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 Editor and Proprietor.

SATURDAY JUNE 20, 1885.

HOW TO DIE IN PERSIA.

Charms as a Last Resort—Reading from the Koran—Hired Mourners.

(St. James' Gazette.)

The sick man lies in extremis on a thin mattress upon the floor, covered by a quilted silken coverlet. Twenty or thirty persons are in the room where he is dying. The smoke of many hubbub-bubbles clouds the air; whispered conversation is general. The doctors have declared their patient's condition hopeless, and, as a last resort, certain charms suggested by a weird-looking dervish have been tried. But the crab broth, prepared from the tiny crustaceans that inhabit the streamlets round Shiraz, the patient has been unable to swallow; and the dervish points out to the relatives of the dying man that his panacea has only proved infallible because it was tried too late. A veiled woman, the wife of the dying man, sits weeping at the side of her husband's pillow. She frequently holds to his face a moistened piece of mud torn from the wall (this wetted mud is supposed to have a very reviving influence, and is used by Persians as we use smelling salts).

Tea is handed round in small cups; the crowd in the room becomes greater; every window is shut, and, as the outside temperature is 50 degrees, some idea of the heat within can be formed. The crowd is not here from mere curiosity. A man is sick; then where should his friends be, they say, if not by his bedside? The samovars (Russian tea urns) steam and bubble; the room is filled with clouds of tobacco smoke and the steam from the urns, and now, just as 200 years ago was done in England, a fowl is killed and placed warm and bleeding on the patient's feet. All is of no avail, however. The man has breathed his last.

The wife yields her place by the bedside. Moistened cotton-wool is placed in the mouth of the dead, in the orifices of the nostrils, and in the ears. A moollah begins to read aloud the prescribed portion of the Koran, commencing "O man, I swear by the instructive Koran that thou art one of the messengers of God sent to show the right way," etc. This portion of the Mussulman's sacred book was called by Mohammed himself "the heart of the Koran." And now all present witness aloud that the dead man was a good pious Mohammedan. The limbs are composed and a cup of water is placed at the head of the corpse. No sooner is this done than a moollah ascends to the flat roof of the house and begins to read in a shrill monotone certain verses from the holy book. This announces to the neighbors that the man is verily dead; and at the same moment his relations shriek and wail, "Wo, wo! he is dead; he has passed away." These are the expressions of real grief. But presently the professional mourners arrive and rend the air with their shrill screaming, which is like the "keening" of the Irish.

The house is soon filled with friends and neighbors, who add their cries to the screams of the mourners. The women of the family hasten to array themselves in "bitter" (i. e. somber) garments—not in actual black, but in sad colors; neither they nor the men wash or dress their hair until the funeral and the first days of mourning are over. The male relatives do not literally rend their garments, but give them the right appearance by opening certain seams of their coats and cloaks with a penknife; and instead of casting dust upon their heads they dab mud on their hats.

And now come the "washers of the dead." To each parish are attached a family of these people, who get a despatch livelihood by performing the last offices for the dead. The corpse having been washed at an adjoining stream, the hands are placed across the chest, and it is wrapped in the shroud of cotton cloth that the deceased has probably had by him as a sort of memento mori for years. Camphor (real vegetable camphor) is placed beneath the shroud, and the body is laid in a rough coffin made of thin planks and brought back to the house. The coffin in Persia is of a thin and unsubstantial kind, and the burial always takes place within twenty-four hours of decease.

Drunkards in Turkey.

(St. James' Gazette.)

According to Pouqueville, "a Turk who falls down in the street overtaken with wine, and is arrested by the guard, is sentenced to the bastinado. This punishment is repeated as far as the third offense, after which he is reputed incorrigible, and receives the title of 'imperial drunkard' or 'privileged drunkard.' If after that he is taken up and in danger of the bastinado, he has only to name himself, to mention what part of the town he inhabits, and to say he is a privileged drunkard; he is then released and sent to sleep on the warm ashes of the baths." Pouqueville had been in Constantinople at the commencement of the present century, since which time a good many changes have been introduced into the city of the sultans; but an improved way with inebriates is scarcely one of them.

London Gin.

(The Current.)

The temperance men are doing some good as chemists. They have learned the actual ingredients of London gin to be "alcohol, water, uratic-acid, tartaric-acid, acetic-acid, ether, sugar, oil of turpentine with a trace of oil of turpentine." It does kill millions. It would slay all who drink it were it not that the tartaric-acid destroys the bad effect of the uratic-acid, the acetic-acid in turn overcomes the fatality of the tartaric element, the ether and sugar then arrest the tartaric-acid in its work of dissolution, these then are overcome by the oil of juniper and at last the man is left to die of the oil of turpentine. Good spring water is a much better drink than gin.

Solar Engines for the Soudan.

(Exchange.)

Not long ago Capt. Ericsson boiled water by the sun's rays, using heat accumulators, invented by him, and the London Telegraph points out that if the sun of New York can be made to do this, the sun of Soudan can be utilized in driving the locomotives on the Berber railway, now building.

Josh Billings: Every man has his foibles, and sometimes they are the most interesting things he can own.

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