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MOORISH LADY'S DEATH

At the Manchester City Coroner's Court yesterday the Deputy Coroner (Mr. W. Sellars) held an inquest on the body of Yassmin Benquiran, a Moorish lady, who died under tragic circumstances at Parkfield-street, Rusholme, on Wednesday. The husband of the deceased, Dris Benquiran, carries on the business of a shipper in the city.

The evidence showed that Mrs. Benquiran, who had only been in England five months, was a very excitable person. On Wednesday she had some words with a servant employed at the house and it was alleged that the servant struck her, but this was denied by the servant, Jane O'Connor. Later Mrs. Benquiran was found dead in the kitchen, having hanged herself with a rope fastened to a hook at one end of the ceiling.

Mr. Benquiran, in reply to the Deputy Coroner, said suicide was considered "a very great crime" in his country; in fact, it was so seriously considered that it was scarcely ever heard of. The husband was not allowed to attend the funeral, or take any notice of it.

The Deputy Coroner: I am asking you this to show that the woman could scarcely have been in her right senses to do this.

The jury returned a verdict of "suicide while of unsound mind."

The Manchester Courier, 27 October 1906

A DISHONEST SERVANT GIRL

At the Manchester County Police Court, a well-dressed young woman, named Annie Holmes, was yesterday charged with stealing a diamond ring, gold watch and chain, pair of earrings, and other articles of jewellery from the house of Mahomet Benani, a Greek merchant, residing in Parkfield Street, Husholme. The prisoner had been employed as domestic servant by the prosecutor, and on the 16th June last left the house during the temporary absence of the family. Next morning the stolen articles were missed from one of the bed-rooms. A few days after the robbery the prisoner offered the diamond ring in pledge at Liverpool, and said it belonged to her brother, who was dead. The pawnbroker retained the ring, and communicated with the police, and the prisoner was apprehended in Liverpool about a week ago by Police-constable Fitzpatrick. She was committed for trial at the sessions.

Edinburgh Evening News, 26 September 1876.

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION, 21 AUGUST 1873

Hadj Elarbi Guesus is a natural born subject of the Emperor of Morocco in Arabia; aged thirty-three years; a Merchant, carrying on business at N40 Chorlton Street, Manchester, in the County of Lancaster, married, and that he has one child, namely Isha Guesus, now residing at Fez, Morocco, and that in the period eight years preceding his application he has resided for five years in the United Kingdom, and intends, when naturalized, to reside therein: Hadji Elarbe Guesus of number 40 Chorlton Street in the city of Manchester Merchant, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her Heirs and Successors, according to law. So help me God.

MARIA MEETELIN, A DUTCH FEMALE SLAVE IN MEKNES, 1740

I continued to go everyday to the royal palace and attend with the king and his wives all the diversions and stroll everyday in the courtyards. Sometimes, I remained there whole nights with my child, dearly loved by the king, more than his own. It was very dangerous to go in town in the evening because of the brigands. The king, learning that there were there so many bandits in and around the palace who sometimes in broad daylight stole the king's food and in his own house, handed me a pistol with powder and bullets as well as a sword with the order to shoot anyone who tried to abstract something from me. And thus I set out everyday on the way to the palace with my loaded pistol on one side, and the sword on the other, and one of my Christians with a loaded musket behind me, and another with a sabre in front of me. Shortly after, it happened that one evening I received the order from the king to come to the palace. On the way, I met some bandits who were hiding behind hillocks. When we perceived them, we fired at them immediately and they dared not come closer to us.

LETTER FROM A MUSLIM FEMALE CAPTIVE IN MALTA TO THE SULTAN OF MOROCCO, 1790s.

Praise be to God alone,

And may God's blessings be upon our Master and Lord Mohammed,

Praise be to God, the Cause of causes, the Redeemer of slaves, the Creator of Adam and Eve from earth; To my Lord Sidi Moulay Sulayman, the Sultan of Morocco, may God give him and his soldiers victory. Amen.

Many greetings from as-Sayyida Lalla Fatna bint Sidi Mohammed ben Abd Arrahman and to every Muslim, and a thousand greetings to our Master Moulay Sulayman, and many greetings from her husband Moulay Mohammed Ben al-Haj Ali Sbiaa, followed by a thousand greetings.

Today, O Sultan of mercy, may God grant you victory and prolong your life, when I was brought up to Malta, I was put under quarantine, and remained there for forty days. Having completed the forty days, I was conducted to the king of Malta who asked me: "Woman, where are you from?"

"O, King I am from Morocco," said I. "Whose daughter are you?" I replied:

"I am a descendant of Sultan Moulay Idriss, I shall not conceal my origin and kinship to Moulay Mohammed."

Then he addressed the merchant who brought me and said to him:

"This wretched woman shall remain with you; she is neither for sale nor purchase, she and her husband, until their relatives are heard of. Put them together in the same house."

And today, O my Master, may God [prolong] your life and increase your days, the *Rumi* (infidel) who owns me asked me:

Today, the *Rumi* who owns me sits on a chair, puts the inkwell in my lap and smokes in my lap and the smoke rises up my lap and against my face. I said to him:

"Enemy of God, why do you smoke in my lap?"

He said: "You are mine, I do with you whatever pleases me." And he went up to her husband, put him in irons and threw him in jail.

Afterwards, the merchants came to buy her and offered fifty thousands Maltese riyals for her, her husband and her maid, all three.

And today Lalla Fatna went up to the merchants and said to them:

"Do you want to buy me? I am no slave [to be bought] for money. I am Sharifa, may God grant victory to the House of the Prophet and may He grant victory to Moulay Sulayman and bless his progeny."

Then, the infidel brought her barley-bread and she told him:

"O enemy of God, I shall not eat barley-bread."

Then, the infidel locked her up and fastened all doors, leaving her alone without any light and allowed none to enter. Then, the neighbours heard my screams and sent for him. He came up, seized the maid. He took a broom, covered it with excrement and gave it to her who told him:

"O enemy of God, I shall not carry excrement to Lalla."

Upon which, the *Rumi* took the dirty broom—blessed be the face of my Master—and thrust it into my face, saying to me: "Why do you say I am not your master?"

And I replied: "O enemy of God, my Master is the Glorious Moulay Sulayman, may God grant him and his soldiers victory. You are God's enemy."

Upon which, he dealt me a blow of his fist in my belly and I, being a pregnant woman, remained in violent pains for eight days. Then he called a physician and a midwife who examined as-Shrifa and found her pregnant and her baby dead for seven days. And on the ninth day, she aborted the Sharif, a dead baby of five months and a half.

And today, O my master, may God render you victorious and prolong your life, if you dispatch a messenger, send him via the king of Spain; and the admiral of the Spanish navy will convey him to Malta to the house of Nipafe, the servant of Sidi Mohammed, may God have mercy upon his soul and greetings are to my Master Moulay Sulayman and may God grant victory to him and to all the Mujahidin, mariners and captains. We invoke God and you. Your grandfather [the Prophet] intercedes in the afterlife and you intercede in this life, may God prolong your life.