



Zeyneb and Melek

In their yashmaks. These are the two heroines of *Pierre Loti's* famous novel, *Les Désenchantées*, who reappear in *"A Turkish Woman's European Impressions,"* just published by Seeley, Service and Co.

LONDON, March 10, 1913.

I print on this page a letter which has been sent to me as to other journals in support of a memorial to George Gissing. I should like to urge that appeal with very great zest. Gissing has never been a popular novelist but he has a sturdy band of admirers who recognise that he is among the immortals. We have read much, and perhaps too much, of his sadly-troubled life. It is often the destiny of genius to lead lives that are sad and full of trouble. If Gissing had led the easy, comfortable life that comes to most of the novelists of our day he would have gone with them into oblivion. He could not have written the books by which he will live. He could only have written the type of book that obtains appreciation at this moment from critics of no very fine literary discernment—such a book as *By the Ionian Sea*, for example.

Let Gissing's admirers and those who want to show their belief in his future send even but five shillings to this fund and they will help to secure the object of the memorialists—that is to say, to honour Gissing in the University of Manchester, where he suffered some dishonour in his lifetime. Manchester years hence, when it has a spirit for literature in its councils, will recognise in sculpture, I hope, some of the men and women so honourably associated with it—De Quincey, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, for example, and among these most certainly George Gissing.

In this connection I was delighted to read a fine eulogy on Gissing in *The Manchester Guardian* the other day. It was from the pen of Mr. A. C. Benson. "I have all his books," he says, "and I should be ashamed to say how often I have read *The Whirlpool* and *New Grub Street*," and then follows much wise criticism which I hope Mr. Benson will incorporate in one of his volumes.

In a recent letter, by a slip of the pen, I wrongly attributed the admirable book on Cambridge by Mr. Charles Tennyson, just published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus, to his elder brother, Mr. Alfred Tennyson. Mr. Alfred Tennyson was at Oxford, whereas the book in question is the outcome of Mr. Charles Tennyson's natural enthusiasm for his own university.

A correspondent, in reference to my recent objection to the phrase of "averse to" in the English language, calls my attention to *The Oxford Dictionary*, in which under the word, "averse," we read as follows:—

"Averse to" is condemned by Johnson as etymologically improper but may be defended on the ground that these words, "averse to," express a mental relation analogous to that indicated by "hostile," "contrary," or "repugnant."

Sir James Murray, however, gives the following muster roll of literary authorities who have used the two forms:—

AVERSE FROM		AVERSE TO	
Donne	Hale	Walton	D. North
Burton	Dryden	Boyle	Richardson
Milton	Pope	Locke	H. Walpole
Bishop	Johnson	South	Gibbon
Montagu	Southey	Addison	Burke
Sir T.	Motley	Steele	Buckle
Browne	Lowell	De Foe	Mill
Evelyn	J. R. Green		

Several writers have used both forms, which to my mind simply means that they have lapsed into indifferent English on occasion. Every reader of Bain's *Higher English Grammar* or, I think, *The Companion to the Higher English Grammar*—which is now out of print—will recall the extraordinary examples he gives of bad grammar on the part of brilliant writers. Stevenson, for example, on one occasion used the plural verb for "neither" and "nor." For myself I am satisfied—as all of us are—that the highest standard of the English language is to be found in the Bible of 1610.

A LITERARY LETTER: *The Emancipation of Turkish Women.*

In the Bible we have the reference in Micah, Chapter ii, verse 8, "as men averse from war," which I count as final. Curiously enough Shakspeare never once uses the word, "averse." Emphatically, then, in endeavouring to condone "averse to," the editor of *The Oxford Dictionary* does the English language a wrong.

There are few more interesting books in modern French literature than Pierre Loti's novel, *Les Désenchantées*, of which, by the way, the firm of Macmillan recently issued a translation in its sixpenny library under the title of *Disenchanted*. The book, of course, should be read in French. Works of imagination do not come in the category described by Buckle, who although a splendid linguist declared that he never read a book in the original if he could obtain a translation. Buckle was, of course, referring to works of scholarship and solid prose, not to fiction or poetry.

I met a man the other day at dinner who had read many books but had not read *Disenchanted*. I pitied him. Not to have read *Disenchanted* is to have missed one of the most beautiful stories written in modern days. It may be a novel with a purpose, but unlike most novels

It is interesting to note, by the way, that it was the visit of the Empress Eugénie to the Sultan of Turkey that led to all the troubles of femininity in Eastern Europe. The Empress was a beautiful woman beautifully clothed. There was nothing of the sheltered life of Turkish women about her environment. Moreover, the Sultan did homage to her, and a Mahomedan Sultan had never before done homage to emancipated womanhood in so marked a way. The result set a fashion which Turkish men encouraged. French governesses were brought over by the score and turned loose in the harems. They encouraged the reading of French novels, and these novels were not always quite of the right kind. It was, it will be remembered, the reading of the novels of M. Loti that led to the correspondence with Zeyneb and Melek. The whole thing caused attempts at emancipation which for years were doomed to failure.

Zeyneb's flight from Turkey, however, led to this interesting book, in which all the contrasts of East and West are presented. They even include Zeyneb's membership of the Lyceum Club in London, and there is a quaint description of a vegetarian dinner in that club which its members may like to read. We are not told the amount of income that these ladies had control over during their sojourn in Europe, but obviously they would have had a happier life had they taken some quiet villa on the Riviera, engaged Turkish servants, and settled down to the advantages of both civilisations. Rushing about through the great capitals of Europe gave them experience but was not likely to give them happiness. However, Melek married during this period. Zeyneb was left alone, and from that time onwards seems to have had a very sad and pathetic life. Here, then, is an admirable sequel to Pierre Loti's great novel, or rather I should say a footnote to it, for the book has no pretence to the high poetic and imaginative qualities of *Disenchanted*.

Yet another book connected with the question of women in the East is before me. All who have read Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall's *Said the Fisherman* found delight in it. They will find not exactly delight but great interest in the same author's *Veiled Women* (Eveleigh Nash). This is an account of an English governess in Cairo, a young woman who had had a very rough time in her own land. She professes to no particular charm or beauty, but by sheer contrast to Turkish experiences she wins the heart of the son of the pasha in the house where she is engaged as governess.

This governess agrees to turn Mahomedan, marries the pasha's son, and enters the harem. She is, of course, his only wife, for Miss Ellison in her *Turkish Woman's European Impressions* incidentally remarks upon the absurdity of English people using the word, "harem," to imply a collection of wives. The word comes from the Arabic "maharem," which means "sacred or forbidden," and is simply applied to those rooms in a Turkish house exclusively reserved for the women. There is as much sense, says Miss Ellison, in asking an Englishman if he has a boudoir as in asking a Turk if he has a harem. It is very rarely, Miss Ellison adds, that a Turk has more than one wife.

In any case, to return to *Veiled Women*, the English governess is the only wife of the pasha's son. But the life is restricted, of course, to a world in which only women appear. The freedom which characterises the women in other European countries, the freedom which enables them to go shopping together and to plays and amusements, and so on, is lacking. The story of this woman's experiences, the revelation of the tyranny that the life involves for her, is admirably told, so also is the attempt of the heroine to escape from it.

Finally, however, the English woman in this story becomes reconciled to her lot, accepts the Turkish standpoint, and has no wish whatever to change it. The scene of the story is laid in Cairo partly during the period of the revolt of Arabi Pasha and the first occupation of Egypt by the English. Altogether Mr. Pickthall has written an admirable story which with Miss Ellison's book makes seasonable reading at a moment when Turkey is passing through yet another phase as exemplified in the interesting drawing by THE SPHERE'S artist in Constantinople that will be found in this issue. C. K. S.

A list of books received by "The Sphere" will be found on the second page of this issue.

A MEMORIAL TO GEORGE GISSING

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE SPHERE"

SIR,—It has been thought by some among the large and increasing number of those who honour George Gissing and his work that the time has come when some permanent memorial of him should be provided. The recognition which came to him only towards the close of a life spent largely in a long struggle against adversity is now secure; he has a place, distinct and apart, but indefeasibly his own, among the writers of his age, and those who know something more of him than his books will desire to commemorate the man as well as the writer.

It is proposed that the memorial should take the form of a scholarship for the encouragement of literary studies, and that this should be attached to the University of Manchester, where, under its earlier style of the Owens College, his own student days were passed and his first literary distinctions won. The university authorities have signified their cordial assent to this proposal.

It is hoped that the sum raised may be not less than £2,000. Of this, £200 has already been promised. Donations, large or small, are invited, and may be sent to the Honorary Treasurer, at Kilsant House, Broadway, Worcestershire.—We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

ARNOLD BENNETT	M. E. SADLER, Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University
JAMES BROCKBANK	THOMAS SECCOMBE
EDWARD CLODD	A. W. WARD, Master of Peterhouse
OLIVER ELTON	H. G. WELLS
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C. H. HERFORD	
A. N. MONKHOUSE	
C. E. MONTAGUE	

PERCY WITHERS, Honorary Treasurer.

with a purpose the artist has triumphed over the moralist. Pierre Loti wanted to show the distressful state of Turkish women as seen through the eyes of two of them—Melek and Zeyneb. M. Loti, however, declares in his preface that these ladies and their charming companion, Djenan, never existed. Of course we knew that that was not true, and now there comes a book from one of Pierre Loti's heroines. I give the title in full:—

A TURKISH WOMAN'S EUROPEAN IMPRESSIONS. By Zeyneb Hanoum, Heroine of Pierre Loti's Novel, *Les Désenchantées*. Edited and with an Introduction by Grace Ellison. (London: Seeley, Service.)

We are informed in the introduction that M. Pierre Loti declared that Zeyneb and Melek never existed because he wished to protect them from the possibilities of having to endure the terror of the Hamidian régime as a consequence of their indiscretion. The precaution, we are further informed, was unnecessary because the two heroines had fled to Europe at great peril of their lives before even the novel appeared. Miss Grace Ellison tells the story of their experiences in Europe through the medium of letters from Zeyneb. This book is not a novel but a very realistic presentation of many episodes in the two women's lives while in Turkey, and we have much sensible reflection upon their experiences in Paris, London, and elsewhere. One thing is brought out very vividly—that Oriental women should not in middle age attempt to face European civilisation. The contrast with the life that they had led in the past is too great.