

# A PICTURESQUE COLONY

## SYRIANS SETTLED IN THE FIRST WARD.

### WHAT MAY BE SEEN IN A WALK THROUGH LOWER WASHINGTON-ST.—A YOUNG BUT GROWING COMMUNITY WITH SOME QUEER CUSTOMS.

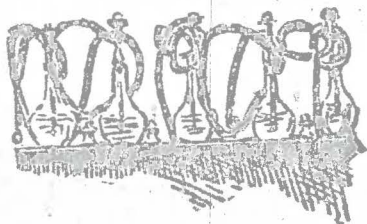
Away down town in the First Ward, not far from the jumping-off place where Manhattan Island ends and the North and East Rivers meet, there has gathered one of the most interesting, curious and, to a student of human nature, instructive colonies of people that is to be found anywhere in the big metropolis, if not anywhere in the country. With their brown complexions, medium stature, lithic, wiry and muscular forms, keen, dark, restless eyes, the people composing this group plainly show their Eastern origin. The language they use among themselves is "as old as the hills," and is one which has contributed to the literature of the world no small part of its poetry and romance. To it the English of the present day is indebted for many words in common use, for it is the soft, flexible, graceful Arabian, the speech of the people who gave to the civilized world its system of notation. The members of the colony themselves are



NATIVE WEDDING COSTUMES.

hardly true Arabians, as the majority of them came to this country from Syria, principally from the cities of Blerut and Damascus, and Syria is under the rule of Turkey and yields allegiance to the Sultan Abdul Hamid. But the Arab dominion left an indelible impress upon the country, which has outlasted all the changes of government, and in that section of New-York City which is bounded by Rector, Greenwich, Morris and Washington sts., the salutation on entering a room is far more likely to be "Assalam aleicom," than "how do you do?" The houses, especially on the Washington-st. side of the block, are old, weather-beaten, dingy and sometimes dirty, the cellars are devoted to trade and packed full of everything which a pedlar can carry in his pack or find a market for in his wanderings, and the first or ground floor is generally used as a display-room and office, where goods are sorted out and bargains made—and these sojourners from the far East are sharp traders.

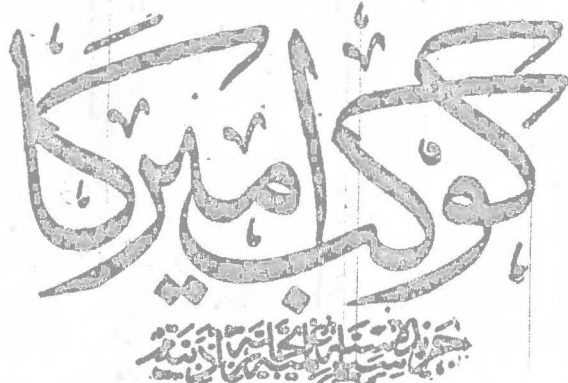
But as it is sometimes hard to judge of a man by the clothing he wears, so it is hard to fix a value on these houses by their outward appearance. Go inside one of these stores, where plus by the hundred gross rest against shoe-blackening by the case, and scapularies and rosaries, beads and prayer-books are almost hidden from view by boxes of cheap cologne and ornamental shell-work, and if you can find some one who will translate your English into Arabic and tell the proprietor what you want, with a wave of his hand this latter-day magician will alter the whole scene, and for a brief time you will realize that "things are seldom what they seem."



A, ostive indolence shows itself in many ways, and exertions are relaxed. This is seen in the restaurants along the Washington-st. side of the block. In any one of them at any time may be seen groups of men watching games of backgammon, which is the favorite amusement of the people. These restaurants, where coffee of the consistency of mud, but delightful to the taste, is served in tiny cups, and the long, flexible stemmed narghileh, or "bubble-bubbles," all ready for smoking, are in constant demand, partake more of the character of a common meeting place than a regulation dining-room. In reality they are the common room of the boarding-house, for at least sixty per cent of the men either have no families or have left them behind in Syria, the boarding-house is necessary, and eating is done on the "go as you please" plan. It is not uncommon to see some eating, some talking over trade and business prospects, others playing backgammon, and yet more watching the game, all in the same room, while the soft flowing language of the talkers, the bubble of the water in the narghileh, the rattle of dice and the click of the pieces as they are moved around, the gleam of a red fez with its long, black tassel hanging down behind, and the dark, watchful eyes of the waiter, who is idly leaning against a table and playing with a string of brilliantly colored beads, make a combination of sound and sight which seems strangely out of place in busy New-York.

Of home life, as Americans understand it, there is little in the colony. The population is constantly shifting, and the families who are here find their homes utilized as headquarters by those who are not yet settled. They are extremely helpful to one another, and the proverbial hospitality of the Arab suffers no loss at the hands of his Syrian representative. Of course there are many who are permanent dwellers here, and nearly all who come look forward to citizenship as the one great prize. This is obtained as speedily as possible, and then comes the settlement in the city, and the helping of others. Contrary to general opinion, the followers of Mohammed among them are few in number, the majority professing the Roman Catholic faith, while the Presbyterian, Maronite, Protestant Episcopal, Greek and Orthodox Catholic creeds all have adherents among the members of the colony. Many of the Catholic members worship in St. Peter's Church, at Barclay and Church sts., the Maronites have a place of their own in Washington-st., and the others go wherever their fancy leads them.

As a class, these Syrians are not only seekers after trade, but are diligent in the pursuit of knowledge. Some of them, notably the pioneers of the emigration to this country, have achieved renown in learning, and small though the colony is in numbers, it supports a newspaper of its own, of which three pages are printed in Arabic and one in English. This paper, "Kawkab America," or "The Star of America," is edited by Dr. A. J. and



ARABIC TITLE "KAWKAB AMERICA."

Nageeb J. Arbeely, brothers, and sons of Dr. Joseph A. Arbeely, who was the first native Syrian to come to New-York. He was President of the Patriarchal Syrian College of the Greek Church, and his standing as an educator and scholar was such that when the Rev. Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck first translated the Bible into Arabic, Professor Arbeely was called upon to assist in and verify the translation. Dr. A. J. Arbeely, the present editor, was graduated from the Presbyterian College, at Blerut, and took a postgraduate course at the Imperial College, at Constantinople. He is an expert on the subject of cholera, having acted as a physician during three epidemics in his native land. Nageeb J. Arbeely, his assistant, was educated at Blerut, and was graduated from the university at Marysville, Tenn. He has served the Government as United States Consul at Jerusalem, and is at present connected with the Bureau of Immigration in this city. Nasseem, the youngest of the brothers, holds the gold medal for proficiency of the class of 1890.

help out the barber by holding the basin when undergoing a shampoo, and pick out from the stock the razor they wish to be shaved with, who read and write backward when they read and write at all, and when they get tired of playing backgammon take a string of parti-colored beads, and with faces as grave and immobile as if carved out of mahogany, proceed in some peculiar fashion of their own, to extract as much enjoyment from them as an American girl will from her first doll.



AN ICE-CREAM SELLER.

With reference to this colony, these points should be remembered—that the colony is growing in numbers and wealth constantly; that its members are anxious to learn American ways and manners, and to become citizens as soon as the law will permit; that they are, as a rule, quiet, orderly, sober and industrious people, who are beginning to see the benefits to be derived from united effort, and who are destined to become in the near future, under the leadership of men who are thoroughly acquainted with their capabilities and needs, a factor in the body politic which will make itself felt for good.

### GOSSIP OF THE CLUB WORLD.

#### THE LOTUS'S NEW HOUSE AND ITS INTERIOR ARRANGEMENTS—OTHER NOTES.

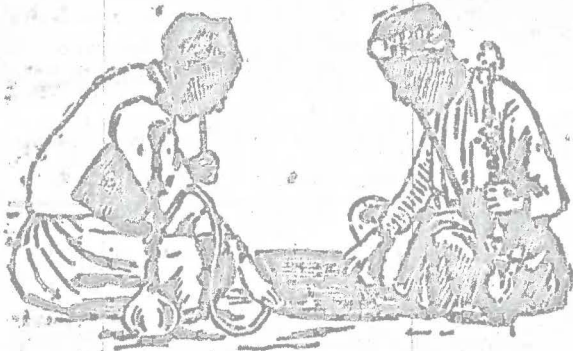
The Lotus Club rejoices in the expectation that it will be in its new house, Nos. 556 and 558 Fifth-ave., by February 1. The work of altering and redecorating the buildings will be begun immediately after the Columbus Celebration. With its present home, at Fifth-ave. and Twenty-first-st., and the two houses uptown, the club will give its members ample facilities for seeing the parades. Members may secure tickets at the clubhouse, admitting them and their families to Nos. 556 and 558 on the days of the celebration. Stands will be erected to increase the accommodations. The plans for altering the houses for permanent use will be decided on shortly. It is likely that the new entrance will be the one of No. 558, which is on the side of that house next to No. 556. The partition wall will be removed and thus the main hall will be made twenty-five feet wide. A window will replace the entrance to No. 556. The club dinners are so important a feature that the members will appreciate the big dining-room on the first floor, with room for 200 guests. William H. Hume is the architect. The club is growing so rapidly that a bigger house will soon be a necessity. On October 1, 1891, there were 306 members paying dues, and yesterday the number was 527, the largest in the history of the club. This is exclusive of the honorary and life members.

The Republican Club continues its aggressive campaign work. Its leaders are now engaged in getting up plans for a series of five or six big meetings in Cooper Union. The first will be held on Tuesday evening, and Senator Frank Hiccock and Congressman Boutelle, of Maine, will be the speakers. James A. Blanchard will preside and make one of his short, pithy, forcible addresses.

The Catholic Club began its season of entertainments with a lecture on last Tuesday evening. The board of directors will have their October meeting Tuesday night, and the entire club will have its on Thursday.

The first meeting of the Harvard Club since spring will take place on Saturday evening.

Until this year the Delta Kappa Epsilon Club has held its election each May. Last year it was held in



A GAME OF BACKGAMMON.

Let it be in the afternoon, when the sun, striking slantwise through the window-panes, fills the whole interior with a flood of soft, yellow light. You turn to look at something which has attracted your attention, and a low, soft voice whose words you do not understand causes you to turn back again. In place of the pile of dusty boxes you see and are turned away from, your eyes are dazzled by a great square of yellow satin, covered with delicate tracery of silver wire, fine as a spider's web, and glistening in the sunlight as if of burnished steel. One corner is turned over and the other side shows only a shade darker, but the same tangled web of silver network and glittering color is there. Out from a drawer, with a sweeping throw, is tossed a great fleecy cloud which finally resolves itself into an Arabian burnous of soft white silk with blue stripes, and settles down over the golden square as if trying to hide it from too curious eyes. Silks and satins, lacework, embroideries, follow each other in rapid succession, until the eyes are revolting in a bewildering mass of gorgeous, fantastic and beautiful colors, and your fingers begin to itch and your pursings to loosen, while the alert, keen-eyed dealer assures you that all these wonderful combinations of parti-colored threads are the work of hands as brown as his own, and far more slender and pliable, in that far-off land where lived the fertile brain that gave to the world the "Arabian Nights Entertainments."

Pick up a silken gossamer web of woven lace with a hue like the Koran running around its border, and in your ear is whispered the magic word, "Bagdad." Shade of Haroun-al-Raschid! Here this swarthy trader has got the enchanted carpet we read about so long ago stowed away in one of those boxes under the counter! Hardly, but he has some rugs there which are a delight to the eye and a benison to weary feet. Here is one which came from Mecca, and is more than a hundred years old. Of a soft, lustrous brown color, with a pattern showing the straight arrow markings and geometrical figures so dear to the Eastern fancy. He will warn that undimmed by age and use, it seems almost as if it were more fit to be hung upon a wall than to be trodden under foot. And the quaint specimens of Oriental carving, the marquetry work, the little tables in which the wood is lost in the wealth of inlaid pearl with which it is adorned, the long, curved sword of Damascus steel, whose edge is as keen as a razor, and which has that marvellous temper which has made its name famous wherever swords are known, all are here! And in the midst of all this riot of the beautiful and odd stands the dealer, the natural gravity of his features relaxed into a smile of satisfaction at the wonder and delight expressed by his American visitor. But the vision ends, and with many parting "cassas" one goes back to the dust and dirt, the noise and bustle of the street.

These wholesale dealers, who will do a retail trade if opportunity offers, are of great help to their poorer countrymen, often advancing to them not only goods but money, with which to trade, and though there are large sums outstanding at times, and often goods of much value on hand, the Syrian colony has yet to furnish a case of bankruptcy, and the credit of the tradesman is inviolable. But the cause, the what and the why of them? They are, as a rule, poor; and the question naturally arises, why did they leave their native land, and how did they get the means to come to this country? The same reasons which have impelled thousands of people of other nationalities, to make for themselves homes, in England and France in the Western El Dorado, started the Syrian emigrant on his journey, to make wealth, or, in some cases, mortgaged his neck to a Turkish money-lender, but far more often borrowed the money from some accommodating friend. The result of this sacrifice of debt is what you see before you, the Syrian, who seeks to get his trade and keep his money. Debt once cleared

graduated from the university at Marysville, Tenn. He has served the Government as United States Consul at Jerusalem, and is at present connected with the Bureau of Immigration in this city. Nassam, the youngest of the brothers, holds the gold medal for oratory of the class of '02, from the University of Tennessee, and is now studying law in New-York.

The editorial rooms of "Kawhab America," at No. 45 Pearl-st., are unique. Divans are ranged on all sides, a squawking parrot has his cage in one window, and another is taken up by canaries; Oriental rugs are on the floor, and the walls are covered with carics from Syria, and other Bible lands. A branch from one of the cedars of Lebanon drops lovingly over the edge of a brazen shield embossed with sentences from the Koran, and the mouthpiece of a narghileh is poked out from behind one of the ancient goatskin bags or bottles, as they are called, in which wine was carried in the days when the injunction went forth, "Thou shalt not put new wine in old bottles."

But if the editorial rooms are a delight to the artistic eye, the composing room, which is on the same floor, is a place which the average American printer would do well to keep out of. The cases which hold the Arabic type are so arranged that the workman stands with two sections before and one behind him, and not content with having nearly 1,500 different characters and combinations to remember, he sets his type from right to left, reversing the method of English composition. The printed page, which much resembles closely written shorthand, is read in the same direction. This department is in charge of Joseph E. Hays, the only expert Syrian compositor in the United States. The paper itself has a large circulation, and is the only publication on this side of the world which is admitted to the palace of Yeldis and translated for the Turkish Sultan. A special copy is printed for him on parchment paper and then gilded. Arabi Pacha, in his exile at Ceylon, the Shah of Persia, the Amir of Afghanistan, and many others of the high and mighty are numbered among its subscribers, and the list reaches out wherever a Syrian merchant or traveller may have settled, and he, perhaps the only member of a group who can read the printed page, will read it aloud for the benefit of those less favored educationally, and then send it on to some friend further away.



BARBER AT WORK.

While the Syrian of the peasant class who comes to this country is generally totally ignorant of the English language and American business methods, he is quick to learn, and ready to grasp every opportunity of doing so. To aid in this work there has been formed the Syrian Society of New-York, with Dr. William H. McLaughry as president, Dr. Edward P. Thwing vice-president, Mrs. H. E. Leverich, of Brooklyn, treasurer, and Dr. Ameen F. Haddad, a native of Syria, and a graduate of Beirut College and the New-York University Medical School, secretary. This society in May last opened an evening school for the benefit of those employed during the day, and now has a class of thirty members. A day school was opened later, which is presided over by Miss Helen M. Fisher, who gained her experience in the American Female Seminary at Beirut, and whose services are given to the society without charge. She has now a class of fifty, over half of whom are constant attendants. The society has rooms at No. 95 Washington-st., and its work in promoting the welfare of the Syrian community, and by means of an industrial home and school, in preparing them for the duties of American citizenship, is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

Those who can afford to bring with them to this country and retain for use on state occasions, their gorgeous native costumes, and while the regular American dress is seldom departed from in everyday life, a feast or wedding will bring out costumes which are gay with silver and gold, and covered with embroidery. All through the colony, glimpses of a life foreign to America may be seen, and the veil of mystery which has ever hung over the peoples and countries of the Orient has one little corner lifted in this section of the town. Here in its perfection is that mixture of the Occident and the Orient which is so once interesting and interesting. These men are members of an odd lot, who do their best to make the most of their end to, the make ice-cream on the sidewalk in full view of a prospective customer, who they try to tempt and make sleep with six feet of slow and a quick and water to the bowl, who make their best for no man shaved his under lip, and

Tuesday night, and the entire club will have its on Thursday.

The first meeting of the Harvard Club since spring will take place on Saturday evening.

Until this year the Delta Kappa Epsilon Club has held its election each May. Last spring, however, it was decided to change the date to October, so that the officers could be installed at the beginning, instead of at the end of each season. It was intended to have the election on the second Thursday of this month, the 18th, but a postponement was had until two weeks later, the 27th, on account of the Columbian celebration. The nominating committee, consisting of George Austin, Benjamin E. Hall, A. W. Gleason, J. W. Farquhar and C. M. Price, will report before long. The house committee is going to decorate and illuminate the clubhouse for the celebration next week. Many members will doubtless view the parades from the club. Shortly before the club election the retiring entertainment committee will have a dinner in accordance with a well-established custom. There will be a few invited guests. The D. K. E. Club felt deeply the loss it sustained by the death of General James W. Husted. He was one of the original members and for two years was a vice-president. The club has swelled its membership since summer by electing the following: William H. St. John, Arthur E. Jenks, Arthur M. Johnson, Austin Colgate, Joseph Leavy, resident, and S. K. Pittman, of Chicago; F. W. Whiting, of Detroit, and Charles A. Preston, Haytian Commissioner to the World's Fair, non-resident.

The Arion Society, at its recent election, chose the following officers: President, C. M. von Bauer; first vice-president, Richard Weinsicht; second vice-president, H. C. Kudlich; recording secretary, Louis Kortun; corresponding secretary, Julius Werner; financial secretary, Henry Endemann; treasurer, Constanton Lucius. The board of directors includes such well-known members as John B. Pannes, Richard Katzmayer and Augustus I. Rolle. While many of the members were abroad last summer, all the lower part of the house, including the library, cardroom, restaurant and cafe, was handsomely redecorated. There are on exhibition some of the presents received by the delegation which visited Germany. The most conspicuous of these is a magnificently carved ivory pitcher, the gift of Mr. Bartholomay, the Rochester brewer, who was in Wiesbaden when the Arion members visited it. Some of the presents were delayed in Hamburg on account of the cholera. The Arion's membership is now about 1,400 and there are twenty or more applications to be acted on this week.

MR. MADISON, OF MADISON SQUARE.

The assistant business manager of the Madison Square Garden is J. V. Gottschalk. It is he who strolls about the roof garden to see that it is properly conducted, that the stage entertainment goes on smoothly, that the waiters do not pour beer down people's backs and that those who can find no seats do not block the aisles, particularly while a serpentine dance is going on. The other evening as he was passing among the tables he had the misfortune to step on the foot of a man who had every appearance of living off Manhattan Island. The man protested in rather violent language and made some unpleasant remark about the advisability of Mr. Gottschalk's looking to see where he was going. The assistant business manager told him that his foot would not have been stepped on if he had not been standing in the aisle, where he had no right to be, and the man who had been injured asked in turn if Mr. Gottschalk, whom he had no way of distinguishing from an ordinary visitor, owned the place. Before the latter could reply a companion of the man with the trodden foot said: Oh, keep still, don't you know him? He's Mr. Madison; he owns the whole garden and the square." Mr. Gottschalk thought that this sufficiently established his position and walked on to view his large possessions.

MUTATIONS OF A NAME.

From The Pall Mall Gazette. Apropos of our remarks last night on Mr. Gladstone's visit to Wales, a correspondent gives an amusing instance of how wrong English people get when they come to deal with Welsh names. A short time ago a London journalist took up his quarters in a house at Barmouth, rejoicing in the melodious appellation of Ty Fry (pronounced Tivree). This means the "upper house." One morning the journalist was astonished to have a letter addressed to him "care of Mr. Ty Fry," while another day a further letter came "care of T. Fry, esq." To crown it all, a telegram found him with the meagre direction, "care of Fry, Barmouth." It speaks volumes for the postoffice that none of these extraordinary epistles should have gone astray. The explanation subsequently vouchsafed by his friends was that they thought he was ceylon, with one Timothy Fry.

A CHILD'S "REASON WHY."

From Le Gaulois. "Tell me, mother, did grandmother lose her teeth a long time ago—a very, very long time ago?" "Why do you ask such a question?" "Because, mother, dear; because, you see, when I know—why, then, I shan't ask you again."

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