

Why Wasn't I Born A Boy? Is The Cry Of Persian Women

QUEER RULES COUNT AGAINST THEM FROM BIRTH

Weaker Sex Held Inferior to Men—Widespread Ignorance and Superstition Bar to Progress—Arrival of Female Child Deep Disappointment to Family—Mother Even Risks Favor of Husband by Such an Unwelcome Present.

BY ANNETTE HEINICKE.
HIRAZ, July 17.—(Special correspondence.)—Why was I not born a boy? Life would have been so much easier to bear! Unhappy women, doomed to inferiority from birth, are daily repeating this complaint in every part of Persia, especially since echoes of the world's progressive ideas began to penetrate even here.

The least of all the problems will be settled when this country's dynamic future is fixed up, for the greatest problem concerns the abject ignorance of its people in all the relations of life. Of education, as Westerners understand it, there is none, and the widespread prevalence of superstition impedes whatever spirit of progress may be started moving from time to time.

When a girl babe is born the average Persian household is filled with disappointment, for the faith of Islam has degraded women to a place little superior to the cattle. The mother of a female infant even runs the risk of being instantly turned from favor by her lord and master for making such an unwelcome addition to his family.

Only by following the career of a boy from his birth to his marriage can one obtain an adequate idea of the characteristic life and peculiar social rites of the Persians, high or low. The birth of a boy is always the signal for a great family feast, to which no parallel exists in Western lands. Sheep are slaughtered in honor of the event, and a banquet of great dishes of rice, pilchard and chilies is served up by the happy father to friends and relatives.

The new-born child is tightly swaddled up in clothes, his eyes painted with native cosmetics, his forehead adorned with a beauty spot, a colored handkerchief tightly bound round his head, while beads, coins and amulets against the evil eye are hung round his neck. In order that he may have a straight figure when he grows up, he is tightly strapped down to a flat board, shaped like his body.

As soon as "the little Agha" is able to walk, he becomes a very privileged person. Indeed, in the harem, where he is allowed to do just as he pleases, his every whim being indulged. By constant association with servants, the young hopeful of the Persian household learns the art of lying—a universal accomplishment in the realm of the Shahs.

When five or six years of age, he goes to the school kept by the local mullah in a corner of the mosque, and with the Koran as his lesson book, learns the alphabet. Writing is taught by means of a reed pen and Chinese ink, and as paper is too expensive he uses a tin plate, from which the writing can be erased. During the reading lesson the mullah sits behind his pupil enjoying his water pipe, while the boys away to and fro to the rhythm of their sing-song recitation.

After School Comes Idleness.

The boy leaves school when he has finished his Koran, and loaf about, if his father can afford to keep him in idleness, till he is married. The boys of the wealthier classes enjoy a few extra privileges, occasionally extending to the acquisition of foreign languages, but even then their tuition falls far short of the elementary education standards of the Western world.

While the lad has been receiving all this paternal attention, his sister seldom goes to school, and runs about at will and untended until she is 9. At that age she is transformed into a little woman, wearing the chador, a large black cloth garment enveloping the whole figure, and beneath the shalvar—wide pantaloons drawn in round the ankles. Her face is covered by the rouhand or long, narrow white veil, and over it, in front of the eyes, there is a laced "window" to look through without being seen.

Her whole time until she is married is employed in enhancing her personal appearance by means of the cosmetics, paints and hair washes to be found in every apothecary, as the harem is called, so that rumors of her beauty may get



Persian Mother And Daughters In Street Costume, But With Their Veils Folded Back

abroad and a husband be found while she is still young.

Marriages are arranged by the parents or relatives of the family, and young children are often betrothed among the high-caste sections of Persian society. Young men are never supposed to see the face of their betrothed during the betrothal period, but sometimes a mother manages to satisfy her son's not unnatural curiosity by giving a tea party and hiding him behind a curtain, from whence he can catch a glimpse of his future wife's face.

When the marriage has been fixed up between the two families, the bridegroom-elect makes an offering of a Kashmir shawl or a diamond ring to the girl who has been chosen for him as his life's partner. The details of the dowry, however, take a long time to negotiate, for Persians are shrewd at a deal and the rock-bottom price of love's young dream is not easy to ascertain. Ready cash forms the most important part of a dowry which, in the case of well-to-do folk, also includes jewelry, dresses, land, houses, flocks, horses, camels, sometimes slaves, and always a beautifully bound copy of the Koran.

Marriage Is Great Event.
When all the preliminaries are fixed up to the satisfaction of both parties, the services of a mullah are engaged to determine the marriage day, which never falls in Moharram or Sofar, the two months of mourning, or in Ramadan, the month of fasting. The marriage always takes place near sunset and the attendant ceremonies continue for several days.

On the first day of the fest, the Shirm, Karan, the bridegroom elect, accompanied by a throng of relatives and friends and a number of servants carrying trays of candy and fruits, goes to the house of the bride. The procession is welcomed by music and dancing, the women, with the bride elect in their midst, watching the reception from the flat roof of the anderoon.

After she has been presented to her future husband by her father, the wedding party, accompanied by the mullah, adjourns to the largest reception room in the women's quarters, where



Persian Woman In Street Attire

the guests seat themselves round the table. The room is divided by a curtain, behind which the women, all heavily veiled, take their seats. The mullah, standing at a parting in the curtains, asks the girl if she is willing to accept the young man of her

parents' selection as her husband. Silence is taken as a sign of acceptance. He is interrogated in the same way, and the contract is then signed. The men retire to feast, while the women make merry in their own quarters. These rejoicings continue almost un-



interruptedly till the sixth or seventh day, when the Zafar, or unveiling, takes place. The young bridegroom visits a public bath, where the attendants put him through an elaborate toilet, shaving his head, staining his sideburns, his hands and feet red; and only when evening approaches is he ready to return to his house to await his wife's coming.

In the meantime, the women have been dressing her up in all her finery. The fashion of the indoor dress was introduced by Nasserodin Shah from Europe after he had first seen the ballet girls at the Paris opera. So well pleased was he with the attire of the Gallic nymphs that he dressed all his wives in a similar costume, which speedily became the fashion all over the country. The wedding dress is a clever elaboration of this style, with an abundance of variegated silks, satins and velvets.

Misery May Become Lot.

Just before sunset the bride, who may be only 12 years old, is taken with much ceremony to her new abode, riding a richly caparisoned steed, and behind her in long array follows her dowry. This is contained in big red chests carried by mules with gay trappings, and longer the string of mules the greater talk there is in the bazars about the wedding. This being the case, it often happens that many of the chests are empty, in the case of Persian parents whose social ambitions outrun the length of their



Persian Mullah Keeping School. His Ignorance Apart From The Moslem Bible Is Colossal



Persian Women's Indoor Costume Adapted From Gird Of Paris Ballet Girls Who Delighted Eye Of Shah While On European Tour

Men carrying huge white lanterns walk on each side of the procession, the slow progress through the narrow streets being accompanied by the noise of guns, barbaric music and shouting, while frequently a fireworks display is also given at intervals along the route.

Arrived at the bridegroom's house the procession halts while she is slaughtered, and the bride has to step across streams of running blood, supposed to bring her luck and happiness, as she enters her new home, where she is received by her husband, who introduces her to the anderoon.

After the long wedding is over, about midnight, the mother of the bride leads her daughter to a private chamber, where, alone with her husband for the first time, she drops her veil—to her moment of tense anxiety, for if her

lord and master is not pleased with his bargain, she is faced with long years of misery and degradation. If he is displeased with her and cannot afford the expense of a second marriage, he is at liberty to take a pretty slave wherewith to console himself, for neither such promiscuous unions nor orthodox polygamy are prohibited by the Koran, though many Persians are satisfied with one wife.

But one never sees married couples strolling out together in Persia, for the household arrangement, which allocates them separate quarters, divides them in public as well. Yet in spite of women's degraded position, the anderoon is so inviolable that not even the law is powerful enough to force a way through its jealously guarded portals, where the Persian's "legal property" is hidden from prying eyes.

HOW UNCLE SAM LOST

\$64 TALE OF A TRIP BY MAIL

BY CHARLES FORT.

SIMON BOBBLES had ways of his own, so you must not be astonished at anything done by him.

Said Simon: "Ain't I the strange feller, though! I'm that set on traveling! I'd like to be in Denver, just to say I was there. I'd like to go out to see Budd Lobe in San Francisco. I ain't got any use for Budd and he ain't any use for me; but I'd like to go out just to say I was there. I'd like to go to Washington. Don't care about the Capitol and wouldn't be bothered with the Monument; don't care about generals and senators; but just want to say I was there."

Simon made a discovery. Said he: "It costs money to travel!" Simon was given to wisdom. Said he: "There's always ways of doin' things." And this was his way:

The postman hastened from corner to corner, collecting mail. And there on a letter box sat Simon Bobbles, perched comfortably, swinging his legs. "Hey, young fellow!" said the indignant postman. "You mustn't do your lounging there! The Government ain't in the furniture business. Do you hear?" for Simon said nothing but swung his legs idly. "You mustn't loaf there, so take a jump for yourself."

"But I can't," answered Simon. "I can't move, and by rights I can't talk, either. I'm mail. I'm mail. See?" Mr. Budd Lobe, 234 Pearl Street, San Francisco, Cal.

Upon his forehead was a postage stamp. Upon his coat was marked in huge letters the above address. "Don't talk nonsense," said the im-

patient postman. "And you'd better not interfere with the postoffice, either." He called to a policeman.

Now, Officer O'Glory was a new policeman and, as he had been in trouble several times because of arrests made too promptly, he was a careful officer. Not grasping the facts of the case, he approached, glancing at a little book of rules.

"I'm mail," said the unruffled Simon. "He can take me or leave me. I'm addressed and stamped and I don't care what he does about it."

"Stumped!" cried the wrathful postman. "Why, he weighs at least 200 pounds. And for that he's got one miserable two-cent stamp on him. Officer, are you going to take this fellow?" Officer O'Glory fluttered the pages of his book of rules. Unfortunately, the compiler had neglected to foresee such a situation.

"When in doubt, use your own judgment." That was the only suggestion of application.

No; there was another: "Never permit yourself to be thought at a loss."

"I can't touch him if he's mail," declared Officer O'Glory. "You don't get me before the Commissioner for picking parcels off the tops of letterboxes."

"But how far would a two-cent stamp carry him?" shouted the postman. And Simon answered: "I ain't supposed to talk, 'cause I'm mail, but you know that so long as there's one stamp on anything you've got to take it. Wasn't there any on me, I wouldn't go; but so long as there's two cents paid, you've got to take me for the rest to be paid at my destination."

"Well, I'll be registered!" cried the postman. "But Mr. Budd Lobe will be



The Postman Staggered To The Postoffice With Simon Resting Comfortably On His Back

glad to see you! How are you malling? You're first-class postage, I suppose?" "I'm always first-class goods," answered Simon.

The postman calculated rapidly. "Two cents an ounce or fraction thereof. Sixteen to the pound—two hundred pounds—\$4. But won't Mr. Budd Lobe be glad to see you! Come on, then."

"Carry me," said Simon. "I'm sort of a ward of the Government and must travel luxurious. I'm mail, and can't walk."

And with many a gasp and many a groan, the postman staggered to the postoffice with Simon resting comfortably on his back.

"He's mail!" gasped the postman, falling into the office with his parcel. "He is!" said the postmaster. "Well, he don't go here. He's livestock, and Uncle Sam isn't carrying livestock. Turn him out."

"That'll be all right," Simon agreed; "turn me out. I'm mail and ain't supposed to talk, but my sender'll say you. There ain't a court in the land would uphold you. You just try to classify a human being as livestock and hear the kick that'll go up. There's the Wimmen's Clubs always something frenzied to find something to kick about. You let them hear you call them and other human beings' livestock!"

"To—to California with him!" roared the postmaster. So there was nothing to do but to accept Simon and cancel his stamp. The indignant cancellation clerk dipped his fist into indelible ink and punched the stamp on Simon's forehead, while up and down his clothes "postage due" stamps were pasted. Neatly done up in a sack all to him—

self, Simon traveled across the continent. He saw nothing of Philadelphia and nothing of Chicago.

"Don't want to," said Simon; just want to say I been there. Must go to Washington, too. There's sights there. Don't want them; just want to say I been there."

And, having a plentiful supply of tablets secured from a vegetarian, he subsisted as well as any vegetarian, secluded in the mail car until the brakeman cried: "San Francisco!" and another postmark was stamped on his forehead.

It was the early morning delivery. The postman went up a stoop, whistling and crying: "Lobe! Budd Lobe! Any one know Lobe?"

Budd Lobe knew Lobe and he hastened down the stairs. "Sixty-four dollars due!" said the postman.

"Why, if it isn't Simon Bobbles!" cried Budd. "How are you, Simon? What on earth are you doing here? And what's that on your forehead? What kind of a stamp album are you wearing?"

Said the postman: "Sixty-four dollars, please!" Then Budd Lobe understood.

"What's for Simon Bobbles? He ain't worth it. Sorry, Simon, but you know you aren't worth anything like \$64."

of \$64, he was forwarded to the Dead Letter Office.

A clerk rudely tore off his coat. It was the "envelope" of the "dead letter." In a vest pocket was a card bearing the name and home address of Simon Bobbles.

Letter sent him home from the Dead Letter Office.

Says Simon: "There's always ways of doin' things. Been everywhere! Didn't see much places, but just the same can say I was there." (Copyright Shortstory Publishing Co.)

The Cromwell Bicentennial.

Two hundred years ago, June 13, 1712 (O. S.), died an honest gentleman, who from September, 1658, until May 25, 1659, was in all but name king of Great Britain and Ireland, and who gave up royal authority not only without regret, but with positive pleasure. This was Richard Cromwell, eldest son of Oliver Cromwell, who for this brief period was acknowledged protector of the three kingdoms. He had lived in peaceful security for 53 years after giving up the government, and this is an age when heads were taken off with little provocation thereafter. He was 59 years old when he died. It was noted of Richard, son of Oliver, that he could scarcely ever be induced to speak of politics. He was strong in his friendships and maintained to the last the character of a fine old English gentleman. When obliged to leave the government he carried with him a mass of documents in a large hair-covered trunk of which he asked his servants to take great care. "Why so much care of an old trunk?" inquired some one; "what on earth is in it?" "Nothing less," said Richard Cromwell, "than the lives and fortunes of all the good people of England." What a book of disturbing memoirs he might have left behind him! But Richard was not that sort.—Indianapolis News.