THE FOREIGN ELEMENT IN NEW YORK.—THE SYRIAN COLONY, WASHINGTON STREET.—Drawn by W. BENJAMIN.

THE SYRIAN COLONY.

These natives of Syria who have forsaken the historic land of their birth and transferred their abode to the prostrate surroundings of Washington Street form but a small colony when compared with the other three great foreign settlements. They number in all only about one thousand, and occupy less than a block on one side of Washington Street, near the Battery. They are some others—about thirty families—who live in Brooklyn, and a large number of brickmakers who find work in the brick-yards of the upper Hudson.

The Mount of Lebanon and the coast of Syria are the localities from which, as a rule, they have emigrated; and they have gladly left behind the land of the Turk and sacred history for the less poetic environments of soap factories and dingy warehouses, among which they live and move and have their first sensations of American citizenship.

The Syrians follow various trades and occupations, many of them being skilled workmen in silk, needle, and other industries: cigarette-making is also a favorite trade, while the more unskilled or illiterate take to peddling. There are some importers of Syrian goods who are quite prosperous, while the colony itself supports several native restaurants and shops. The peddlers in the city are generally women, who sell Eastern trinkets and jewelry at basement doors.

These women are usually decorated in the Syrian style with tattooed ornaments, sometimes covering broad surfaces of the body, and on the lips of the hands. It is seldom, however, that the Syrians of the colony are found with the face tattooings that are so fashionable among the Bedouin women, who mark their faces and lips until the whole aspect of the mouth is changed to a chilled bluish tint. Those which are so fashionable among the Bedouins are generally in progress, while these people from the coast of Syria are the colonies from which, as a rule, they have emigrated; and they have gladly left behind the land of the Turk and sacred history for the less poetic environments of soap factories and dingy warehouses, among which they live and move and have their first sensations of American citizenship.

The children of some of these people are very beautiful, with large black eyes and dark skin, and regular close-cut facial features which might be brought upon them by their Roman-esque rulers. Although the colony is Christian, it is divided into four distinct religious sects, the most distinctive being the Syro-Chaldean Church of the Maronites, which worships in an upper loft of one of the old warehouses, where an altar and confessional are adjoined. The service is conducted in their own church at their home, near the Battery. There are some others—about thirty families—who live in Brooklyn, and a large number of brickmakers who find work in the brick-yards of the upper Hudson.

The Turkish water-pipe is a conspicuous feature and a universal household article, the members of the family keeping it lighted as they follow one another with a whiff of the fragrant weed. The restaurants along the street serve as social gathering places, where games of cards or chess are generally in progress, and the hostess cooking being altogether strange to American tastes; the bread is in the form of flat cakes, like Scotch 'scones.'

The waiter sociably joins the groups between courses, puffing meditatively at the nearest water-pipe, while the cook sits on the floor at the door of her kitchen, her whisk of cool smoke, calmly waiting for the next order. Some of the social topics are carried on in the open air, such as the history of their old country.

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