existence of so much petty jealousy. Much more requires to be accomplished in the work of public instruction, and we hope, on a future occasion, to go into the subject thoroughly, and point out the means to be adopted in order to complete the work satisfactorily.

B.

THE SULTAN OF MUSCAT AT HOME.

Muscat, the capital of Oman, a state supposed to contain a population of about a million and a half, stands on the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf. The British India steamers come to anchor well out in the bay, and for want of anything in the shape of a landing-place you have to be conveyed part of the way towards the shore in a small boat, and the remaining distance on the shoulders of a native. On the eastern side of the harbour stand two partly ruined fortresses, which were built by the Portuguese when they occupied the country. They contain a few pieces of artillery, which are used to salute the Consuls when they enter the harbour. The only buildings of any consequence to be seen from the bay. are the Sultan's palace, the British Residency, and the American Consulate. The rest of the city is in ruins.

It may be safely asserted that Muscat has the most pestilential climate of any place in the Persian Gulf. It is quite an ordinary thing, while walking through the market-place, to rub shoulders with a score or so of lepers. Crouching in corners you see old men and women clad in filthy rags and rotting with disease, or lying fever-stricken and helpless in the glare of a scorching sun, and praying piteously to Allah to deliver their souls from their bodies.

The British and American Consuls are generally the only European residents in Muscat. As the country yields much valuable produce, there are, of course, a number of Indian merchants in the city; but the climate is so extremely bad that in spite of all temptations in the way of trade profits the place is shunned by Europeans.

Our visit to Muscat was made in the spring of last year. Like dutiful subjects, we called as soon as we landed upon Her Britannic Majesty's representative, the Consul. Europeans are rarely seen in the place; for though the steamer plying between Bombay and Bassourah anchors in the bay once a fortnight, it only stays a few hours as a rule. It was largely owing to this fact, no doubt, that we were quite overwhelmed with the cordiality of our reception. The Consul was exceedingly hospitable, and entertained us most graciously. At luncheon-time we were tormented by a perfect plague of flies and other insects. Although the servants made frantic efforts to keep the pests away by means of dusters and fans, we were obliged, in order to prevent our wine from being polluted by their drowned bodies, to carefully keep our glasses covered with our hands. I could not help asking the Consul how he was able to live in such a place. "We don't *live*," he replied, "we only struggle for existence."

Not only is the climate deadly, but the state of the city is such as to inspire the most gloomy thoughts. At every turn are to be seen the remains of what were once houses. Some of these ruins are tenanted only by dogs, but here and there one finds four walls and something in the form of a roof, which is used yet as a human habitation. The merchants and the better sort of people dwell in the parts of these ruined houses which still remain standing, while the poor occupy wooden huts and tents scattered haphazard all over the city. Some of these are set up on dung-heaps. This deplorable ruin was mainly caused by a terrible cyclone, which swept over the country about three years ago. Not a single house escaped its devastating breath. Even the palace had to be propped up to keep it from tumbling to pieces, and then partly rebuilt. Both consulates were completely demolished. The only open space at all pleasing to the eye of which Muscat can boast is a not very attractive piece of land called the Sultan's Garden. It is an appurtenance of the royal palace, and special permission is required from His Majesty to view the few Indian plants and shrubs, and the fewer flowers, it contains.

Immediately after our arrival at the Consulate, the Sultan's former Vizier, who lost his royal master's favour and his high office at the same time, called especially to pay his respects to the English visitors, of whose arrival he had just heard. He was a very amusing old gentleman. His politeness was unbounded. Twenty or thirty times during a brief visit did he inquire in set phrase after the health of myself, my companion, and the Consul. At every momentary pause in the conversation he would raise his hand to his forehead, and turning to me, say in Arabic, "How do you do? I hope you are well." Then to the Cousul, "How is your Excellency? I hope you slept well last night. I hope you had a good appetite this morning for breakfast. Please Allah, you are in good health." Our amiable visitor also inquired where we were going, where we had come from, and how long we were going to stay in Muscat. Being told that ours was merely a flying visit, he seemed quite distressed and informed us that he was sorry we were not going to stay a few months at least.

The palace is a low, square, flat-roofed building, whose white walls are slightly relieved with blue. On the side facing the sea, the upper part of the building is divided into two by a wide latticed gallery, which is used as a promenade by the ladies of the harem, who are never permitted to leave the house.

Having received an intimation from the Sultan that he would be glad to see us, we—my companion and myself—accompanied by the Consul's native factotum, and preceded by two giant Indian Sikhs, who lend dignity to the Consular establishment, repaired to the palace. Our approach had been announced by running footmen, so that the palace gates were flung open the moment we reached them, and the Sultan's guard, consisting of about twenty Sikhs provided with long rifles of a very antiquated pattern, presented arms. We passed through the gates into a spacious courtyard, with a fountain in the centre. From the opposite side of the courtyard steps led up to the Sultan's apartments. My companion, who was somewhat nervous at the thought of entering the presence of an Oriental potentate, especially as he knew not a word of the language spoken by the Sultan, became still further discomposed as we beheld a young man descend the steps and come quickly towards us, followed by half-a-dozen attendants, turbanned and habited in flowing robes. The young man was the Sultan himself. Bowing graciously to us, and addressing our guide, he inquired in purest Arabic, "Which one of them is it that speaks Arabic?" He did not wait for a reply. Seeing the guide look towards me, he understood, and instantly bade us "Welcome to Muscat." Then he walked by our side up the steps. At the door of the reception-room he again bowed and preceded us into the chamber, where he motioned us into two richly-covered chairs, at the same time seating himself in another close by. The floor was of white marble, there were no hangings on the walls, and the furniture, with the exception of two handsome chairs, was of the scantiest and rudest kind. Behind us came filing into the room the Grand Vizier and the lesser officials and servants of the Court. All these except the Vizier remained standing while our interview lasted. The Vizier is old and shrunken, but he has remarkably piercing eyes. Only two teeth are left to him; they project from his mouth like tusks and impart a distinctly malevolent appearance to a countenance which even in his best days could scarcely have been agreeable. For all his outward seeming of deference to his royal master, it was easy to see which of the two is the wire-puller and which the puppet.

Sultan Saïyad Feysal bin Turki has a truly majestic appearance for one so young. When I saw him he was little more than nineteen years of age, though he looked six or seven years older. He is about five feet six inches in height, strongly built and well-proportioned. His complexion is rather dark, but not so dark as that of the majority o his people. He wore a robe bearing a strong likeness to a tight-fitting dressing-gown. It was composed of a white silken stuff. Around his waist was a band of cashmere of a reddish tint, in which he carried a huge dagger with a jewelled hilt. His head-dress was a small white turban. His

bearing is stately, and his movements are dignified and slow. The subdued tones of his voice are very pleasing, and his whole manner is such as to inspire respect and admiration. Almost as soon as we were seated, and he had inquired kindly after our health, and expressed his regret that our stay in his capital was to be so short, sherbet was brought in and handed round, the Sultan directing, by a glance at the attendant, that his guests were to be served first. A long silken napkin, embroidered with gold, hung over the servant's left arm. Directly I had drunk my sherbet and returned my glass—the latter, by the way, was of German manufacture—this napkin was handed to me. For a moment I was quite at a loss to know what to do with it, but at length it occurred to me that I was expected to wipe my mouth with it. Accordingly I did so, and handed it back to the servant, who offered it in turn to *the whole party*.

His Highness displayed the greatest anxiety to learn all he could about England, its customs, institutions, streets, buildings, and so on; and as far as possible, in so short a time, I gave him the information he asked for. "My uncle, the late Saïyad Bargash, Sultan of Zanzibar," he said, "was much impressed by his visit to England." I ventured thereupon to say that I hoped His Highness would ere long visit that country. "Yes, that is my intention," he replied; "but there is plenty of time, Insha-allah. The affairs of my country require my attention at present. Owing to the decree of Allah, Muscat, as you see, has been laid in ruins." When I expressed the hope that it would be rebuilt and become under his reign more flourishing than ever, he answered with a smile, "Oh, yes; by Allah's will all will be well." As a matter of fact the Sultan has done nothing whatever towards rebuilding the city, but Oriental magnates are very greedy of approbation, and take a childish delight in compliments, so I thought I would humour him a little.

While we were talking I became in some mysterious way aware that a pair of dark eyes were peering into the room from a partly latticed verandah outside. Looking up, I had just time enough to catch a glimpse of a young Arab beauty, who, seeing she was observed, vanished in a second. It was one of the houris of the harem, who had escaped from her cage to enjoy the forbidden luxury of a peep at the European strangers. The incident did not escape the watchfulness of the Sultan. He made no remark, but I saw an angry flash in his eyes which boded trouble to the over-curious fair one.

In accordance with the custom of the country, the sherbet was followed by black coffee, served in tiny porcelain cups which fitted into a silver case resembling an egg-cup in size and shape. The coffee, delicious in flavour, was perfumed with rosewater.

A few minutes later another attendant came forward, carrying in his hand a glass bottle about two inches high, which he offered to me. It looked like a pomatum-pot, and contained a brown liquid. A second time I was quite nonplussed. First I looked in bewilderment at the attendant, then at my companion, and finally at the Sultan. His Majesty, seeing my perplexity, rose gracefully from his seat, took the stopper out of the bottle and asked me for my handkerchief. When I gave it to him, he allowed three or four drops of the liquid from the bottle to fall on it. In an instant the room was filled with an exquisite fragrance. Then I guessed it was the far-famed Attar—or Utr—of Roses. In spite of repeated washings, the scent of the roses still clings to that handkerchief.

Before we parted, the Sultan urged me to pay him a visit on my return from Mesopotamia, whither I was journeying, or, failing that, to let him know by letter the best time of year for visiting England. A cold climate, he said, would be very trying to him, as it had been to his uncle, the Sultan of Zanzibar. He referred frequently to this uncle, who, he told me, gave him a yacht, which was then lying in the harbour. From other sources I gathered that the yacht is never used.

When we took our leave, the Sultan came with us as far as the courtyard. He put out his hand to say good-bye, but instead of doing so seized me suddenly and violently by the arm and dragged me away from the spot on which I was standing. Naturally I wondered what this rough usage portended, but the mystery was soon explained. It seemed I had been standing in dangerous proximity to a caged lion, of whose existence I was unaware. The lion had stretched out his right paw and was about to strike me on the shoulder from behind, when the Sultan, seeing my peril, forcibly hauled me out of the animal's reach. His Highness sent his *aide-de-camp* to show us over the palace gardens ere we returned to the Consulate.

Muscat can boast of nothing worthy to be called an army. The only military force is a guard of about 1,600 men, which is quite inadequate to protect the city from the Arabs of the desert should they think it worth their while to attack it. But there is little danger of that, the Sultan being on very good terms with the Arab chiefs. Perhaps His Majesty's greatest fault is that he is in the habit of borrowing money at a very high percentage and neglecting to meet the repayments when due, so that the loans have to be renewed at a perfectly ruinous rate. What he does with the money he obtains in this way it is difficult to say, as he receives a fixed yearly income of £30,000, and his establishment is apparently by no means a costly one. Judging by the size of the palace his harem cannot possibly be numerous, unless, indeed, the inmates live underground, as the citizens of Baghdad do in the summer months.

J. HASELMON.

THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN.

THE legend runs in Japan that when the god-like ancestor of Fimmo-Tenno stood on the floating bridge of heaven and dipped his sword into the waters beneath, the drops which fell from the point formed the islands of Japan. In this creation from the ocean, the islands settled upon the back of a huge cat-fish, which was henceforth for ever imprisoned beneath the land, and it is supposed that it is the violent struggles made by this immense fish to free itself from its incubus which produce the earthquakes that occur so frequently in the land of the Rising Sun.

The legend varies according to the geographical position of the inhabitants. The people living on the sea-shore believe that earth-tremors and tidal waves are caused by the monster hurling himself on the coast and rearing up his huge back on which the waters are piled; the inland folk, on the other hand, aver that he lies under the land with his head pointing northwards, and that it is the violent flapping of his tail which occasions the frequent earthquakes of the south. These explanations, fantastic as they are, seem quite as good as some of those which are offered by scientific and semi-scientific men in explanation of the extreme instability of the land in Japan.

Earthquakes are so closely watched and carefully recorded nowadays, that it has been contended that they are more frequent and destructive than they used to be in ages gone by; but on turning back to the records of the various earthquakes which have ravaged Japan for the last 1,200 years it is found that, though they are still extremely frequent—no fewer, Professor Milne says, than 500 on an average in the course of a year—the great majority are so insignificant that they pass unobserved; and even destructive cataclysms such as that which recently devastated one of the most populated plains of Japan, and which three years ago blew out the whole of one side of a mountain, are yet probably not on so great scale as those of which we have records several centuries ago. In fact, the earthquakes of recent times, terrible as they have been with regard to loss of life and property, may be looked upon as superficial manifestations of the seismic and volcanic forces partially exhausted, but still at work in the bowels of the earth.

The earliest historic date at which there is any reliable record of an earthquake in Japan is in the year 685, when we are told that mountains were levelled, the rivers overflowed the land, temples and houses were overthrown, a large area of land sank into the sea, and thousands of men and animals found a sudden death. In 745, the province of Mino was ravaged by oscillations of the ground resembling those which have just taken place in

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