tyranny of his solitary spouse, merely regretfully adding that "a man of wealth may marry four wives at once or gradually; then from amongst such a number he is sure to find one who gives him every satisfaction, and the rest may be maintained without being repudiated, each knowing that she has only herself to thank for a rival in her lord's affections, as she ought to have made herself so dear to him that he could not have desired a change." A novel excuse for polygamy, Lutfullah. Since in your land people have to be married to become acquainted it is not surprising that the ceremony of introduction occurs frequently. And you, poor fellow, your fate was a hard one. To think that one's solitary acquaintance should be one's only wife! I like the way in which the discarded three are referred to the consolations of philosophy. It is so eminently masculine, so entirely fitting and final. For her failure to retain her fraction of pledged Moslem affection secure from all trespassers each has only "herself to thank," and the unkind destiny that shaped her nose; and, O, epitome of the duties of womankind under the sun, she "ought to have made herself so dear to him that he could not have desired a change!" Perfidious Moslem, thine is an ingenious defense, and in the almost unimaginable case that the rejected trio, scornful the bread-and-butter compensation, should adopt a similar argument, reversing the pronouns and the situation, and seek another and a more susceptible Sheikh. I am quite sure that you would find some equally simple and charming argument to convince them that what is eminently proper for the gander is to the last degree incorrect for the goose. Well, said Lutfullah, she ought—why, certainly—and so ought you. The feminine Moslem mind being somewhat destitute of originality, however, for which the masculine Moslem no doubt praises Allah fervently five times a day, such an application as the foregoing of Lutfullah's excellent theory is not among the probabilities.

You must really let me talk a little more about him, I find this "Mahomedan gentleman" so very refreshing. Notwithstanding the hypochondria, Mrs. Lutfullah appears to have fulfilled the chief end of woman by endearing herself very considerably to her lord, for he mournfully alludes to her departure from the world as inflicting a "deep and unhealable wound" upon that physical structure known as the Moslem heart. "So great," he says, "was my grief for this severe and irreparable loss that I thought of renouncing the world at once." How one conjures up the unfortunate recluse mourning in sackcloth and ashes the flight of his eyes! How one's sympathies go out to him as he drops a salty tear over his underdone mutton, and adds to his "deep and unhealable wounds" with the unaccustomed darning needle; but we read on and discover that he did not at once retire into inconsolable seclusion. Indeed, he sorrowfully confesses that his friends and companions blindfolded him again and led him into worldly delusions by degrees. "Again," he says, "I gave in my neck to be yoked to the wagon of worldly cares," and, not six months after—alas! Lutfullah—"I was reunited in holy matrimony," the successor to his constancy being one Wilayat Khanum. No man gets two chances at immortality, and Lutfullah bartered his for Wilayat Khanum.

I think most of us are very tired of hearing about the "emancipation" of women. The term gives two false impressions—that the sex is in a condition of thralldom, and that it could accomplish its own liberation. So far as the thralldom is concerned it seems to me that the most autocratic power that men wield over us is the power to protect; and that other conditions that impose certain restraints upon our absolute freedom of action are undertaken of our own free will, and gladly. And if we were in a condition of serfdom, and men were interested in keeping us there, could anything be more palpably absurd than the idea that we could help ourselves in the very least? The evident implication of antagonism between the sexes is even more absurd. A being who labors from eight to ten hours a day for his wife or mother or sister cannot well be supposed to be consciously opposed to her interest. It is in the nature of things that men should please us; they always have; they seem to like to. When they are convinced that certain things are for our good, and that we really want them, we will surely get them. But the convictions of men are the fruit of patient reasoning and careful comparison and observation from many sides, while ours are apt to spring, Minerva-like, born of the instant, ready armed, and if they are not immediately all-potent we wax wroth, some of us, and cry "emancipation!" What saith Lutfullah, the calm-eyed observer from the rosy Orient? Summing up the character of the English, "Their obedience, trust and submission to the female sex are far beyond the limit of moderation. In fact, the freedom granted to womankind in this country is great, and the mischief arising from this unreasonable toleration most deplorable." That opinion has the disadvantage of a Moslem grandmother, of course, but as an offset to the demand for emancipation it is quite sensible enough. We have asked higher education and the professions, and we have obtained them, but have we accomplished any emancipation thereby, or have we not added to the bonds that were previously woven chiefly of Berlin wool and crochet cotton? We have felt the capability of sustaining the long struggle for the sake of its rewards, and the exchange of ease for effort is doubtless a noble one, but if there is any emancipation in the case it is not from the affectionate tyranny that supported us in indolence, but from the foolish falsity of the ideas that made such a life the most honorable among women, and for which they are themselves responsible. And now we ask the franchise, surely not by way of emancipation, as its intelligent and faithful exercise would certainly add another burden to the rest that have been laid upon us at our own solicitation. I don't like to talk much about voting, for I confess I'm not as much interested in it as the importance of the subject demands, and then I don't mind telling you that I have a deeply-rooted objection to being supposed an elderly female with spectacles and side curls and an aversion to bangs. I'm quite aware of the frivolity of this objection, and that it is entirely unworthy of any high-minded, philanthropic supporter of her sex, but I regret to say that it is unconquerable. Woman's request for the ballot, however, so far as one can ascertain, is not based upon any hope of emancipation thereby from whatever ills there be in her present condition, but is a simple declaration that the sex has reached that point of intelligence that permits the useful exercise of a public spirit and is desirous of accepting the duties and responsibilities and benefits that grow out of it. The best point that Gail Hamilton makes against the extension of suffrage to women is that while they have a right to vote they have a higher right, based on the sacred first duty of motherhood, not to vote. This is wholly and extremely true, but with the addition of another and a still higher right, the right of discretion as to whether they will or not. If the franchise be granted to women this clever writer and thinker, whose "New Atmosphere" surrounds so many of her grateful sex, foresees that a new burden will be laid upon every conscientious wife and mother in the land, howsoever overweighted she be already; but she admits, asserts that women have the moral right not to vote. Does opportunity then entail obligation? Hardly. If a woman has the moral right to abstain from voting, if she be so disposed, as everybody will admit, it would be simply impossible to place her under circumstances that would compel her to exercise the franchise for conscience' sake. She can ignore that privilege just as serenely as the hewing of wood and the drawing of water; but if it be so that she is willing, for any reason whatever, that seems to her right and proper, to forego this right not to vote, and to assume the responsibility of influence in public affairs, there is no one who should say her nay; but she should not call her willing acceptance of a further share in the world's work emancipation.

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