

CHAPTER XIII.

*CONFLICT OF CIVILIZATIONS.—FAREWELL TO
AFRICA.*

'The crescent glimmers on the hill,
The mosque's high lamps are quivering still,
—but who, and what art thou
Of foreign garb?'

BYRON'S 'Bride of Abydos.'



THE reader will perceive that I have travelled over five degrees of longitude, and very considerably inland toward the 35th degree of latitude; that is, from Fort Napoleon on the borders of Constantine on the East, to Oran, where I write, not far from the borders of Morocco. He will understand that I have travelled not hurriedly in railroad cars, but in carriage, and on foot; and have thus had opportunities to correct first impressions, and to know the country for what it is. He will also perceive that I have indulged in details, seemingly trifling, but with a view to elucidate the questions growing out of the conflict of antagonistic systems and civilizations. There is no country like Algiers in this regard. Here is a Mohammedan people under Christian rule; the religion of the ruled tolerated—almost fostered in a way—by the ruler, and the ruler doing all in his power to attract the affection and loyalty of the subject, and that failing, holding the people pinned to the throne by the bayonet. There have seldom been less than 100,000 French soldiers in Algiers; yet I do know, from conversation with leading Mussulmans, that their

hatred of the French is inveterate and irreconcilable. The Mohammedan religion and customs are, however, decaying before the French. But it is still a problem whether France had not better do with Algiers, as the conscript did who caught the Algerine tigress,—let her ‘go.’ I do not see that she intends to do that. Her hold is rather growing tighter. True, she does not realize much,—in fact, pays more than she receives in revenue. But she is building bridges, walls, docks, forts, turnpikes, and railroads, and inducing immigration by offers of land—rich land—at cheap rates. But the immigration is not increasing very fast. The land is untaken. There is protection enough given now by the army against native outbreak. There is no trouble in reaping, if you plant, provided there be no untimely fog, or sirocco, or locust raid. The land is very rich, well watered, well rained upon, and labour is cheap. It is, however, complained, with great emphasis, that the home Government discriminates against Algerian produce; not only by taxes here, but by heavy duties, even against the grain here raised and imported into France. Algiers is treated as a foreign country, and that too by a nation which claims M. Chevalier as its political economist, and free trade as its policy. Because the farmers of Southern France howl for protection against the importation of Algerine wool, wheat, barley, and horses, the Government yields. The advantages of Algiers as an agricultural colony—once acknowledged, and so great in grain that Rome was fed from it—are dissipated under the insane clamour of ‘protection to home industry.’ Even the Arab horse is ‘protected’ against visiting the world out of Algiers!

I have already incidentally shown why Algiers is so fruitful. The desert below, by its heat, draws the rain clouds from the north. Their cisterns are sucked over

the sea, which keeps them full, and they are emptied on the mountains and plains of Algiers. Hence, when the soil of Southern Spain and France is cracked and seamed with heat, Africa is damp, misty, cool, and fertile. Her fields and mountain sides are carpeted with all the hues of Flora. Her streams are fringed with oleander and tamarisk, and her rocks are draped and tasselled with the Mauritanian ivy. Her very moors (I do not mean the Moors) are mosaics of every dye; her road-sides are odorous with roses and jasmine.

From the soil, mountains, harbours, climate, waters, flora, and the history of Roman successes here, as also from the proximity of this colony to France, I infer that France will hold Algiers, and in time make it an exception to her general system of colonization, by making it a success. France has had Algiers about thirty-six years; but never so as to control it in tranquillity until recently. Her experiment, therefore, has not been fairly tested. Had not England been jealous of French power in Africa, or in the Orient, France would have had control of the three pashalics of Morocco, Tunis, and Algiers as long ago as 1827. A treaty was made for that purpose with the Turkish power, which had held them from 1516, but the intervention of England with the Porte prevented its consummation.

French blood has flowed freely here. Half a million have perished to hold Algiers. The war with Abd-el-Kader, whose plume cut the French like a sword, for when he was in the saddle all Moslemdom were his retainers—lasted from 1837 to 1848. The French did not keep faith with him on his surrender. They imprisoned him in the island of Marguerite for four years—a beautiful isle near Cannes, which I have described, out of whose barred castle-windows

he could look out upon the sea toward Algiers—a sea as unstable as his own vicissitudes of fortune. Perfidy and blood, confiscation and plunder, these are the penalties exacted when the strong war with the weak. By some overruling law of political gravitation, which attracts the minor States to the greater; or which compels the less civilized people to yield to those of superior civilization, Algiers has become absorbed in France. The word is, that God has commissioned France to redeem North Africa! France accepts! The military and civil administration of France, with its system of magistrates and prefects, its division of military and civil territory, departments, arrondissements, and communes, combining a central, provincial, and municipal government, leaving much of domestic matters to the native people, especially as to religion, marriage, and indigenous customs, remitting much of the administration of justice to the Kadis, or Mussulman judges, all these are features of the policy prevailing here to-day. But there is no representation as yet of Algiers in the Chamber of Deputies, and great complaint is made that the interests of the people are neglected by the irresponsible pro-consular system.

Still, Algiers does show prosperity. Her agriculture flourishes, but her market is restricted. Oats, beans, sorghum, and all the cereals are readily raised, and the production seems to be augmented with every year. The forests of cedar, cypress, and oak have been noticed in our visit to the South; but the fruits of the olive, the palm, and the orange almost rival the grains of the soil for their production. The tobacco is held to be next to that of Cuba; and its production and manufacture is a large business. Everybody smokes in Algiers; cigarette is the favourite style with all. The cotton culture has been quickened by recent

events in America. The quality raised is that of the long staple, and of the species familiar to the Carolina coast. A volume might be written of the mineral springs and mineral resources of Algeria. Every coloured and veined marble—blue, red, white, and black—is found here. Porphyry is to be had in Constantine. Wages are not high; they vary in the different provinces. A good carpenter will make from three to five francs a day, and a gardener or common labourer about two francs. But it costs little to live. Beef and mutton are common and good; milk of cow, goat, and mare is ever at hand. One thing may be said, that Algiers is prolific in births. Doctors unite about this. There is something about Africa peculiar in this respect. The births far exceed the deaths. Commerce increases, despite restrictions. But the United States have no part in this commerce. I find no record of any American vessels at the ports. Our consular duties are restricted to rescuing naturalized citizens from the French army.

The principal drag upon the prosperity of Algiers is the Mohammedan faith and polygamy. I am not illiberal toward the Moslem. He has much of interest in his religion, even for a Christian. The Mohammedan is not so intolerant as he was; nor has he been so intolerant to the Christian as to the Jew. The Koran itself refers to the Saviour 'as one who came to save from sin; as one conceived without corruption in the body of a virgin, tempted of Satan, created of the Holy Spirit; as one who established an Evangel which Mohammed confessed!' But it offers to the faithful a heaven of sensuality: nay, seven of them—one of silver, of gold, of precious stones, of emeralds, of crystal, of fire-colour; and the seventh heaven—a delicious garden whose fountains and rivers are milk and honey, whose trees are perennially green, whose

fruit is so beautiful and delicious that a drop of it in the sea would change its brackish taste into sweetness. The mansions of this heaven are filled with all the imagination desires, and the believers espouse there the most wonderful of lovely hours—*for ever young and for ever virgin!* Thus you see that the highest heaven of the Mohammedan smacks of his earthly home where the senses are gratified, and where there is no limit upon his loves. Of course so long as this is his religion, and when, too, wives are purchased for money at pleasure, the family, which is the base of the social pyramid, cannot be said to be a blessing, but a curse. The author of the 'Crescent and the Cross' thus hits the nail on the head:—'In Paradise he finds the extreme of sensual enjoyment, as a reward for the mortification of the senses in this life; so that his self-denial on earth is only an enlargement of the heroic abstinence of an alderman from luncheon on the day of a city feast. His heavenly hareem consists of 300 houris, all perfect in loveliness. What chance has his poor wife of being required under such circumstances!—it is *supposed* she has a heaven of her own, in some place or other, but as to *her* substitute for houris the Koran is discreetly silent. In Paradise is to be found every luxury of every appetite, with every concomitant, except satiety and indigestion.' Hence, the Mohammedan has forever in his appetite and faith a canker to his prosperity. He must give way. France, not over scrupulous in her own domestic ways, is nevertheless reforming even Algiers in this particular.

The influence of the Crimean war upon the Orient reaches even to Algiers. The Turkish empire was not so much shaken as it was propped by that war; for the real power of Government to-day in Constantinople is not in the Sultan, who sits cross-legged, sipping his coffee, and smoking his chibouque on the

Bosphorus. His favourite occupation is to feed his chickens and ducks—of which he has a poultry yard full; while Russia, France, and England, from their ambassadorial palaces at Pera, dominate as well over the roofs of Stamboul, as over the various nationalities which make up the East.

The harem has been invaded. The chief wives, or the wives of the chief Turks, seek European society—or the society of European women. They import the tawdry ornaments of Vienna and Paris, and their dresses are no longer the velvet jacket and trousers, but they have the stays, the gaiters, the long trains, and chignons of their fashionable sisters of the West. They are even learning the piano!

All these domestic reforms are traceable to the influence of the Crimean War, which opened, with much authority, the secluded portals of Oriental life. France is doing the same just as effectually in Algiers, because she wears the velvet glove over her mailed hand. For instance, she not only permits, but aids the Moslem schools. Therein the children of the faithful are taught, as of yore, by Moslem teachers. Many of the institutions, about Algiers especially, are under the care of French matrons. The girls of Moslem families come to these institutions to learn the arts of domestic life, including, as I have explained, the refinements of embroidery, toward which their delicate, henna-tinted fingers seem to have an instinctive tendency. While at these schools, they are guarded from Moslem eyes of the opposite sex, but not from those of the Christian; and, when they return at evening to their homes, they are muffled up in their awkward mantles and head-gear, and conducted by some one who is approved by the parents. My wife visited one of these establishments. She tried to tell me how the girls put on their long, winding, won-

drous involutions of dress for the street promenade. But I cannot repeat her description.

Again, I think the French influence, while it tolerates the existence of Mohammedanism, has its effect upon polygamy; not to abolish but to mitigate. It will in time abolish it. As we used to hear it said about American slavery, that we might repose in the hope of its ultimate extinction, so we prophesy that much about polygamy. This remaining 'relic of barbarism' will, perhaps, be found last on the soil of my native land. Proud thought! For example, you rarely find a Mohammedan in contact with the Christian community, and having relations of business or otherwise with it, who has more than one wife. Not but that he can afford more. Out on the plains, where the Arabs roam, or up in the mountains, where the Kabyles farm, there you may find the sheikhs, or chief men, who have means, also having several wives. The people generally adhere to the Christian practice. The wives appreciate it. They are very much more docile and dutiful, when they are alone the mistress of the household. The other day, while at Algiers, my wife was invited to visit a Mussulman family—that of Mustapha Rayato—a merchant of Algiers. The lady of the household—and there was only one—gave a sparkling answer to the American lady, when the latter inquired after the *other* wives. If you will allow me, I will extract the scene from the journal of my wife, not alone for the colloquy about polygamy, but as a better description of the Moorish domesticity than any *man* can give. Thus the journal:—

'Our visit had been previously arranged, and a promise made that we should see all the trinkets, jewellery, &c., of a Moorish household. As Mustapha Rayato led the way to his house, he enlarged upon

the narrow streets through which we were passing. He said that once he, too, could afford to live in an elegant house in better quarters, but the French came, and all was changed. He had sold his house, taken one much inferior, and kept his shop like one of the common people. We did not see the degradation of that, but out of respect to our host, we forbore comment.

We enter the ordinary Moorish house by a large, double, common, wooden door. It opens into a small square vestibule. A neatly whitewashed stairway is in front, and a door at the side opens to the inner court. The double piazza incloses the court, and the lower rooms are devoted to the servants. The stairs were of slate; and I noticed their extreme cleanliness was not in the least disturbed by the boots of the gentleman, since our host had quietly dropped his shoes at the door, and encased his feet in another and clean pair, ready for him at the foot of the stairway. [MEM.—A good idea for the lords of creation of other nations.] The floors of the piazzas and rooms were of porcelain tiles. We were ushered into the *salon de réception*; one of the four upper rooms reserved for Mustapha's family. A low, cushioned divan ran the length of the room, and in front, scattered over the floor were carpets, rugs, and silken cushions. Madame Rayato rose gracefully to receive us, and gave us the Arab salutations. Then, we chose our seats as best suited us: I, on the divan near our host, my Italian companion on the carpet in front, and a charming little French madame whom we had encountered on our travels (for the gentlemen were excluded), upon the cushion by our side; Madame Rayato on the other side of her liege lord, with her group of three very pretty daughters; while number four, a pretty child of about that number of years, nestled between

her father's knees, and alternately bestowed and received caresses from her handsome papa. Indeed, it seemed much like a Christian household in this respect; a beautiful domestic picture. Mustapha's face radiated with pleasure, "as he floated down the calm current of domestic bliss." [This last remark is not in the journal. It is that of the author.] I introduce, not the madame, in my engraving of the "Moorish woman of the period," but a type of the



Moorish Lady of the Period.

well-dressed Moorish lady, dressed like her. She had decidedly Spanish features and complexion, as we thought; we afterwards found that she was descended

from a very wealthy and noble Spanish family—*i. e.*, a Moorish family once celebrated in Spain before the Moors were driven thence. Her hair was dazzling in its blackness. It was cut short at the neck, and covered with a silken foulard (handkerchief) whose embroidered and fringed ends hung jauntily upon one side in the form of a heavy tassel. A diamond sword fastened it on the forehead; an agraffe, with pendants, ornamented the point at the tie; and these were matched with earrings of pendant solitaires. She wore a crimson velvet basque, cut nearly in the Pompadour style, with lace chemisette, and confined at the waist by a girdle of the same, the girdle and basque embroidered in gold. Large, full muslin "pantalons," over those of a thicker material, completed the toilet of the madame. A dozen strings of pearls were around the neck, and several pairs of bracelets, in unique designs, of gold and diamonds, and massive gold anklets, were the ornaments of arms and feet. Of course, she had put on the additional number of jewels, to redeem the promise made to us, that she would display all her bijouterie. The diamonds were set in silver, so that we were able to bear their brilliancy without envy. Had the setting been gold, I would not speak for our integrity. Afterwards, jackets of gold cloth and "pantalons" to match, were shown us, for fête occasions. The children were attired like the mother, only with less jewelry, and instead of the foulard head tie, they wore the little fancy Greek cap of gold coins, tied coquettishly at one side.

'Salutations over, and jewelry examined, we explained our different nationalities, we speaking in French and Mustapha Rayato translating into Arabic for his wife. We inquire if they have French masters for their children, since their country is becoming essentially French? "No. Our religion does not

allow instructions in any other than our own language." "Did you take your wife with you to the Paris Exposition?" "Oh, no! Moorish ladies seldom travel." "They do not always stay at home, surely?" "No. We go to our country house for the summer," said Madame, "and we ladies go to the cemetery on Friday. Besides, we visit among each other." "But in the evening, in the city? Do you not drive out as we do, to take the fresh air?" "Oh, no. Never!" "Why should they?" says M. Rayato. "They have the court here, and the freedom of the house." "Your daughters marry so young—when do you expect to give up your pretty charge there?" pointing to his oldest of fourteen, in size and precocity, already twenty! "Oh, in two years most probably," at which the young lady coyly concealed her blushes behind her mamma. M. Rayato remarks that no dowry is needed on the part of the girl, but the would-be husband must bestow a certain sum. "You must be happy to know that you can add to that sum, however, for your daughter's comfort?" "Oh, yes! Allah be thanked! the French have not taken my all." Our French "madame" appeared to enjoy all these diatribes against her nation as much as we did.

"But, M. Rayato, how is it? You have but one wife?" Here Madame R., curious to know the question, opened her great black eyes half suspiciously, and said, on the instant the translation was given: "If he had another, I would strangle her!" and, with equal quickness, turned on us, saying: "But why is it that Madame has but one husband?" To this we could make but one reply, and that the one previously given by her, in answer to our numerous other questions: "It is our law—it is our religion!" Here a neat, bright-eyed mulatto girl, who proved to be our acquaintance of the night before at the religious rites,

appears, and brings in a low table or stool. She follows it with a silver salver, on which were china cups in silver filigree holders, filled with odorous coffee. Napkins of the length of a towel, with embroidered golden ends, were unfolded for each, and laid upon our laps; then the sugared coffee, without cream or spoons, was passed, followed with blocks of fig paste, handed to us in spoons. Both were very good, and our hosts were kindly urgent that we should partake again; but glancing at the time, I found, to my horror, that we had but twenty minutes to reach the hotel, pack our trunks, and leave for Blidah! I will not answer for our hasty adieu, or the impression left on our hosts by the hurried manner of our exit, but in a few words of thanks for their great kindness, and good wishes for the future of Mademoiselle the elder, we descended the stairway and literally rushed for hotel and railroad.' Thus endeth the journal.

From this chance conversation thus reported, one may perceive what does not appear on the surface, that there is a good deal of inflammable material in Algiers growing out of French domination and these heterogeneous elements of society. A spark may make a tremendous explosion some day, even in the midst of Algiers. Let me illustrate. Last year a beautiful French girl, a child of eight, Rabel her name, and daughter of an engineer on the railroad, was found with her throat cut and evidences of attempted outrage, lying upon the basin or quay under the Rue Impératrice, leading to the railway. The child had been sent at seven in the evening with an umbrella to the depot for her father. It was raining. Having missed her father and returning alone, she was thus assassinated, after an ineffectual attempt at rape. The indignation was wild. It was accounted the beginning of a plot among the indigenes to murder the children of the Europeans.

Algiers was on fire for a month. At length, after the police had in vain endeavoured to find out the villain, a Mohammedan, who had been educated in the French Moslem school, denounced his brother-in-law, one Ahmed ben Mustapha, called Sordo, an irreclaimable scoundrel. He had returned to his home, the evening of the murder, with the umbrella, and bloody. He had been seen to burn the umbrella and throw the debris into a cistern. There it was found, with two buttons of the child's dress. His sister saw them, and telling her husband, the conscience of the latter compelled him to make known the guilty one. Sordo was tried. I have read the pamphlet of his trial. It was before a jury, and after the French method. The Judge questioned the accused, and so implicated him in the toils of his own prevarications, that he was at once convicted. He suffered death. The reputation of the indigenes was not only saved, but it grew in favour, because of the conduct of the brother-in-law.

France does all she can to mitigate the prevailing prejudices; but more in a social than in a political and economical way. A story is told that, shortly after the French took Algiers city, the general in command gave a great ball and invited all the native inhabitants. Ices and wines were passed around. Directly dishes, cups, and glasses became scarce; and it was found that the natives, not familiar with the customs of the French, had 'put away' those articles under their sashes and clothes. Explanations followed, and the articles appeared!

The French appear to sneer at the Arab; but they are, nevertheless, utilizing the native elements here, as best they may. I have seen Arab women, under the direction of a zouave, breaking stones for the road. I have seen the Morocco people in this province of Oran, pumping water and making mortar for the

bridges. I have seen as many native soldiers as French. I have seen the Arab tending sheep for the French colonist—those large black-faced Southdowns, were they not? At any rate, they are heavy with mutton chops, and rich with a golden fleece. I have seen the railroad track for many, many miles, lined with native workmen. An Arab does the work among the horses of the diligence. We see him as we ride along the road for leagues toiling amidst the wheat and barley all but ripe, or standing sentinel against the birds! As this is novel to us, may I picture it? Indeed, I have it engraved. At first I could not understand why some half-dozen turbaned individuals were standing like statues of ancient Romans, and all at once began hallooing at each other across fields of wheat. Then we saw them with slings, swinging them with rare handi-craft, round their heads, till—crack! and off went the stone a half mile into a flock of hungry birds who were in the wheat. The birds, affrighted, rise. The Arab sounds his warning to his fellows—and, crack! another sling from another quarter! Thus they attend their fields, and in spite of the Koran, take a sling! I understand now how young David became such a proficient, and why the giant of Gath fell—beneath a sling. David, we learn, attended flocks; and no doubt was employed to frighten crows from the corn. David, like Samuel, when young was a good boy! He degenerated.

There is something so oriental, biblical, and interesting in this sleight of the sling, that I requested the performer to perform on my account, rather than on the bird business. He complied. I endeavour, in the absence of a library, to recall the history of this peculiar weapon of war, and, as I perceive, of industry. But having no library—only my Bible—I must be content with researches therein. It is a favourite weapon of the Syrian shepherds; was adopted by the



ARABS SLINGING AT BIRDS.