THE
CIRCASSIAN GIRL
ZALUMMA AGRA,
"STAR OF THE EAST."
Now on Exhibition at Barnum's Museum.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
THE CIRCASSIAN GIRL,
Zalumma Agra:
OR
"STAR OF THE EAST."

PHILADELPHIA:
JAS. B. RODGERS CO., 52 & 54 NORTH SIXTH STREET
1873.
LIFE OF

ZALUMMA AGRA:

"THE STAR OF THE EAST."

The Circassian Girl, Zalumma Agra, of whom the object of this sketch is to convey a brief and concise history, presents a type of humanity, so rare in this country, that, since its discovery, but two or three individuals of her race have ever visited its shores. Although the terrible ravages of the Russians had driven great numbers of Circassian men and women for refuge into the dominions of the Sultan of Turkey, choosing the sad alternative of an almost living death to that of desolated homes and imperiled existence, we believe there is no instance of any of their race having voluntarily left their native homes. Even
in the great cities of Continental Europe, where can be seen, daily, representatives of almost every nation under the sun, civilized or barbaric, the Circassian is seldom or never seen. Their ardent and poetic attachment to their native land has become almost a proverb, and nothing but the horror and desolation of war, and its attendant evils of rapine, lust, famine and pillage, ever induce them to emigrate.

In fact, their intercourse with the great family of mankind has been so exceedingly limited that the world at large know but comparatively little of their manners, customs, habits and peculiarities, and, save to the occasional tourist, the student, and the historian, Circassia and her people have been as a sealed book.

The great masses of the people, both of Europe and America, especially the non-reading public, know absolutely nothing of the history of this beautiful and romantic, but sad and desolated country, except that its women are as beautiful as houris, and that the slave markets of Turkey have long been an emporium for the sale of these lovely but unfortunate creatures, to supply the
seraglios and harems of the Sultan and his sub-
jects. Even the geographical and historical lore
of civilization reveals but a tithe of the interest
connected with Circassia, her history and her
religion.

Its southern limits, lying on the line of 40°
north latitude, her climate is necessarily mild and
genial, and the bold and classic Caucasus range
of mountains extend through the almost entire
extent of her country, from the Black Sea and
the Sea of Azov, eastward, to the waters of the
Caspian. Of the mineralogical and geological
wealth of these mountains but little is known, but
they are doubtless stupendous repositories of
nature's richest treasures. The steady, onward
march of civilization will probably reveal, perhaps
within the generation of the majority of our
readers, amid the spurs and slopes, and glades of
the mountains of Circassia, another Golconda,
another Potosi, another California, or all com-
bined; and Argosies, bearing untold wealth, the
product of her womb, may, even within the pres-
ent century, be plowing the waters of every clime.
The developments of science, of learning, and
of industry, have been so manifold, so extended, and so various, as the world progresses, that it is not only within the range of possibility, but probability, that which seems a fiction may become a reality. But it is not so much within our purpose to speak of Circassia as to relate succinctly some of the salient points in the remarkable history of Zalumma Agra, the Circassian Girl now on exhibition at Barnum’s Museum, and concerning whom this sketch is written.

The Circassian Girl—called, in the poetic language of her country, “Zalumma Agra” (in our own vernacular, the “Star of the East”) was born in the town of Suldaun Kale, a port on the Black Sea, near the boundary line of Asia Minor, and can boast of royal blood in her veins. She is a daughter of one of the petty princes of the country, and a niece of the prophet Schamyl.

When she was scarce two years old, just budding from infancy into childhood, there came to Circassia one of those terrible Russian incursions, bearing horror, despair and death to her unfortunate countrymen and kindred, and destruction and desolation to their homes and hearth-stones.
The terrified inhabitants fled by scores and hundreds to the scarcely less hospitable shores of Turkey, preferring the questionable protection of the barbarous Turk to the cruelties and oppression of the no less ruthless, though Christian Russians. Zalumma was borne by tedious marches by her friends to Constantinople, which became the temporary refuge for some hundreds of her people. It was here that Mr. Greenwood, of the Board of Managers of Barnum's Museum, first saw her. Her marvelous beauty and pleasant, intelligent manners at once arrested his attention, while the extraordinary peculiarity of her hair challenged his interest and his admiration. There were many, very many Circassian women and children in the streets of Constantinople, and most of them of exceeding beauty, but he saw but few so magnificently adorned by nature as was Zalumma Agra.

The luxurious growth of her beautiful hair astonished him, and its very singular conformation riveted his attention. Although he had been a sojourner in many lands, he had seen nothing half so singular nor yet so beautiful; and a desire
was at once awakened within him to save her, if possible, from the deplorable fate that was pending over her, and by cultivation and education to stimulate and develop her crude intelligence. Nature had been very bountiful and beneficent, and in mind and body, form and feature, had been lavish of their gifts to Zalumma; but circumstances, or fate if you will, had surrounded her with apparently insurmountable barriers to human progress, and were it not that a kind and all-seeing Providence had intervened, the Circassian girl, who is now a refined, intellectual, and Christian woman, might have been enrolled upon the scroll of humanity, in company with the great mass of her countrywomen, as the beautiful but ignorant habitat of a Pagan’s harem.

Mr. Greenwood at once interceded with the child’s friends and with the Turkish authorities, and through his own exertions, and those of influential friends, after a great deal of interposition and negotiation, he succeeded in having Zalumma transferred to his guardianship. Competent tutors and instructors were at once engaged for her, and the child’s mind grew apace with her
body, and, naturally quick-witted as she was comely in person, she acquired, with unusual rapidity, not only a perfect and scholarly knowledge of the English language, but many of the accomplishments that characterize the thorough and lavishly educated woman. Not only was she instructed perfectly in that most difficult of modern tongues, the English, but music, drawing, and the fine arts generally form no unimportant part of her education, and few belles lettres scholars of her age exhibit greater proficiency. Under the kind guardianship and protection of Mr. Greenwood she has grown from beautiful childhood to a still more lovely woman, and her mind has become cultivated, expanded and beautified in the same ratio as her person. She has visited the various cities and courts of Europe, and everywhere has been the cynosure of admiring eyes. She has had the honor of being presented to Queen Victoria, who received her with the most flattering marks of consideration, and extended to her favors seldom granted by royalty. Everywhere, either at court or amid the society of friends, in the salons of a metropolis or in the
quiet seclusion of home, Zalumma Agra is a general favorite, not only from the interest her strange history and nativity excites, but from her womanly deportment and social qualities. Kind and considerate to everybody, she converses freely with those who approach her respectfully, and is always willing to impart such information as she may possess, or to amuse or entertain her numerous visitors.

Since she has consented to gratify a desire of Mr. Greenwood to give the people of the United States the opportunity of seeing and conversing with the only person of Circassian birth in the country, and increase the facilities of so doing indefinitely, by holding public levees at Wood’s Museum, she has been visited by over five hundred thousand people; and from the forests of Maine to the lagoons of Florida, from the shores of the Atlantic to the far-off California, visitors have come by scores to see the Circassian beauty. The press and public throughout the Union have made her a household word, and have been profuse in their acknowledgments of her surpassing beauty, and many a dashing belle of our own metropolis
is ready to die with envy of her for her beautiful hair, that no chignons can imitate and no art equal.

No written or spoken description can convey the slightest idea of her personal appearance; and her peculiar and lustrous beauty is in such a marked and striking contrast to the acknowledged loveliness of the magnificent belles of America, as to create the utmost admiration from all who see her.

Being of very tender age at the time of her exodus from the land of her nativity, her recollections of Circassia are, of course, very imperfect and obscure; the associations of her far-off country seem to her an imperfect and confused dream rather than reality; and from the long severance from the people of her kind, she has partially, if not entirely, lost remembrance of her native tongue; and yet, as has been stated elsewhere in this little sketch, she speaks the language of her adopted land with ease and fluency that would puzzle the most cunning linguist, that was not otherwise informed, to discover that she was not a native of America.
Her exact age is not known to a certainty; but, judging from her apparent age at the time that Mr. Greenwood first saw and took her under his guardianship, Zalumma Agra is in about her eighteenth year.