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MISCELLANEOUS

A SURPRISE FOR A SULTAN.

The following lively sketch, with its very dramatic termination is taken from the French, and appeared in one of the numbers of the *Jamaica Herald*, which was kindly sent us by a correspondent. The editor of the Jamaica paper calls it 'a lesson for husbands.' Intending it for the benefit, we suppose, of some of his friends the planters, whose wives may be a little too fond of playing the empress. We hope no Jamaica gentleman is afraid for his head. It is an allegory, perhaps, meaning that the 'head of the house' will be brought low, if it does not take care, and that the pretty lips will reign in its stead.

To call it, however, a 'lesson for husbands,' is too exclusive. It is a lesson for wives, also, and for lovers,—for all, in short, who confound the merely beautiful with the loveable, and who in admiring willfulness in others, at once betray the propensity to it in their own natures, and tempt it to make them its unpaired victims. A handsome tyrannical husband may 'snuff off his wife's head,' as well as a handsome victim her husband's. 'Lessons' for either party are invidious. Bad educations and undisciplined wills, are of both sexes, and have a right to demand instruction through the medium of lessons for all.

Semiramis, whose name has become proverbial for an able and despotic female sovereign, has the reputation of having been one of those perplexing personages, whose private and public actions appear to be at variance; and who have allowed themselves to do every bad thing they chose, upon the plea of turning it to some great general account. Catherine the second of Russia, was such a woman and has been called the 'Semiramis of the North.' Semiramis is said to have really got rid of her husband by means of his own delegated authority; though the French writer has invented the details. After all, she lived as far back as the time of Abraham! so that our certainty as to her proceedings, whether of love or murder, cannot be very precise. But the Frenchman has wisely considered, that a wilful undisciplined nature has nothing to do with chronology; and that foolish clever women, disagreeable beauties and all other ill-related phenomena, have talked and acted in the same high style of absurdity, in all ages.

—Yes of all my wives thou art the one I love best, (said king Ninus to Semiramis.) No one possesses so many graces and attractions as you. For you I willingly renounce all my other wives.

S. How the wisdom of the king watches over his words! suppose I should believe my master?

N. So long as you love me what care I for the beauty of others?

S. So then, if I desired it, you would shut up your seraglio—you would send away the women who fill it. I should be the only one you should love, and who would share you power; I should be your only wife—I should be the Queen of Assyria.

Semiramis spoke with an ardor which made her a thousand times handsomer. However, to shut up his seraglio, and send away his wives, was rather a delicate matter. Ninus, therefore, did not answer her, but renewed his conversation and caresses.

N. Queen of Assyria! and art thou not so, since by thy beauty thou reignest over the king of Assyria?

S. No, I am only a slave that you love today. Who can answer for tomorrow? I do not reign,—I happen to please. If I give an order, they consult you before obeying me.

N. Do you think it then so great a pleasure to reign?

S. Yes, for those who have never enjoyed it.

N. Well, would you reign for a few days in my place?

S. Take care that you do not propose to be too generous.

N. Nay, I repeat, if you would for one day be the absolute mistress of Assyria, you shall.

S. Shall I—and every thing that I command—shall it be obeyed?

S. Yes, I will cede to you, for one day, my power; and my golden sceptre, its emblem.

S. Suppose I should desire them to shut up the seraglio?

Ninus smiled. I will not retract my word. For one day—one entire day—you shall be queen, and mistress—I swear it. It shall no longer be to me, that the palace and empire pay obedience, but to you, to you alone. Summon up then, all your whims and caprices, for you shall have absolute power.

S. And when shall this be?

N. To-morrow, if you wish it.

S. I do.

Semiramis sweetly bent towards Ninus, letting her head fall on the shoulder of the King. She had the air of a pretty woman, begging pardon for a little caprice after it had been ceded to her. Never had she been so pleasing: never had Ninus been so happy. In the morning the king said to Semiramis,—Behold thy day to be Queen!

Semiramis called her women, and made them dress her magnificently; she placed on her head a crown of precious stones, and appeared with it in the presence of Ninus; Ninus, enchanted with her beauty, ordered that all the officers and servants of the palace should repair to the hall of state, and that they should take from the treasury his sceptre of gold, and bring it to him. When this was done, and every one had assembled before the throne in expectation of some great event he made them open the doors of the chamber where he sat with Semiramis, and taking her by the hand, repaired with her to the hall. All the officers and servants prostrated themselves before the king. Ninus conducted Semiramis to the throne placed in the centre of the hall, and made her sit on it,—then commanding every one to rise he announced to them his wish, that during the present day they should obey Semiramis, as if she were himself. He took the golden sceptre from the hand of the chief slave, and putting it in the hands of Semiramis—

'Queen' said he, 'behold the sign of sovereign power—take it, use it, & command as queen. You have here only slaves, and I myself, during the whole of this day am but one among them. Whoever are slow to obey your orders, let them be punished, as if they had disobeyed the king.' Having thus spoken he kneeled before the queen, who smilingly gave him her hand to kiss. The whole court then passed before the throne of Semiramis, who touched each officer, with the end of her royal sceptre, and received from each of them an oath to obey implicitly her commands. She received their oaths with a majesty which Ninus admired. When the ceremony was ended, he complimented Semiramis, and asked her how she had obtained her grave and majestic air?

S. Because whilst they are swearing obedience replied Semiramis, I was thinking what I should command each of them to do. I have only one day of power, and I would employ it well.

The king laughed heartily at this answer. Semiramis appeared to him more than ever amiable and lovely. Let us see, thought he, how she will play her part, and with what commands she will begin. Let the secretary of the king approach my throne, said Semiramis in a loud voice. The secretary drew near—two slaves placed before him a small writing table. 'Write! On pain of death it is commanded that the governor of the citadel of Babylon give up the government of the citadel to him who shall hand him this order. Seal it with the seal of the king and hand me that order. Write! On pain of death it is commanded to the general of the armies encamped under the walls of Babylon, to give up the command of the armies to him who shall present this order. Close it—seal it—and give it to me!'

She took the three orders she had dictated, and put them in her bosom. The court was thunderstruck—the king was himself astonished. 'Let all listen,' said Semiramis—in two hours all the officers of the state shall come to offer me presents, as it is the custom on the elevation of a new princess. Let a feast be prepared for the evening. Wait, I have another order. On pain of death it is commanded the chief eunuch that he present this evening at the feast, twenty of the most beautiful women that they may be added to the seraglio. Go—let every one depart now, except my faithful servant Ninus—I would consult him on state affairs.'

All the court went out, Ninus alone remained.

—You see, said Semiramis, I know how to conduct myself as queen. Yesterday you would not sacrifice to me your seraglio—to-day I have augmented it. Is not this generous?

Ninus began to laugh. 'My beautiful Queen, said he, you play your part admirably—but if your servant might dare to question what are you going to do, with those orders which you have dictated?' S. I am no longer Queen if I am to give you an account of my intentions—but, [continued she, laughing] I wish to avenge myself of those three officers.

N. To avenge yourself! for what?

S. The first, the governor of the citadel, is ugly, and frightens me whenever I see him. The second, the chief of the slaves, has twice presented you fresh slaves to wean from me your love; and the third being general of the army under the walls deprives me too often of your presence, you are always at the camp—I am jealous of the army, and not being able to disband the whole, I will disgrace their chief.

This answer, mingled with folly, and flattery, enchanted Ninus.—Well, said he, behold three great officers disgraced for very weighty reasons.

Oh, continued Semiramis, it is my pleasure, I tell you; I mean to put your empire in disorder for one day at least.

Ninus and the Queen walked in the gardens of the palace—the slaves of the garden prostrated themselves before Semiramis.

N. These handsome gardens are yours to-day, my Queen.

S. Beautiful gardens do you call them! what is there in them that is royal, or that the meanest of your officers may not have? Oh how few know how to use the power they possess!

N. But you have this day the power to make use of it.

S. You shall see. Slave, (cried she to the chief of the gardens,) you see that portico of columns of granite, one hundred feet in height, and the terrace which surmounts them; take the gardens with their flowers, their trees, and their cascades, and place them on the top of that terrace.

—Queen! said the chief of the gardens.

—Thou diest, if I am not obeyed. Take a million of slaves, and do as I have ordered—Semiramis will then have gardens worthy of her.

The chief of the gardens stood petrified with surprise: Ninus laughed—an eunuch approached the Queen.

—Great Queen, (said he,) the lords of the court beg that you will deign to receive their homage.

S. Follow me, servant, (said the Queen, smiling to Ninus,) and she entered the hall of state.

The grandees of the court passed one by one before the throne, each bringing a present. The majority had considered it judicious to offer jewels and precious stuff.

Semiramis, paying little attention to these useless presents, ordered the treasury to give to each lord another, three times the value of the one he brought.

—It is thus (said she to Ninus) that a prince ought to receive presents as a homage, not as a charity.

After the officers came the servants of the place. These offered flowers, fruits, and roses, or elegant animals: Semiramis received their offerings with a gracious air. Then came the slaves, who having nothing, could make no offering; the first slaves were three young brothers, who had been brought up in the same place with Semiramis. They were young, fierce, and bold; and served as guards to the palace. Semiramis recognised them; for one day, in the place where she had resided, the females were attacked by an enormous tiger and it was these three brothers who rushed to kill the animal. The females during the scene had remained veiled,—therefore the brothers knew not Semiramis. When they passed before the throne, she said to them. 'And have you no presents to make to the Queen?'

—None, (replied the first, whose

name was Zopyrus,) but my life to dedicate her.

—None, [replied the second, who was Artaban,] but my sword against her enemies.

—None, (replied the third, who was Assur,) but the respect and admiration with which her presence inspires me.

—Slaves, (said Semiramis,) it is ye, who of all the court have made the best presents. I cannot recompense them with the riches of the treasury of the empire, as I have done the rest,—but it never shall be said that Semiramis was ungrateful. Thou who hast offered me thy sword against mine enemies, take this order,—carry it to the general of the armies encamped under the wall of Babylon, and bid it to him, & wait for that which he will do for thee. Thou who hast offered me thy life to defend me, take this order, carry it to the governor of the citadel, and wait for that which he will do for thee. Thou who hast offered me thy respect and admiration which my presence inspires, thou seemest to me a courtier,—take this order, carry it to the chief of the slaves of the palace, and wait for that which he will do for thee.

The three brothers went out immediately, and the rest of the slaves passed on. The ceremony of gifts being finished, Semiramis descended from her throne, and desiring every one to quit the hall, remained alone with Ninus. 'I told you (said she) that I would upset your empire. You see, I put your gardens upon high terraces, and your slaves at the head of armies,—but now to my toilette for the feast. You will help me, will you not? and during that time we will judge of the beauty of the women whom I have added to your seraglio.

There was in Semiramis so much gaiety, folly, and beauty, that Ninus had never been so much in love as now. He assisted at the toilette of the Queen. In a short time they introduced, one by one, the women destined for the seraglio. There were some beautiful, some only pretty. Ninus scarcely looked at them—he had eyes only for Semiramis. You are wrong (said she) not to pay attention to your new slaves: look at this young girl,—what a timid air she has! and how pretty! Fifteen women had appeared,—the eunuch announced that he had not been able to get any more. 'Very well,' (said Ninus, with indifference,) very well.

The eyes of Semiramis lightened with anger. 'Slave, (said she,) I told you this morning, on pain of death, twenty women for this evening, and you have only brought fifteen. Where are the others, that your head may not fall?'

The eunuch did not answer, but kept his eyes fixed on Ninus.

S. It is not to Ninus that you are to answer for your disobedience—it is to me. Where are the five women, wanting to complete my order—I will have them or thy head.

E. My head will not fall unless the king pleases.

S. 'That word hath condemned thee!' then striking her hand, the slaves entered. 'Seize that slave, drag him to the courtyard of the seraglio, and take off his head—let it be presented to me before the feast this evening: begone.'

N. 'Will this be your last whim,' said Ninus, laughing.

S. No,—I have yet six hours to reign.

N. My lovely Queen, (said Ninus, laughing,) I willingly give you the head of the slave,—but is it worth your while to be angry about it? It is true, your anger gives you new charms,—but a few women, more or less, what signifies it?

Without thinking any further of the slave condemned to death, Ninus conversed with Semiramis. In a short time evening, and the time for the banquet, arrived. When Semiramis entered the hall, a slave presented a plate, from which she turned not away her eyes, but carefully examined. It contained the head of the eunuch. 'It is well, (said she,) place it in the court of the palace, through which the slaves must pass to the feast. Stand you by it, and repeat, that three hours since this man lived, but that, having disobeyed me, his head was instantly struck off.' The banquet was magnificent,—there were dances, flowers, and perfumes, & a sumptuous feast prepared in the gardens. Semiramis, receiving the homage paid her, with much majesty and grace, addressed herself constantly to Ninus, as if she would pay him the honors of the feast.

S. You are (said she) a stranger King, who comes to visit me in my palace. I must conduct myself to please you.

They were soon at table, Semiramis confounded all ranks—Ninus was placed

at the foot of the table,—he was the first to laugh at this change of the etiquette of the palace,—and the court, following his example, allowed themselves to be seated according to the caprice of the Queen.

She placed near her the three brothers. 'Are my orders obeyed, she asked them. They answered, 'Yes.' The banquet was gay. A slave having by chance served the king first, Semiramis caused him to be hung up and flogged with thorns,—his cries mingled with the laughter of the company. Every one was disposed to be joyful,—it was a comedy, in which each played his part. Towards the end of the repast, when wine had inflamed the gaiety of the court, Semiramis spoke—'Sire, the treasurer has read me the list of those who have offered me gifts on the joyous events of my sovereignty; the name of one lord only is wanting to complete it.

N. Who is he? (exclaimed Ninus;) he must be severely punished.

S. It is yourself, (replied Semiramis.) Speak what have you given the Queen this morning?

Ninus rose, and with a smile, whispered that he had saluted her beautiful lips.

S. The Queen is insulted by her slave.

N. I embrace her knees to obtain my pardon. Pardon me, powerful Queen, pardon me.

S. (Abandoning him her hand, which the King was covering with kisses,) 'I do not pardon such an insult from a slave: (then added in a lower voice,) Slave, prepare to die.'

N. What a little fool you are! (replied Ninus, still on his knees) I will, however, give way to your whims,—but your reign will soon be over.

S. You will, then, not be angry with something which I am about to order: Slaves, seize this man—Yes, even him, Ninus.

Ninus went laughingly up to the slaves, and put himself into their hands.

'Drag him out of the hall, take him in the court-yard of the seraglio, prepare every thing for his death, and await my orders.'

The slaves obeyed, and took Ninus out. He went willingly all the way. They led him past the head of the murdered eunuch. Semiramis placed herself in a balcony. Ninus allowed them to chain his hands.

Run to the fortress, Zopyrus—you to the camp, Artaban: Assur, shut all the doors of the palace. The orders were given in a low voice, and were immediately executed. 'Well, (said Ninus,) great Queen, there remains but one word to end this comedy.' Hear it, cried Semiramis; 'slave, remember the eunuch Strike.' They did strike, and before Ninus could utter a cry, his head fell on the ground, a smile still playing on his lips.

'Now I am Queen of Assyria, (cried Semiramis,) and perish, as did the eunuch and Ninus, all those that dare to disobey.'

FROM THE WASHINGTON SUN.

TO THE RIGHT ABOUT! WHEEL!

The editor of the Nashville Banner now and then refreshes the recollection of the public with facts that make the party leaders and their organs wince to the quick. We have already transferred to our columns certain disclosures he made, illustrative of the character of the scribbler who was brought to this city to hold forth in the name of Van Buren and his faction. Blair has been placed before the judgment seat, condemned, and is now undergoing sentence. No more of him.

But the Banner lashes in admirable style the hypocrisy and treachery of some of the high priests of Van Burenism in Tennessee, Grundy, Polk, and Johnson; and, for the sake of the moral lesson, and lending our aid to circulate his exposure of the humbug which these men are now attempting to play off on the people, we copy his remarks. On the occasion of Mr. Calhoun's publication of the correspondence between general Jackson and him, the editor of the Banner took up the defence of the president. He says there were other friends of general Jackson who differed from him on this question. Who were they?

FELIX GRUNDY. He came home from Washington a hot Calhoun man. He declared that 'Mr. Calhoun had sustained himself' in the controversy with general Jackson, and visited the adjacent counties, preaching similar doctrines. It required two letters from governor Carrol, then in Nashville, to choke him off the Calhoun track, and to convince him that he was 'barking up the wrong tree.' He