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Girl of the Harem.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

BY

EDMONDO DE AMICIS,

AUTHOR OF "HOLLAND," "SPAIN AND THE SPANIARDS," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FIFTEENTH ITALIAN EDITION BY

MARIA HORNOR LANSDALE.

ILLUSTRATED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TURKISH WOMEN.

On arriving in Constantinople for the first time, one is much surprised, after all he has heard of the thralldom of the Turkish women, to see them, everywhere and at all hours of the day, coming and going with apparently the same freedom as the women of any other city in Europe. It seems as though all these imprisoned swallows must that very day have been given their liberty, and a new era of freedom and independence dawned for the fair sex among the Mussulmans. At first the impression is very odd: one is in doubt whether all these females enveloped in white veils and long, variously-colored mantles are nuns or masqueraders or lunatics; and, as you never by any chance see one of them accompanied by a man, they seem not to belong to any one, being all, apparently, young girls or widows or inmates of some huge asylum for the "unhappily married." It is some time before you can realize that all these Turkish men and women, who meet and jostle one another in the streets without ever walking along together or interchanging so much as a nod or look, can have anything in common, and you constantly find yourself stopping to watch them and reflect upon this singular custom. And these strange figures, you say to yourself—these actually are those "subduers of hearts," "fountains of peace," "little rose-leaves," "early grapes," "morning rays," "life-givers", "sunrises", and "shining moons" about whom thousands of poets have written and sung? These are the "hanums" and mysterious slaves, reading of whom in Victor Hugo's ballads at the age of twenty, in a shady garden, we imagined to be like beings of another world? These the unfortunate beauties, hidden behind gratings, watched over by eunuchs, separated from the world, who, passing like shadows across the face of the earth, emit one cry of pleasure and one of sorrow? Let us see how much truth lies at the bottom of all this poetry.

* * * * *

First of all, then, the face of the Turkish woman is no longer a mystery, and owing to this fact alone much of the poetry that surrounded her has disappeared. That jealous veil which, according to the Koran, was to be at once the "seal of her virtue and a safeguard against the world," has become a mere form. Every one knows how the *yashmac* is arranged. There are two large white veils—one, bound around the head like a bandage, covers the forehead down to the eyebrows, is knotted just above the nape of the neck, and falls over the back in two long ends reaching to the waist; the other covers all the lower part of the face and is carried back and tied in with the first in such a manner as to give the effect of a single veil. These veils, however, which are supposed to be of muslin and adjusted so as to leave nothing visible but the eyes and the upper part of the cheeks, have worn away to something very thin and flimsy indeed, while they have drawn farther and farther apart, until now not only most of the face, but the ears, neck, and hair, and not infrequently a European hat and feathers worn by "reformed ladies," are plainly visible. Hence the reverse of the former order of things has come about. Then it was the older women who were allowed to appear with their faces somewhat less closely covered, while the young ones were obliged to conceal them rigorously. Now the young ones, especially if they be handsome, show as much of their features as possible, while the older women, in order to deceive people, wear their veils thick and closely drawn. And so an infinite number of charming and romantic incidents told by poets and writers of fiction are no longer possible, and among other fables is that of the husband seeing his bride's face for the first time on the night of his marriage. Beyond the face, however, all is still concealed, and not so much as a passing glimpse can be had of waist or bosom or arm: the *ferege* hides everything. This is a sort of tunic furnished with a cape and very long sleeves, full and shapeless, and falling like a cloak from the shoulders to the feet. In winter it is made of cloth, in summer of silk, all of one color, and that usually brilliant—now bright red, now orange, now green; but, whatever may be the change in color from year to year, the cut is never altered. Notwithstanding the fact that the women are enveloped in this manner, so great is the art with which they can adjust the *yashmac* that the pretty ones pass for beauties, and those who are ugly look pleasing. It is difficult to say just what it is they do with those two veils. How artfully they dispose of their ample folds, drawing them back and allowing them to fall in simple classic lines or arranging them like coronets or turbans! With what subtle grace they employ them to at once display and conceal their charms, offering a tantalizing suggestion, a promise, a check, and revealing unlooked-for marvels! Some of them seem to wear about their heads a white diaphanous cloud, which at a breath would melt away, others to be garlanded with lilies and jasmines: all of them apparently have the whitest skin, and seem to borrow from those veils a shining reflection and an appearance of delicacy and freshness quite captivating to behold. It is a headgear at once austere and festive, with something of a sacerdotal or nun-like character. Beneath it, one would think, nothing but kind thoughts and innocent, child-like fancies could have birth. But it appears that a little of everything is born there.



Turkish Lady.

It is not altogether easy to define the beauty of the Turkish women. In thinking of them, I may say I always see a very white face, two black eyes, a crimson mouth, and a sweet expression. But then they almost all of them paint, whiten their skin with almond and jasmine paste, lengthen their eyebrows with India ink, color their eyelids, powder their necks, draw dark circles around their eyes, and put patches on their cheeks; but in all this they employ taste and discretion, unlike the belles of Fez, who use whitewash brushes to beautify themselves with. Most of them have pretty oval contours, noses a little arched, lips somewhat thick, round, dimpled chins—many of them have dimples in their cheeks as well—handsome necks, long and flexible, and tiny little hands, generally covered—more's the pity!—by the sleeves of their mantles. They are usually plump, and many of them above the medium height. One rarely sees the dumpy or scrawny type of our countries. One universal defect they have—their manner of walking; they shuffle and stumble along like big children who have grown too fast: this, it is said, comes from a weakness of limb resulting from the abuse of the bath, and also, in a measure, from the wretched shoes they wear. Elegant-looking women, whose feet must be very small indeed, may sometimes be seen wearing men's slippers or long, wide, wrinkled shoes, such as a European peasant-woman would scorn. But even that ungainly walk has something child-like about it that, once you are accustomed to it, appeals to you. There are none of those stiff-looking individuals, like the figures in fashion-plates, whom we see in our cities going along with little mincing steps like pieces on a chess-board. They have not yet lost the free, careless gait natural to the Oriental, and when they do, although they may gain in dignity, they will be less attractive. Occasionally one sees a face of great beauty, and not always the same type either, since there is Circassian, Persian, and Arabian blood mingled with the Turkish. There is the matron of thirty, whose ample form the *ferajeh* cannot entirely conceal, very tall, with great dark eyes, protruding lips, and delicate nostrils, the kind of *hanum* who makes a hundred slaves tremble at her glance, and the mere sight of whom turns into ridicule the boast made by Turkish gentlemen that they are four times the husband. Then there are others, chubby little ladies with everything round about them—face, eyes, nose, mouth—and such a guileless, childish, kindly air of entire and sweet resignation to their lot, which is that of never being anything more than a plaything and source of recreation, that you feel tempted to slip a sugar-plum into their mouths in passing. And there are the slender, graceful figures of sixteen-year-old brides, vivacious and passionate, whose bright coquettish eyes arouse a sentiment of pity in one's breast for the poor effendi who has undertaken the care of them, and the unfortunate eunuch whose duty it is to mount guard over them. 14

The city is wonderfully adapted to form a background and framework for the beauty of the women and the picturesque style of their dress. You should see, for instance, one of those graceful figures, with its white veil and crimson *ferajeh*, seated in a *käik* on the surface of the blue Bosphorus, or extended on the grass surrounded by the vivid green of some cemetery, or, better still, coming toward you down one of the steep lonely side-streets of Stambul, closed in at the end by a great plane tree, when the wind is blowing and veil and *ferajeh* flutter about and reveal neck and foot and ankle. I can assure you that if the indulgent decree of Suleiman the Magnificent were in force at such a moment, levying a fine upon every kiss given to the wife or daughter of another, even the avarice of a Harpagon would receive a severe shock. And even when the wind is high the Turkish women do not feel called upon to struggle very hard to keep down the *ferajeh*, their modesty not including their ankles, and sometimes stopping quite short of them. 15

It is at first somewhat astounding to see how they look at you, laughing too in a manner which certainly encourages the taking of liberties. It not infrequently happens that a young European, looking attentively at a Turkish lady even of rank, finds his gaze smilingly returned, sometimes by an actual laugh, or, again, a pretty *hanum* driving by in her carriage waves a graceful salute behind the eunuch's back to some good-looking Frank who has struck her fancy. Occasionally in a cemetery or some retired street a lively young woman goes the length of tossing a flower as she goes by or dropping it on the ground, with the manifest intention of having it picked up by the young gentleman who is walking behind her. Hence it follows that a fatuous traveller is sometimes betrayed into making grave mistakes, and more than one fool of a European is quite saddened at the close of his month's visit to Constantinople at the thought of the hundred or so unfortunates whose peace of mind he has destroyed for ever. No doubt there is in some of these carryings on a frank avowal of preference, but they are chiefly dictated by a spirit of rebellion nursed in the heart of Turkish women and born of their hatred of the subjection in which they are kept. This they give vent to at every opportunity, and these little mischievous acts of secret spite toward their masters are more the result of childishness than coquetry. What coquetry they have is of a most singular kind, a good deal like the first experiments of young girls when they begin to find people looking at them. It consists of a great deal of laughing, gazing up with the mouth open as though very much astonished, pretending that they have hurt their head or foot, certain gestures of impatience with the *ferajeh*, which is in their way, and various other school-girl tricks, which certainly seem to be done more to make one laugh than with any view of fascinating. They never pose as if for a photograph or the drawing-room; what little art of that kind they possess is of the most rudimentary kind. It is plain to be seen that they have not, as, Tommaseo would say, many veils to lift, that they are unaccustomed to long courtships—to being "surrounded by the pack" like Giusti's hieroglyphical women; and when they take a fancy to any one, instead of wasting time in sighs and languishing glances, they would like to say quite frankly, "Christian, I like you." Being unable to say the actual words, they make their meaning clear with equal frankness by displaying two shining rows of pearls or laughing outright in your face. They are just pretty tamed Tartars.



Lemonade Seller.

And, after all, Turkish women are free—a discovery which the foreigner makes as soon as he lands. It is an exaggeration for Lady Mary Wortley Montague to say that they have more liberty than European women, but any one who has been to Constantinople cannot help but laugh when he hears people talk of their "bondage." When a lady wishes to go out she tells the eunuch to order her carriage, and goes without asking any one's permission, and stays as long as she wants to, provided, of course, she returns before nightfall. Formerly she was always accompanied by a eunuch or female slave or friend. The bolder spirits, when they wanted no one else, would at least take a child with them as a sort of passport to public respect. One of them appearing entirely alone in some retired spot would quite probably have found herself stopped by a city guard or a straight-laced old Turk, and subjected to a severe cross-examination: "Where are you going? Where have you been? Why is there no one with you? Is it thus that you respect your effendi? Go home at once." But now-a-days all this has changed, and hundreds of Turkish women may be seen at all hours of the day quite alone in the Mussulman streets and suburbs, and in the Frankish cities as well. They pay each other visits from one end of Stambul to the other, spend half a day in the bath-houses, make excursions by water to the Sweet Waters of Europe on Thursday, and on Sunday to the Sweet Waters of Asia. On Friday they visit the cemeteries of Skutari,

on the other days of the week the Isles of the Princes, Terapia, Buyukdereh, or Kalender, to eat luncheon in parties of eight or ten with their slaves. They say their prayers at the tombs of the pādishahs and sultanas, visit the dervishes' monasteries, and go to see the public exhibitions of wedding-outfits. And not a man would presume to join or follow one of them, or even so much as to accost her. For a Turk to be seen in some retired street in Constantinople, not arm-in-arm or walking beside, but merely pausing an instant to exchange half a dozen words with one of the "veiled," would be considered most unseemly, even were it written on their foreheads that they were man and wife; or, to speak more correctly, it would be looked upon as an audacious piece of impudence, as though two individuals should select the centre of one of our crowded streets in which to make mutual declarations of love. In this sense, then, Turkish women really have more freedom than ours, and no one knows how highly they value it or how eagerly they grasp at the noise and crowd and open air and light of the streets and public resorts. In their own houses they see but one single man, while their windows and gardens are like those in convents; so it is perfectly natural to find them running about the city with all the enjoyment of liberated prisoners. It is great fun to follow one of them—at a safe distance—and see how she has mastered the art of chopping the joys of vagrancy into the smallest possible pieces. First she will drop into the nearest mosque to say her prayers and loiter under the arches of the courtyard for a quarter of an hour or so, chatting with a friend; next she will go to the bazâr, glance into half a dozen shops, turn one or two upside down, and finally, after purchasing some trifle, take the tramway down to the fish-market, cross the bridge, and examine at her leisure every wig and headdress in every hair-dresser's shop in the Rue de Pera; next we find her in a cemetery, where, after settling herself comfortably on one of the tombs, she will sit for some time munching sweetmeats; then back to the city and down to the Golden Horn again, making numberless détours to right and left, and watching everything out of the corner of her eye—shop-windows, signs, posters, the other ladies who pass her, carriages, the open doors of theatres, advertisements; then she will buy a bunch of flowers, give a trifle to some beggar, drink a glass of lemonade from a water-carrier, and, recrossing the Golden Horn, in a kâik this time, make some fresh excursions about Stambul; after which she will again take the tramway, alighting at her own door. But even on the threshold she is fully capable of turning back merely for the purpose of walking a little way up the street and making the circuit of a half-dozen houses or so before being shut in for the night, just as some young girl who has been allowed to go out for once alone tries to crowd a little of everything into that one short hour of liberty. A poor fat effendi who should undertake to follow and watch his wife to see if she were up to any mischief would certainly have a hard time of it: he would very probably find himself distanced at the end of the first half hour.

* * * * *

To really get a good view of the Mussulman fair sex, you must go to the Sweet Waters of Europe, at the head of the Golden Horn, on one of the great feast-days, or to those of Asia, near the village of Anadoli-Hissar. These are two extensive public gardens, watered by two little rivers, and thickly sprinkled with trees, fountains, and cafés. There, on a vast grassy plain, beneath the shade of walnuts, terebinths, palm trees, and sycamores, forming a succession of leafy pavilions, through which not so much as a ray of sunshine can penetrate, may be seen thousands of women seated in circular groups surrounded by their slaves, eunuchs, and children, lunching and passing away half a day in each other's company, while all around them crowds are coming and going. On arriving you are at once captivated by this scene, which resembles a festival in the Islam Paradise. The myriads of white veils and scarlet, green, yellow, and gray *ferajehs*; the groups of slaves dressed in every hue of the rainbow; the crowds of children in their fanciful costumes; the great Smyrna rugs spread on the grass; the gold and silver vessels passed from hand to hand; the Mussulman waiters from the cafés in gala dress running hither and thither carrying plates of fruit and ices; the gypsies dancing; the Bulgarian shepherds playing on their pipes; the horses with silk and gilded trappings stamping beneath the trees to which they are tied; the pashas and beys and young gallants who gallop along the river's bank; the swaying of the distant crowd like the movement of the wind over a bed of tulips and hyacinths; the gayly-painted kâiks and elegant carriages which every moment deposit fresh loads of color in that sparkling sea; and the mingled melody of flute and pipe and tambourine, of voices singing and children calling to one another; the play of light and shade across the grass and thick foliage of the trees and shrubs, with here and there a little glimpse of some distant view,—all combine to form an effect of light and color, sound and movement, so perfect that one's first impulse is to clap his hands enthusiastically and cry, "Bravo! bravissimi!" as though it were a masterly production on the stage.



An Outing of the Women of the Harem.

Even in such a scene as this, notwithstanding the opportunities afforded by the crowd and confusion, it is extremely rare to find Turkish men and women making eyes at one another or exchanging so much as a smile or glance of intelligence. Gallantry, *coram populo*, does not exist there as it is seen in our countries; there are none of those melancholy sentinels who march up and down beneath the loved one's windows, or those devoted followers who will walk for three hours behind the beloved object. Their love-making is carried on entirely within doors. If by chance you should happen to come upon a young Turk in the act of gazing up at a grated window behind which may be detected the flash of an eye or a white hand, you may take it for almost certain that they are a pair of fiancés. To engaged couples alone are meetings and rendezvous permitted and all the other childish accompaniments of authorized courtship, such as conversing together at a distance by means of a flower or ribbon or by the color of the dress or scarf. In this art the Turkish women are very proficient. There are a thousand small objects, such as flowers, fruits, grass, feathers, stones, to each one of which some especial meaning is attached, an epithet or verb, or even a whole sentence, so that an entire letter may be expressed in a single bunch of flowers, and any number of things be said with a little box or purse full of odds and ends apparently collected by merest chance; and, as the signification of the various objects is usually expressed in verse, every lover is in a position to compose an amorous couplet, or even a polymetrical poem, in five minutes. A few cloves, a scrap of paper, a slice of pear, a bit of soap, a match, an end of gold thread, a grain of cinnamon and one of pepper, signify, "I have long loved you. I pant, languish, die with love for you. Give me a little hope; do not repulse me. Answer me with a word." And not only love-affairs, but thousands of other matters, can be expressed with equal facility—reproof, counsel, warning, news. Young girls just beginning to be conscious that they have hearts find endless occupation and amusement in committing all this symbolic language to memory, and in composing long letters addressed to imaginary sultans of twenty. Then there is the language of signs or gestures, some of which are extremely graceful, such, for example, as that of the man who, wishing to imply that he has been wounded by the force of his love, stabs himself in the heart with an invisible dagger, to which the woman responds by letting her arms fall at her sides in such a way that the *ferajeh* opens a little in front, which means, "I open my arms to you." No European, however, has probably ever witnessed the actual interchange of these signs, which have now almost passed into traditions, and are only to be learned, moreover, from some ingenuous *hanum* who has confided them to a Christian friend. Were you to interrogate a Turk in regard to them, you would cover him with confusion.

* * * * *

We learn through the same channels what the dress of the Turkish women is in the seclusion of the harem—the details of that charming costume, at once rich and fantastic, which every one has some idea of, and which lends to every woman who wears it the dignity of a princess and freedom and grace of a child. We will never see it unless the fashion should be adopted in our own country, for even should the *ferajeh* be some day discarded, every Turkish woman will by that time be found dressed like a European underneath. What anguish for the artists, and what a pity for all concerned! Just fancy a Turkish beauty, "slender as a cypress," with the coloring "of all the blended tints of a rose's petals," wearing a little red-velvet or silver-brocade cap slightly on one side, her black hair falling down over the shoulders, clad in a garment of white-silk damask embroidered in gold, with wide, open sleeves, and a long skirt parted in front so as to show the full trousers of rose-colored silk falling in close folds over little feet encased in tiny pointed slippers turned up in Chinese fashion; a sash of green satin around the waist, and diamonds flashing from neck and arms and hair, the tassel of the cap, slippers, girdle, forehead, so that she glitters from head to foot like the Madonna in a Spanish cathedral as she lies extended on a wide divan in an attitude of childish grace, surrounded by a circle of pretty Circassian, Arabian, or Persian slaves, enveloped like statues of antiquity in long, sweeping garments; or imagine a bride, "white as the summit of Olympus," arrayed in sky-blue satin with a large gold-embroidered veil falling over her entire person, seated upon a pearl-embroidered ottoman; or picture to yourself the adored favorite in the most retired apartment of the harem, wearing the jacket and trousers which set off to the utmost advantage the exquisite contours of her person, making her look like a graceful, well-formed boy. Then you can realize what those beasts of "reforming"

Turks, with their bald heads and black coats, have to answer for. These house-costumes, however, vary with the changing fashions. The Turkish women, having nothing else in the world to occupy them, devote a large part of their time to trying to devise some new style of dress: they cover themselves with finery and trinkets, stick feathers and ribbons in their hair, tie scarfs around their heads and fur around their necks and arms, borrowing something from all the different styles of Oriental costume; they combine the fashions of Europe and the East, wear wigs, dye their hair black, red, yellow, indulge every sort of fancy, and vie with one another every whit as much as the leaders of fashion in other lands. If at one of the gatherings at the Sweet Waters a fairy should suddenly wave her wand and all the *ferajehs* fall off, no doubt we would find some of the ladies attired like Asiatic queens, others like French Christians or in full ball-costume or in the gala dress of tradespeople, riding habits, Greek costumes, gypsy dresses, or like vivandières—just as great a variety, in short, as may be seen among the men on the bridge of the Validêh Sultan.

* * * * *

The apartments occupied by beautiful and wealthy Mohammedan ladies correspond, to a certain extent, with their fanciful and captivating style of dress. The rooms reserved for the women are usually well situated, commanding charming views of sea or country or else overlooking a wide expanse of the city. Beneath the windows are gardens enclosed between high walls covered with ivy and jasmine, overlooked by terraces; over the street extend small rooms built out from the walls and enclosed with glass, like the *miradores* of Spanish houses. The interiors are simply enchanting. Almost all the rooms are small, the floors covered with Chinese matting and rugs; screens painted with flowers and fruits stand about; a wide divan runs all around the wall, and in the centre of the room a fountain plays; vases of flowers stand in the windows, and over all falls that soft, subdued light so characteristic of the Oriental house, like the dim light of the forest or—what shall I say?—the cloister or some sacred spot, so that one is inclined to walk on tiptoe and speak in whispers, saying nothing but what is humble and tender, talking only of God and love. This soft, mysterious light, the perfumes wafted in from the gardens, the murmur of the fountains, the figures of the slaves flitting back and forth like phantoms, the stillness which broods over everything, the distant blue of the Asiatic mountains seen between the bars of the windows with their leafy screen of honeysuckle, awaken in the breast of a European, who finds herself for the first time within those mysterious walls, an inexpressible sensation of languor and of melancholy.

The decoration of most of these harems is simple in the extreme, almost severe, but there are those which are very magnificent, having walls hung with satin and gold damask, screens of cedar-wood, gilded gratings, and costly furniture, from whose character it is easy enough to judge what sort of life is led by the inmates. You find only arm-chairs, big and little ottomans, rugs, stools, low seats, cushions of every possible size and shape, and mattresses covered with shawls and brocades; everything is soft, yielding, inviting, saying in a thousand different ways, "Rest, take your ease: love, sleep, dream." Here and there are hand-mirrors and large fans of ostrich feathers; chased chibuks hang on the walls and bird-cages in the windows; braziers for burning perfumes stand in the middle of the rooms, and musical boxes, bric-à-brac, and ornaments in every direction; sufficiently indicating the tastes of an idle and weary woman. Nor does this luxury exist only on the surface: in some establishments all the table service is of gold—of solid gold the vessels for perfumed water, of gold the fringe of the satin napkins—while brilliants and precious stones glitter from the various utensils, the coffee-cups, goblets, pipes, table-linen, and fans. In others—and these by far the greater number of houses, it must be understood—little if any change has been made from the ancient order of things in the tent or hut of the Tartar, whose entire outfit could be packed upon the back of a single mule, and everything stood in perpetual readiness for a fresh migration across Asia. These houses are distinctively Mohammedan and severe in character, where, when the hour of departure sounds, nothing is heard but the resigned voice of the master pronouncing the word "Olsun!" (So be it).

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The Turkish dwelling, as every one knows, is divided into two parts, the *harem* and the *selamlık*. The *selamlık* is the part reserved for the man. Here he works, eats, sees his friends, takes his siesta, and sometimes sleeps at night. The wife never enters it, but, just as the man rules in the *selamlık*, so does she govern in the harem. She orders and arranges everything just as she chooses, and does whatever she wants to, except that of course she cannot receive male visitors. If she does not feel like seeing her husband, she can even refuse to do that, sending a polite message requesting him to return at some other time. Although the *selamlık* is, as a rule, only separated from the *harem* by one small door and a narrow corridor, they are, in reality, like two distinct houses, far away from one another. The male friends of the effendi who come to see him, and the ladies who call upon the hanum, neither encounter nor hear each other, and frequently are mutually unknown. In the same way, the two establishments are supplied with different servants and very commonly separate kitchens. Husband and wife seek their amusements in their own way, spending their time and their money without reference to each other, and rarely even dine together, having almost nothing in common. It is very unusual for the man to enter the harem in the character of husband or companion or as the guide and educator of his children; his visits are those of the lover: on crossing that threshold, he puts away all his cares and worries, giving himself up entirely to the soft distractions of the moment: his object is to be amused and diverted, and it would never occur to him to look there for the light and guidance of a mind more clear and serene than his own, or for even a sympathetic interest in his affairs; and, indeed, the women of Turkey would be found to be but poorly adapted to satisfy such demands were they made. The husband, moreover, is at no pains to surround himself with that halo of wisdom or strength or intelligence which might be calculated to increase his importance in his wife's eyes. What would be the use? He is already the god of the temple, claiming worship and adoration as a right. There is no need for him to make himself more attractive. The honor which, of his bounty, he pays his wife in going to see her at all itself calls for a sentiment of gratitude sufficiently like love to satisfy him. The word "woman" has for him absolutely no association with the mind or with any of his outside interests and occupations. She belongs exclusively to his private life, and on this account he dislikes to so much as hear the word pronounced in public. If he has to announce the birth of a daughter, he will say, "'A veiled one' or 'a hidden one' or 'a little stranger' has been born to me." And so it is that any real intimacy between husband and

wife is out of the question: all those depths and secret recesses of the soul which can only be discovered by the light of entire mutual confidence must, from the nature of things, remain for ever hidden; their intercourse lacks the necessary quality of an assured footing. The wife, never knowing at what hour she may receive a visit from her husband, is constantly decked out in expectation of that event: intent upon outdoing a rival or preserving a pre-eminence which is continually threatened, she is always something of a courtier, doing violence to her own feelings in order that everything may look smiling and cheerful for her lord, and often enough, when her heart is heavy within her, assuming the gay and laughing mien of a happy, contented woman in order to prevent his growing weary of and neglecting her. And so it happens that the Turk never really knows woman as a wife, just as he has never known her as a mother, sister, or friend, and never will as a daughter, while she, finding that her nobler qualities are neither used nor prized, allows them to become blunted and warped, valuing only those for which she is sought, and often resolutely checking the natural and finer dictates of her own heart in order to find, if not happiness, at least peace, in the apathy of a purely animal existence. She has, it is true, the comfort of her children, and very often her husband sends for them to pet and caress them in her presence; but whatever satisfaction this might have given her is marred by the knowledge that within the hour he may well have done the same to the children of another wife, and an hour later be embracing those of a third, and—who knows?—within a year of still a fourth. Lover-like devotion, parental affection, friendship, confidence, all, are divided and subdivided, each portion having its own hours, regulations, and boundaries. Hence his visit is cold and formal, while through and beneath it all there is a bitter humiliation, a deadly insult, in the love of a husband who pays a eunuch to mount guard over his wife. He says to her, in substance, "I love you, 'my joy,' 'glory,' 'pearl of my house,' but I am quite sure that you cannot be trusted."

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The conditions of married life, however, vary very greatly according to the worldly possessions of the husband, even apart from the fact that a man who can only support one woman can, of course, have but one wife. The rich man lives apart from his wife in body as well as in spirit; he is able to afford a separate suite of apartments or even a house for her, and does so in order that he may carry on his occupations and receive his friends and acquaintances without running any risk of the ladies of his household being seen or interfered with. The Turk of moderate means is forced, from motives of economy, to live on terms of much greater familiarity with his wife, and, dwelling under the same roof, sees her much more frequently. The poor Turk is obliged to occupy the smallest possible space, and so eats, sleeps, and passes all his leisure time in the company of his wife and children. Wealth divides, while poverty unites. The life led in the houses of the poor differs very little whether the inmates be Turks or Christians. The woman who cannot keep a slave does the work herself, and labor increases her dignity and authority. Not infrequently she may even be found routing her lazy husband out of the neighboring café or tavern and driving him home with blows from her slipper. Here, at least, husband and wife are on an equality: they spend their evenings together, seated side by side in the doorway of their house, and in the more retired suburbs even go together, sometimes, to make the family purchases. Not infrequently you may see in an out-of-the-way cemetery a father and mother, with their children gathered around them, seated near the grave of some relative, eating their luncheon, just like a laboring family in any other part of the world; and from the mere fact that it is uncommon, one finds himself strangely moved by this simple scene. You realize, as you watch them, how natural, how essential, and eternally and universally fitting is that junction of soul and body; that in that group, so complete in itself, there is no room for any one else; that a single additional note and the harmony would be spoiled or destroyed outright; that, talk and argue as you may, the fact remains that the first condition, the elementary force, the cornerstone of an orderly and well-balanced society, is there before you; that every and any other combination of affections and interests violates a natural law; that this is a family, the other a herd; that this, and this only, corresponds to a home, the other to a wolf's den.

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There are those who maintain that the women of the East are not only satisfied with polygamy, but that they do not so much as understand its injustice. To believe this one would have to be ignorant, I do not say of Oriental life, but of the human heart itself. And how is it, if this be so, that almost every Turkish girl, when she agrees to marry, makes it a condition that during her lifetime there shall be no other wife, or that large numbers of wives return to their own homes on account of the husband's failure to keep this promise? and what is the meaning of the Turkish proverb, "A house with four wives, a vessel in a storm"? And even supposing her husband worships her, an Oriental woman can hardly fail to curse polygamy, obliging her, as it does, to live with that sword of Damocles suspended over her head—the daily dread of a rival, not hidden and distant and always in the wrong, as the rival of a European wife must necessarily be, but installed beside her in the same house, with the same name, and entitled to equal rights with herself. She is liable at any time to have one of her own slaves suddenly lift her head in her presence, treat her as an equal, and have children whose rights are the same as those of her own. It is quite impossible that she should be blind to the injustice of such a state of things; and when the husband whom she loves introduces another wife into his house, it may well happen that, reflecting upon the fact that he is but taking advantage of the code of the Prophet, and knowing full well at the bottom of her heart that an older and more sacred law has denounced that act as an infamous abuse of power, she rebels against and curses the conditions which have taken her husband from her, cut the knot which bound them together, and destroyed the happiness of her life. On the other hand, suppose she does not love him: she still has good cause to detest a law which so seriously interferes with the rights of her children, wounds her self-respect, and permits her husband to either neglect her altogether or seek her society solely from motives in which affection plays no part. It may be urged that Turkish women know that such misfortunes as these sometimes overtake European women as well: perhaps they do, but they also know that the latter are not obliged by the law, both civil and religious, to treat with respect and give the title of sister to the women who have poisoned their lives, and have, moreover, the comfort of being looked upon as martyrs, as well as a hundred ways of vindicating and consoling themselves without the husband being once able to say, as the polygamist can to his rebellious wife, "I have a right to love a hundred women, while it is your duty to love no one but me."

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The Turkish woman has, however, many rights and privileges under the law to console her. She is treated on all hands with a certain chivalric tenderness. No man would dare to raise a hand against her in public. Not a soldier, even in the midst of the general license and disorder of a riot, would attempt to maltreat even the most insolent woman of the people. The husband observes toward his wife a sort of formal deference, and the mother is always the object of especial veneration. Nor would a man dream of making his wife work in order that she might support him. It is the husband who settles the dot upon his wife; she is expected to bring him nothing but her wedding outfit and some female slaves. In cases of repudiation or divorce he is obliged to provide for her maintenance, and this is also the case when he treats her badly and she demands a separation in consequence. The facility of divorce remedies, to some small extent, the unfortunate consequences of marriages made almost always in the dark on account of the peculiar conditions of Turkish society, which oblige the two sexes to live entirely apart. It requires very little to enable a woman to obtain a divorce: it is only necessary to show that her husband has ill-treated her once, or spoken of her in conversation with others in offensive terms, or neglected her for a certain length of time. When she has a complaint to make, she has only to lay her grievance before the court in writing, or she may, if she choose, present it in person before a vizier—the grand vizier himself, if she wishes to—he being almost always ready to receive and listen to her kindly and patiently. If she cannot get on with his other wives, she may require her husband to provide her with a separate establishment, to which, indeed, she has a right in any case, or at least to separate apartments. The husband is forbidden to take either as wife or odalisque any slave whom his wife has brought from her father's house. A woman who has been betrayed and abandoned can require the man to marry her unless he already has four wives: in that case she can oblige him to support her in his house and recognize her children. There are no illegitimate children in Turkey. Bachelors and old maids are very rare, and forced marriages far less common than one would suppose, as the guilty fathers are liable to punishment under the law. The state pensions all widows without relatives or means, and also provides support for orphans; often female children who have been abandoned are taken from the street by women of wealth, who educate and marry them off, and it is unusual for women to be reduced to absolute want. Now, all of this is not only true, but very admirable, but at the same time one cannot refrain from laughing outright when the Turks solemnly compare the social privileges enjoyed by their women with those of European countries, to the advantage of the former, or try to persuade us that they are blessed with an immunity from the corruption which, they declare, exists among us. What possible value in the eyes of a woman is an outward show of respect, when her very position as a suppliant wife is in itself a humiliation? Of what avail the facility of divorce and right it gives her to remarry, when the second husband can at any time repeat the offence for which she left the first? What great matter is it for a man to be required to recognize his illegitimate son, when he has not the means to support him, and can have fifty others "legitimately," who, if they are spared the opprobrious epithet of "bastard," are not spared from want and neglect? The social evils which exist in European lands are to be found in Turkey under different conditions and names, and the fact that they are tolerated, and even sanctioned, certainly does not extenuate them, while it may and does make them more common. For a Turk to attempt to criticise any one else in this regard is to the last degree blind and fatuous.

From the foregoing it is very easy to imagine what sort of women the Turkish ones are—merely "pleasing females" for the most part, who, barely knowing how to read and write, as a matter of fact do neither; miraculous beings those who have a little superficial smattering of education. It would not be agreeable to the men, in whose eyes they are endowed with "long hair and little brains," for them to cultivate their minds, as it might be very inconvenient were they to become equal in this respect, or even superior to, themselves. And so, as they never read and are debarred from picking up any stray crumbs of knowledge by association with men, they grow up in a state of crass ignorance. The separation of the sexes also results in the loss of gentleness on the one hand and of high-mindedness on the other. The men grow rough as they grow older, and the women become gossips: even in old age, from never having moved in any society beyond the narrow circle of their female friends and relatives, the women retain something puerile in all their ideas and habits, are excessively curious, everything astonishes them, and they make a great deal out of every trifle; they have spiteful little tricks, too, and are inclined to look down on and despise education; they burst out laughing when any one speaks to them, and pass hours at a time over the most childish games, such as chasing each other from room to room, and snatching sugar-plums out of one another's mouths. On the other hand, to paraphrase the French saying, they have good qualities in their defects: their natures are frank and open, easily read at a glance; they impress you as being "real persons," as Madame de Sévigné said of them, not masques or caricatures or apes; free, natural, and, even when they are unhappy, "*all of one piece*;" and if, as it is said, one of them has only to affirm and reaffirm a thing for every one to discredit it, it only means that she has too little art to deceive with success. At all events—and it is no small praise—there are no dull blue-stockings among them, or wearisome pedagogues who can talk of nothing but language and style, or those spiritual creatures who dwell on a loftier plane than ordinary mortals. It is, however, perfectly true that in their narrow lives, cut off from all elevating association or occupation, with the instinctive desire of youth and beauty for love and admiration constantly thwarted and dissatisfied, their souls remain undeveloped. When once an evil passion gets control of them, having none of the checks and self-restraints imposed by education, they run into violent excesses. Their idle, purposeless life fosters the growth of all manner of foolish tastes, which they pursue with the utmost obstinacy, determined to satisfy them at whatever cost. Moreover, in the sensual air of the harem, surrounded constantly by women inferior to themselves in birth and education, and away from men, whose presence would act as a check, they abandon themselves to the most indecent crudities of language; ignorant of all shades of expression, they say things right out with brutal frankness, using words at which they ought to blush, and indulging in equivocal jests, becoming at times openly abusive and insolent: sometimes the ears of a European who understands Turkish are treated to a flood of invective and abuse directed against a rude or impolitic shopkeeper, which, coming as it does from the lips of a *hanum* to all outward appearance of the highest breeding, would never, among us, be heard from the mouth of any but the lowest class of women. It seems as though their virulence increased in proportion with their knowledge of European customs and intercourse with

the women of other lands—as though the spirit of rebellion was stirred up within them by these means. A Turkish woman, finding herself really beloved by her husband, takes advantage of the fact to visit him with all manner of petty acts of tyranny in revenge for the great social tyranny of which she is the victim: she is often represented as being all sweetness and bashful timidity, but there are fierce, bold spirits as well, and in popular uprisings it is not uncommon to find women in the front ranks: they assemble and arm themselves, and stop the carriages of unpopular viziers, covering them with abuse, stoning them, and forcibly resisting arrest. They are, indeed, like all other women, sweet and gentle when unmoved by passion, treat their slaves with great kindness when they are not jealous of them, and are tender and affectionate with their children, though even if they were willing to take the trouble to have them educated or trained, they have no idea how to set about it. They contract the most ardent friendships with each other, especially those who are separated from their husbands or are suffering from the same kind of misfortune: these friendships are of the most exaggerated character; they wear the same colors, use the same perfumes, put on patches of the same size and shape, and make enthusiastic demonstrations and protestations of undying regard. I might add here the remark that has been made by more than one lady traveller from Europe, that there “exist among them all the vices of ancient Babylon,” were I not unwilling in so serious a matter to make a statement which rests wholly on the assertions of others.

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The manners of Turkish women reflect their characters. They are all more or less like young girls of good family, who, having been brought up in the country and arrived at the transition stage between childhood and womanhood, keep their mothers in a constant state of uneasiness by their want of conventionality. It is very funny to hear a European lady's account of a visit to a harem. The *hanum*, for instance, after sitting for the first few moments in a dignified attitude upon the sofa, just as she sees her visitor doing, will suddenly and without any warning clasp her hands over her head, or begin to yawn loudly or to nurse one of her knees. Accustomed to the liberty, not to say license, of the harem, and to the easy attitudes of idleness and fatigue, and weakened as they are by their prolonged and frequent baths, they quickly tire in any erect or constrained position, and, throwing themselves on the divan, toss continually from one side to the other, twist and tangle up their long trains, roll themselves into balls, catch hold of their feet, put a cushion on their knees and rest their elbows upon it, straighten themselves out, twist, turn, stretch, arch their backs like cats, roll from the divan on to the mattress, from the mattress on to the rug, from the rug on to the marble pavement, and go to sleep like children wherever and whenever they happen to feel sleepy. One French lady traveller declares that they are something like mollusks, and they are nearly always in such a position that one could take them in his arms like a ball. Their most conventional attitude is sitting cross-legged, and it is said that the defect of slightly crooked legs so common among them comes from their having sat in this position since childhood. But how gracefully they do it! You can see them in the public gardens and cemeteries. They drop straight down without so much as putting out a hand, erect as statues, and rise with the same ease, perfectly straight and without leaning upon anything, as though they were being drawn out. But this is about the only free, strong movement they have. The grace of a Turkish woman seems to consist entirely in those attitudes of repose which display to their best advantage the charming curves of her figure. With head thrown back, hair streaming loosely over the pillow, and arms hanging down, she can draw money and jewels from the husband's pocket and drive the unfortunate eunuch to the verge of despair.

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Dancing Girls.

Nor is the practice of such arts as these the only occupation by which they seek to enliven the deadly monotony of the greater number of lives passed in a harem—a monotony resulting not so much from the absence of employment and distractions as from their all being so much alike, just as certain books are tiresome from their uniformity of style, while their subjects may be entirely different. They do everything in their power to combat ennui: the whole day is often nothing but a prolonged struggle with this dreaded enemy. Seated upon rugs and cushions, with their slaves grouped around them, they hem innumerable little handkerchiefs to give away to their friends; embroider night-caps and tobacco-pouches as presents for their husbands, fathers, and brothers; tell the beads of the *tespi* a hundred times; count as high as they know how; spend hours at a time watching the movements of the ships on the Bosphorus or Sea of Marmora from the small round windows of their elevated apartments; or weave interminable romances of love and liberty and riches as they watch the smoke from their cigarettes curl upward in blue wreaths. Tired of their cigarettes, they betake themselves to the chibuk and inhale the “blond hair of Latakia,” then a cup of Syrian coffee and a few sweetmeats, or some fruit or an ice, which they can spend half an hour in eating; then comes a little more smoking, the narghileh this time, perfumed with rose-water, and after it a piece of mastic gum, which they suck to get rid of the taste of the smoke; then some lemonade to do away with the taste of the mastic. They dress and undress, try on all their costumes, make experiments with all the colors in their little boxes, put on and take off patches cut like stars and crescents; and arrange a dozen or so mirrors and hand-glasses in such a way that they can see themselves on all sides; finally, when they are tired out, two young slaves will dance for their amusement accompanied by tambourine and tabor, while a third repeats the well-known song or fairy-tale that every one can say by heart, or the usual couple of mascottes dressed like acrobats perform the regular wrestling-match, which always ends in a stamp on the floor and an artificial, mirthless laugh. Sometimes a troupe of Egyptian dancers will present themselves, and this event is made the excuse for a little fête, or a gypsy comes and the *hanum* must have her fortune told from the palm of her hand, or purchase a talisman that will preserve her youth, or a decoction to bring her children, or a love-philter. She will pass hours with her face pressed against the window-grating watching the people and dogs pass in the street below, or teaching the parrot a new word; then go to the garden to swing: returning to the house, she says her prayers or throws herself upon the divan to play a game of cards; then a visitor is announced and she jumps up to receive her, and there follows the customary round of coffee, tobacco, lemonade, and sweetmeats, of empty laughter and tremendous yawns, until, the visitor having departed, the eunuch appears in the doorway, saying in a low voice, “The effendi.”—“At last! Really, Providence has sent him; I don’t care if he were the ugliest husband in Stambul.”

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Such is the life in a harem where there is at least peace, if nothing more, but there are others in which the dulness is relieved, not to say annihilated, by the storms of passion which sweep across them, and there the life is something altogether different. All is peaceable enough in a harem where there is but one wife whose husband loves her, pays no attention to the slaves, and has no outside intrigues. There is also, if not happiness, quiet, in those where the several wives are equally cold or indifferent, none of them caring particularly for the husband, who on his part does not distinguish among them, but bestows upon each in turn a sufficient amount of attention—where no one is impelled by love or jealousy or ambition to try to supersede the others. These

good-natured wives have for a common object the getting as much money as possible out of the effendi; they occupy the same house, never quarrel, call each other sister, and join in one another's amusement. The boat is made after the devil's pattern, but it goes ahead all the same, and there is peace or the semblance of it, in a harem where the wife, finding herself set aside to make room for another, accepts the situation in a spirit of resignation, and, while declining the shreds of love her husband is still willing to allow her, continues to live in his house on friendly terms with him and the other inmates, consoling herself in a sort of dignified retirement with the society of her children. But when, as is sometimes the case, it is a question of a woman of high spirit and fiery passions, it is an altogether different matter. She declines to submit quietly to her rival's triumph or to the shame of desertion, and will not consent without a fight to see her children set aside to make room for those of a new-comer. Life in one of these harems is a fore-taste of the infernal regions. There are weeping and lamentation, breaking of crockery and glass; slaves die from having long pins driven into them; plots are hatched, crimes contemplated, and sometimes committed—stabbing, poisoning, or throwing vitriol in the face of the enemy. Existence is nothing but a series of persecutions, implacable hatreds, fierce and deadly acts of revenge. The man, in short, who has several wives must either, if he loves one, sacrifice his peace, or else care for them equally and purchase quiet at the expense of love; in either case he usually walks straight to his ruin. If his wives are not jealous by reason of their love for him, they are from motives of ambition and rivalry in luxury and dress. So, then, if he gives his favorite a piece of jewelry or a carriage or a villa on the Bosphorus, he has to do the same for each of the others, or he soon has the house down about his ears, and so buys his peace for its weight in gold. And the same difficulties extend to the children, those of the neglected mother being filled with hatred and envy for those of the favorite; and it is not hard to imagine what sort of training they must get, brought up in harems whose very air is heavy with violence and intrigue, surrounded by slaves and eunuchs, with no help from their fathers, no examples set them of application or self-control, in that sensual, enervating atmosphere, the little girls in especial being taught from earliest infancy to build all their hopes of future success upon their ability to arouse a sentiment for which "love" seems too lofty a title, and receiving the necessary training partly from their own mothers, partly from slaves, and mostly from Kara-Gyuz.

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There are, besides the peaceful and tempestuous, two other types of harem—that of the young and liberal-minded Turk, who encourages his wife in the cultivation of European ideas, and that of the Turk of the old school, who is either strict by nature or else is under the influence of relatives, especially of an old mother if she happens to be one of those inflexible Mussulman women sternly opposed to change of any sort, and determined that he shall manage his house according to her ideas. Nothing can exceed the contrast between the two. The former has the air of a European lady's house: there is a piano on which the *hanum* is being taught to play by a Christian music-mistress; there are work-tables, straw chairs, a bedstead, and writing-desk; a good crayon portrait of the effendi by an Italian artist of Pera hangs on the wall; in one corner stands a small bookcase containing two or three dozen books, among which may be found a little French and Turkish dictionary and the last number of *La Mode illustrée*, which is sent to the mistress by the wife of the Spanish consul after she has done with it; moreover, there is a complete box of water-colors, with which the *hanum* paints fruits and flowers, and she assures her friends that she never suffers for a moment from ennui. Among other things, she is writing her memoirs, and at a certain hour of the day her French master arrives to practise French conversation with her (of course it must be understood that he is old and bent and feeble). Sometimes a German female photographer comes from Galata to take her photograph. When she is ill a European doctor attends her, who may even be young and handsome, her husband not being such a jealous beast as some of his more antiquated friends; and now and then a French dressmaker is summoned to cut and fit a costume in the very latest style as it is given in the fashion-plates, so that she may give her husband a charming surprise on the following Thursday evening, that being the special feast-day of Mussulman couples, when the effendi pays particular court to his "rose-leaf." And then the effendi, being a person of high position, has promised that she may watch the first large ball given at the English embassy during the following winter from the crack of some retired doorway. In short, the *hanum* is a European lady of the Mussulman faith, who says to her friends with intense satisfaction, "I live like a *Cocona*"—a Christian. And her friends and relatives, though they may be unable to do the same, would like to; and among themselves they talk of the fashions and theatres, telling each other stories of the "superstitions," the "pedantries," and the "bigotry" of Old Turkey, winding up every discourse with the remark, "And it is high time that we should change all this and begin to lead lives more like rational human beings."

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But that other harem! Here there is nothing that is not severely Turkish, from the costume of the mistress to the smallest article of furniture—not a book except the Koran, the only newspaper the *Stambul*. Should the *hanum* fall ill, instead of a doctor, one of those innumerable Turkish doctresses, with a miraculous specific for every kind of disease, is summoned. If her parents have become tainted with the European craze, they are only permitted to see their daughter once a week. Every door and window in the house is furnished with bars and bolts: absolutely nothing European but the air is allowed to enter the household, unless the mistress has unfortunately been taught a little French in her girlhood, in which case the mother-in-law is perfectly capable of thrusting a coarse romance of the worst type into her hands, so as to be able to say, "There! you see now what fine sort of people these are you are so crazy to imitate! what pretty things they do and say! what a beautiful example they set!"

And, notwithstanding all their restrictions, Turkish women's lives are full of plots and schemes and scandals to a degree that at first sight would seem impossible in a society where there is so little direct communication between the two sexes. In one household, for example, the old mother has made up her mind to prejudice her son against one of his wives, so that another, her favorite, may occupy the chief place. So she tries, among other things, to keep the first one's children in the background and prevent them from being educated or made attractive in their father's eyes, hoping that he may neglect them for those of the second. In another the deserted wife revenges herself upon her rival by throwing a beautiful slave, whom she has sought over land and sea, in the husband's way, hoping to make him leave the second one, as he has her. Another with a genius for matchmaking manages so that one of her own family shall see and fall in love with a certain young girl of her

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acquaintance, and by marrying her himself balk her husband, whom she suspects of having views in the same direction. A number of wealthy women club together to purchase and present a handsome slave to the Sultan or the grand vizier, to further some private scheme they have on hand; other women of good family, by means of secret wirepulling and their influence over powerful relatives, can accomplish almost anything they want—the disgrace of a prominent official, the elevation of a friend, the divorce of this one, the dismissal of that to some distant province; and, although there is so much less social intercourse than among us, they do not know any less about one another's affairs. A woman's reputation for wit or insane jealousy or stupidity or a slanderous tongue extends far beyond the circle of her immediate acquaintances, while a clever speech or one of those plays upon words to which the Turkish language lends itself so admirably flies from mouth to mouth and is repeated far and wide. Births, marriages, circumcisions, fêtes, every little event which occurs in the European colony or the Seraglio, forms the subject of endless talk and gossip: "Have you seen the new bonnet of the French ambassadress?—Who knows anything about the pretty Georgian slave the Validèh Sultan is going to give the Pâdishah on the feast of Great Bairam?—Is it true that Ahmed-Pasha's wife was seen the day before yesterday in European shoes trimmed with silk tassels?—Have the costumes for the 'Bourgeois gentilhomme' they are going to perform in the Seraglio theatre actually come at last?—Mahmûd Effendi's wife has been going for a week past to the Bayezid mosque to pray for twins.—There has been a scandal in connection with such and such a photographer's shop in the Rue de Pera, on account of Ahmed Effendi's having found his wife's picture among the photographs.—Madame Ayscé drinks wine.—Madame Fatima has ordered visiting-cards.—Some one saw Madame Hafiten go in a Frank shop at three o'clock, and she never came out till four."

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The chronicle of petty gossip and malicious tattle flies in and out among those innumerable little yellow and red houses with incredible rapidity, circulates about the court, crosses over to Skutari, proceeds along both banks of the Bosphorus as far as the Black Sea, and not infrequently, finding its way to the large provincial cities, returns from thence with each particular added to and embellished to provoke fresh mirth and gossip in the thousand harems of the great metropolis.

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If you could only meet in Constantinople one of those walking society chronicles with which all European cities are provided, who know everything about everybody and are always quite willing to impart their knowledge, it would be beyond measure amusing and instructive to get him to station himself by your side at the entrance to the Sweet Waters of Europe on some great fête-day and whisper a word or two about every noteworthy person who passed by. There could certainly be no better method of obtaining an insight into Constantinople manners and customs. But, after all, what difference does it make whether we have his help or not? As long as the incidents are perfectly well known, we can imagine the people for ourselves: for my part, it is just as though I stood there looking and listening. The people stream by, and our Turkish gossip points and whispers: "Do you see that lady passing now? She has quarrelled with her husband and gone to Skutari to live: that, you know, is where they all go when they are discontented or have a falling out with their husbands. She is staying with a friend, and will wait until her effendi, who at bottom is really very fond of her, shall go and tell her that the slave who caused the trouble has been gotten rid of, and conduct her home again pacified.—This effendi is in the Foreign Office: he has just done what numbers of others do to avoid being pestered to death with relations-in-law and relations of relations-in-law—that is, married an Arabian slave: his sister is giving her her first lessons in Turkish.—That handsome woman over there is a divorcée. When Effendi So-and-so has succeeded in repudiating one of his four wives, she is to take her place, having been promised it some time ago.—That one just behind her has been divorced twice from the same man, and now she wants to marry him again, he wishing it as well. So she is about, in obedience to the law governing such cases, to marry some one else, whose wife she must be for twenty-four hours, after which the capricious fair one is free to marry her first husband for the third time.—The brunette yonder with the expressive eyes was an Abyssinian slave who was sent by a great lady of Cairo as a present to a great lady of Stambul; on dying the latter left her the post of mistress of the establishment.—That effendi is fifty years old, and has had ten wives, but the old lady near him dressed in green has done better yet, having been the lawful wife of no less than twelve husbands.—There goes a personage who makes her living by purchasing young girls of fourteen or so, and, after teaching them music, singing, dancing, and the manners of good society, resells them at a premium of five hundred per cent.—Now, there goes a very handsome woman whose exact value I happen to know: she is a Circassian bought at Topkhâneh for one hundred and twenty Turkish francs, and resold three years later for a bagatelle of four hundred.—This one near us, who is adjusting her veil, has had a somewhat checkered career. She began as a slave; then she was an odalisque; then she married, was divorced, and married again; at present she is a widow and is looking about for some fresh matrimonial venture.—Do you see that effendi? Well, you could hardly guess what has happened in his household: his wife has fallen in love with a eunuch, and they say that if he does not look out there will be something queer in his coffee one of these days, and she will be free to end her life in peace with the object of her choice; nor will it be the first time that that kind of thing has happened.—There is a merchant who has married his four wives with an eye to business: he keeps one in Constantinople, one in Trebizond, one in Salonika, and one in Alexandria. Thus at the end of each journey he finds a home awaiting him.—There is a handsome young pasha only twenty-four years old: a month ago he was nothing but a poor subaltern in the Imperial Guard, whom the Sultan promoted at a bound, so as to marry him to one of his sisters; but he is not an object of envy to the other men, for it is no joke to be the husband of one of the sultanas: as every one knows, they are as 'jealous as nightingales.' Probably were we to search through the crowd we would find a slave dogging his footsteps now, so as to note and report every one whom he either does or does not look at.—See that slender, graceful figure over there? One need not be very discriminating to know her at once for a flower from the Seraglio. She was one of the Sultan's beauties: a few months ago an official of the War Office, who has managed to ingratiate himself at court, obtained her hand in marriage, and before long he will mount rapidly.—That little five-year-old girl was betrothed to-day to a youngster of eight. The groom elect was taken to see her, and, finding her to his taste, promptly flew into a violent passion because a small boy cousin about a yard high kissed her in his presence.—There goes an old hag who had two sheep killed the day before yesterday in gratitude to Allah for having removed a daughter-in-law whom she hated.—There goes the wife of a friend of mine with her face completely covered and wearing a lilac *ferajeh*: he is a Turk, but she is a Christian and goes

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to church every Sunday: don't speak of it, though, to any one—on her account, not his. The Koran does not forbid such marriages: for one of the faithful to purify himself from the embrace of an unbeliever he has only to wash the face and hands.—Ah! what have we missed! One of the Seraglio carriages has just gone by with the Sultan's third *kaydyn* inside: I recognized it by the rose-colored ribbon around the lackey's neck. She was a present from the pasha of Smyrna, and is said to have the largest eyes and smallest mouth in the empire—a face very much on the order of that of the pretty little *hanum* with an arched nose who scandalized Christian and Mussulman alike the other day by flirting openly with an English artist of my acquaintance. Little wretch! When the two angels, Nekir and Munkir, come to judge her soul, she thinks she will be able to get out of it with the usual fib, saying her eyes were shut at the moment, so she did not see that it was an unbeliever.”

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So then there are faithless wives among the Turks as well? There are, indeed, notwithstanding the jealousy of the effendis and vigilance of the eunuchs; notwithstanding the hundred blows of the whip with which the Koran threatens to punish the guilty one; notwithstanding the fact of the Turkish husbands being all banded together in a sort of society for mutual protection, and that an entirely opposite state of things from that existing in other countries obtains there, everything seeming to conspire tacitly to ensure conjugal felicity. It may almost be affirmed that the “veiled” of Constantinople commit no fewer indiscretions than their unveiled sisters of most Christian cities. Were this not the case, why should the word *Kerata*—which, translated into mythological nomenclature, would read Menelaos—be heard so frequently upon the lips of Kara-Gyuz? But you say, How is it possible? Well, in any number of ways: first, it must be remembered that women are no longer flung into the Bosphorus, either in bags or out of them, and that the bastinado on the soles of the feet, fasting, hair-cloth, enforced silence, and so on are punishments which have become merely idle threats in the mouth of some brutal *Kerata*. The jealous husband still does all in his power to protect his rights, but when he fails he no longer indulges in the violent scenes or summary administrations of justice of former times, it being now much more difficult to keep the knowledge of these little domestic tragedies within the walls of one's own house. Moreover, a dread of being laughed at is one of the influences which have crept in along with other European ideas. The Turk's jealousy, too, is a cold, apathetic, corporeal affair, proceeding more from self-esteem than from love for another, and, although bitter and suspicious, and even vindictive, it is not, in the nature of things, to be compared for vigilance and watchfulness with that which springs from a real and passionate devotion. And, then, who is going to undertake to watch a wife living apart from her husband—that is, in a separate establishment, where the husband does not even go every day? Who is going to follow her every time she goes out through all those intricate windings and twistings of the Galata and Pera streets and lanes and retired parts of Stambul? What is there to prevent any handsome young aide-de-camp of the Sultan from doing what, as a matter of fact, I did see one of them do one day—gallop his horse close by a carriage just at the corner of a street when the eunuch riding ahead had his back turned and the carriage concealed the one behind, and throw a note in the window? And then the evenings during Ramazan when the women can stay out till midnight, and the obliging *Coccone*—she in especial who lives on the border between a Mussulman and a Christian community—is far too hospitable to refuse admittance to a Christian gentleman just because a Mussulman lady happens to be calling on her at the moment. There are, however, no more of those thrilling and horrible incidents which once were so common. Great ladies now-a-days do not emulate the example set by a sultana of the last century, who, when she repented of her kindness toward a youth who had brought the stuffs purchased in the morning to the Seraglio, had him quietly dropped into the Bosphorus. Now everything is as prosaic as possible, and the places of rendezvous are usually those out-of-the-way shops which deal in a little of everything. It is useless to ask why the Turkish authorities do not suppress this license, when one has only to read the regulations issued to the police in regard to the preservation of good behavior during the period of some popular festivity, to see that they make every effort in their power to do so. Most of these regulations bear upon the conduct of women, many of them being addressed directly to them in the shape of admonitions and threats. For example, a woman is forbidden to go to the rear of a shop; she must stay where she can be seen from the street. She is forbidden to make use of the tramways for mere amusement; that is, she must get out at the end of the route, and cannot return immediately by the same line. She is forbidden to make signs to the people who pass her, to stop here, to go there, to linger longer than a certain specified time in a given place; and so on. Any one can easily imagine for himself to what extent such regulations as these can be enforced. And then there is that blessed veil: originally introduced in the interests of the men, it is now used as a means of outwitting them by the women, who first wear a transparent one in order to start a flirtation, and then a thick one in order to carry it on. It is said to be the cause of all manner of curious situations—favored lovers who are still ignorant of their lady-loves' identity; women who hide themselves under others' names in order to carry out some scheme of revenge; practical jokes, unexpected encounters, and scrapes which give rise to any amount of gossip and idle talk.

The place to hear all these things is the bath-house: here every rumor and fresh bit of scandal is discussed and commented upon and remodelled ready to be served up afresh. The bath is, in fact, the great rendezvous of the Turkish women, taking, to some extent, the place of the theatre in their lives: they go there in couples or parties, accompanied by their slaves carrying rugs and cushions, toilet articles, sweetmeats, and sometimes even their luncheon when they propose remaining the entire day. As many as two hundred women are sometimes assembled in those dimly-lighted rooms lined with marbles and musical with running fountains. The picture made by these nymph-like forms flitting about in the airiest of costumes is, according to those European ladies who have seen it, enough to paralyze the fingers of an artist. There are *hanums* whose dazzling skin contrasts strikingly with that of their ebony-colored slaves; handsome matronly figures, which fulfil an old-fashioned Turk's ideal of feminine loveliness; slim young wives with their short hair turned up, looking like little girls; Circassians whose tresses fall like a golden shower below their knees; Turkish women with jet-black hair divided into a hundred or more locks hanging over the breast and shoulders, while others have theirs arranged in any quantity of wavy little tufts, like an enormous wig. One wears an amulet around her neck, another a bit of garlic bound to her head to avert the evil eye; there are savages with tattooed arms, and little ladies of fashion whose tender skin betrays the stays and shoes of modern civilization; while the shoulders of more than one poor slave bear witness to the existence of a eunuch's whip. Everywhere groups are to be seen in an endless variety of graceful abandonment. Some lie stretched out full length upon rugs smoking, others are having their hair

combed out by slaves; some are embroidering, some singing, laughing, chasing one another and throwing water about like children; shrill screams come from the shower-baths; here a party of friends are seated in a circle having a little feast together; towels fly through the air, pitched from one group to another. The less covering they have on their bodies, the more they seem to reveal the childishness of their natures. They are very fond of comparing their good points, measuring their feet, weighing their comparative attractions. One observes, candidly, "I am beautiful;" another, "I am passable." A third wishes she had not such and such a defect, while a fourth says to her friend, "Why, do you know, you are prettier than I?" or one is heard saying to another reproachfully, "Just see how terribly fat Madame Ferideh has gotten; and you telling her to eat rice-balls, when you know she ought to live on dried crabs!" When an amiable *cocona* is present they all crowd around and ply her with questions: "Is it true that you go to balls with your neck bare down to here? What does your effendi think of it? And what do the other men say? How do they hold you when you dance? This way? Really and truly? Well, I will believe such things when I see them!"

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Not only at the bath, but everywhere else and on all possible occasions, they try their best to meet and talk with Europeans, being especially delighted if they can manage to receive one in their own homes. On such occasions a number of friends are asked to meet her, all the women of the establishment are marshalled in force, and a small feast is prepared at which the guest is crammed with fruit and sweetmeats, and seldom allowed to depart without receiving a present of some sort. Of course it is not a mere wish to be hospitable that moves the *hanum* to take this trouble, but curiosity; and so, just so soon as she feels sufficiently at ease with her new friend, she begins to ask questions, inquiring into every minutest detail of European life, examining her costume piece by piece, from the bonnet to the shoes, and will not rest satisfied until, having persuaded the foreigner to accompany her to the bath, she can see for herself how those extraordinary women are made who study all sorts of things, paint, write for publication, work in public offices, ride on horseback, and climb to the tops of lofty mountains. Since the "reform" movement set in, making this sort of intercourse possible, the Turkish women have abandoned some of the more extraordinary ideas they once entertained regarding their European sisters, which made them look upon them with dislike and contempt, and mistrust even their education and breeding, which, moreover, they were quite unable to appreciate. Now it is quite different. They realize their own ignorance, and are ashamed of it, and, very much afraid of seeming childish or ill-mannered, they are consequently far more reserved than formerly, and it is hard to get them to talk in the same frank, ingenuous way they once did: every year they imitate the West more and more in their dress and customs, studying European languages—not from any especial thirst for knowledge, but so as to be more like other people, and to enable them to converse with Christians or introduce French words into their conversation; even those who do not speak French pretend that they understand it at least, and they all love dearly to be called "Madame," sometimes frequenting certain Frankish shops for no other purpose; and Pera, the all-powerful, attracts them as the candle does the moth; their footsteps, their imaginations, and their money, all are irresistibly drawn in that direction, to say nothing of the field it affords for their little shortcomings. Their eager desire to make friends among European women is perfectly natural: they are to them like revelations of another world. They are never weary of hearing descriptions of some grand theatrical performance or ball or state reception—of the doings of women of the world, the brilliant society, adventures during Carnival time, long journeys, and all the other strange features of that wonderful Western life; and these glowing scenes take complete possession of the poor little brains, sick to death of the dull monotony of the harem and gloomy shadow of the garden-walls. Just as Europeans dream of the mystery and dreamy tranquillity of the Orient, they sigh enviously for the varied and feverish life of the West, and would willingly exchange all the splendors of the Bosphorus for a gloomy quarter of Paris. It is really, though, not so much the excitement and variety of society that they want: the feature which they care most about and long for most ardently is the domestic life, the little world of the European house, the circle of devoted friends, the family board surrounded with sons and daughters, the happy, honored old age, that equal sharing of sorrow and joy, the confidences, mutual respect, and sacred memories which can make the union of two lives a beautiful and enviable thing even where there is not passionate love—that sanctuary called "home" to which the heart turns even after a life of wandering and sin, a safe place of refuge even amid the storms and passions of youth, the thought of which comforts and sustains one in times of suffering and misery with a promise of peace in the years to come, like the glory of a clear sunset seen from some dark valley.

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But all those who really take to heart the unfortunate lot of woman in Turkey can find comfort in one undeniable fact—the daily increasing disfavor with which polygamy is regarded there. The Turks themselves have always considered it rather in the light of a permitted abuse than man's natural right. Mohammed says: "He who marries but one wife does well," although he himself married several; and, as a matter of fact, all those Turks who wish to be looked up to as models in the community do have but one; those with more, while they are not blamed exactly, are certainly not commended. Comparatively few Turks openly advocate polygamy, and fewer still approve of it in their own consciences, being, for the most part, fully alive to its injustice and the unfortunate consequences resulting therefrom. There is a party strongly opposed to its practice at all, while the higher officials of state, officers of the army, magistrates, and religious dignitaries—all those, in short, whose social position requires them to adopt a certain respectability and dignity in their mode of life—have but one wife; and this being of necessity the case among the poor and persons of moderate means as well, four-fifths of the entire Mussulman population of Constantinople are no longer polygamists. This, it is true, is largely due to the craze for European manners and customs, while many of them have *odalisques* in addition to the one wife; but the European mania itself is the result of a growing, if confused, idea that some change in the social conditions of Mussulman society is imperatively demanded, while the custom of having odalisques, already openly denounced as a vice, is sure to disappear with the suppression of slavery—an abuse still tolerated—and become merged into that form of corruption common to all European countries. Will a still greater corruption be the result? Let others be the judges; but here are the facts. To transform Turkish into European society the position of woman must be established; that can only be done through the death of polygamy, and polygamy is dying. Possibly were the Sultan to issue a decree suppressing it outright to-morrow, not one dissentient voice would be raised. The edifice has crumbled to pieces, and nothing now remains to be done but to cart away the débris. Already the light of a new day is tingeing the balconies of the harems with rose color. Take heart, beautiful *hanums*! Soon the doors of the selamlık will swing open; the bars will fall from the windows, the

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ferajeh be relegated to the museum of the Great Bazâr, and the word "eunuch" mean no more than a dark memory of your youth. Then the whole world will be free to admire your charms of mind and person. When the "pearls of the Orient" are spoken of in Europe, the words will refer to the charming Mussulman women, beautiful, refined, and witty, not to those useless stones which adorn your foreheads amid the cold, wearisome splendors of the harem. Be of good cheer. Surely your sun is rising at last. For my own part, as I tell my incredulous friends, old as I am, I have not abandoned the hope of one day giving my arm to the wife of a pasha passing through Turin and repeating a few pages of *I Promessi Sposi* to her as we walk together on the banks of the Po.

I was amusing myself with such fancies as these one morning at about five o'clock as I lay half asleep in bed at the Hôtel de Byzance. In a sort of dreamy vision I saw the hill of Superga in the distance, and began to explain to my travelling *hanum* that "that arm of the Lake of Como which extends southward between two continuous chains—" Just here there rose up before me the form of my friend Yunk, candle in hand, clad all in glistening white. "What on earth," said he, "can be going on?" I listened, and, sure enough, there was a confused murmur of voices from the street, hurrying footsteps on the stair, the subdued roar and tumult of mid-day. Running to the window, I peered out, and saw crowds of people all hurrying in the direction of the Golden Horn. I then repaired to the hall, where I succeeded in laying hands on a Greek waiter just as he was shooting by me three steps at a time. "What is it?" I said; "what has happened?" Shaking me off, he merely cried, "Yanghen Vahr! Heavens! did you not hear them calling?" And then, as he disappeared, he shouted, "Look at the top of the Galata Tower!" We ran back to the window, and, craning our necks toward Galata, saw the upper part of the great tower illuminated by a brilliant red light, while a dense black cloud, issuing from some neighboring houses amid a vortex of flames and sparks, spread itself rapidly across the starlit sky. Instantly our thoughts flew to those terrible Constantinople fires of which we had heard so much, especially that fearful one of four years before, and for a moment we were filled with alarm and dismay, but only for a moment—I confess it with shame—for, following immediately upon that first natural impulse, came the selfish eager curiosity of the painter and writer, and a smile—yes, actually that is the disgraceful truth, a smile—broke over our faces which might have served as a model for one of Doré's demons of the infernal regions. Had any one opened our breasts at that moment, they would have been found to contain nothing but an inkstand and a pallet. 73

We flung on our clothes and ran down the Grande Rue de Pera as fast as our legs could carry us, but, happily, our curiosity was not to be gratified on this occasion. By the time we reached the Galata Tower the fire had been pretty nearly extinguished; only two small houses were actually burned; the people were dispersing and the streets were flooded with water from the pumps, and cluttered up with furniture and bedding; men and women, shivering with fright and cold, were going about in their night-clothes, talking and lamenting in a dozen different languages, nothing being distinguishable through the noise and confusion but that shrill note of terror and excitement which marks the near escape from some great danger. Finding that we were too late to see anything, we walked off toward the bridge to console ourselves for our unrighteous disappointment by watching the sun rise, and before long we were rewarded by a sight which went far beyond any fire. 74

The sky was just beginning to grow light beyond the Asiatic hills; Stambul, momentarily disturbed by the report of fire, had sunk back into the solemn stillness of night, and banks and bridges were alike deserted. The entire Golden Horn seemed buried in slumber beneath a covering of light fog. Not a boat moved, not a bird fluttered, not a tree rustled, not a breath of wind could be heard. That huge city, blue, hazy, silent, veiled, seemed to be an atmospheric effect—a sudden cry, a burst of sunlight,—and it would tremble and vanish. Never had it appeared so aërial, so mysterious, so entirely to correspond to the magic city of the Eastern fairy-tale which the traveller comes upon unexpectedly, and on entering finds every one turned to stone, just as they were in the midst of their gay, busy lives when the spell of a wicked genie fell upon them. As we leaned over the bridge, gazing on the scene before us, the fire completely forgotten, we heard all at once, from across the water, a faint, uncertain noise as of persons calling aloud for help; then, as it drew nearer, shrill cries of "Allah! Allah! Allah!" echoing throughout the great empty space around us, and in a moment we beheld a noisy, evil-looking throng pouring toward us across the bridge. 75

"*Tulumbadgi*" (firemen), cried one of the bridge-guards, and we drew to one side and watched them as they rushed by, a horde of swarthy, half-naked savages with bare heads and hairy chests, streaming with perspiration, young and old, big and little, with faces of thieves and cutthroats, four of them bearing a small pump, that looked like a child's bier, on their shoulders, while the rest were armed with long hooked poles, coils of rope, axes, and picks. On they rushed, uttering hoarse cries, panting for breath, with eyes dilated, streaming hair, grim, determined, their rags fluttering in the wind and poisoning the sweet morning air with the close, malodorous smell of wild beasts. Sweeping across the bridge, they finally disappeared in the Rue de Galata, whence fainter and fainter came the cry "Allah! Allah!" till at length profound silence reigned once more. 76

It is impossible to convey the impression made upon my mind by this unexpected and tumultuous irruption in the midst of the solemn, impressive calm of the sleeping city. In an instant's luminous flash I saw distinctly portrayed before me scenes of barbarian invasions, of pillage, murder, and rape, which until then I had never been able to picture to my mind as actual events, and I asked myself if that could be the city that I was familiar with—if this really were the same bridge across which European ambassadors, ladies dressed in Parisian costumes, and venders of French newspapers were wont to cross by day. A moment later and the silence of the Golden Horn was once more broken by the same far-away cry, and another fierce, unruly, panting mob rushed by like a whirlwind, accompanied by the same tumult of hoarse shouts and sinister laughter, again followed by the mournful prolonged cry of "Allah! Allah!" which, dying out, left us once more silent and alone. Not long after another mob, with all the now familiar accompaniments, poured by, and still another, then two more, and finally the madman of Pera, stark naked and half dead with cold, rending the air with his piercing shrieks, and followed, as usual, by a crowd of Turkish ragamuffins. They, like the firemen, were swallowed up in the dark openings of the streets on the Frankish shore, and again profound silence fell upon the mighty city, now gilded by the first rays of morning. 77

Before long the sun rose, and simultaneously with it the muezzins appeared upon the various minarets; then the *kâiks* started into life, the harbor awoke; people began to cross the bridge, and soon we could hear on all sides the dull roar of the city's daily life as we slowly retraced our steps toward Pera. But so deep was the impression made upon us by that sight—the sleeping city, the whitening heavens, the savage hordes—that to this day we never meet without recalling it, and always with the selfsame thrill, half of wonder, half of fear, as though we had seen in a vision the Stambul of other days or dreamed it while under the mystic influence of *hascisc*. 78

And so I missed seeing a fire in Constantinople, but if I did not actually see the one that destroyed Pera in 1870, I have heard it described so often by eye-witnesses, and have collected such full and accurate details, that I may be said to have seen it with the eyes of my mind, and, it may be, can give as correct an account of what took place as though I had really been present in the flesh.



Turkish Firemen.

The fire started in a little house in the Rue Feridee in Pera on the fifth day of June—that is, in the season when the greater part of the well-to-do population of Pera is out of town, spending the summer in their country-houses on the Bosphorus—and at one o'clock, just when the entire community, European as well, is shut up indoors taking the mid-day siesta. The only occupant of the house in the Rue Feridee was an old female servant—the family having that very day gone to the country—who, as soon as she discovered the fire, rushed into the street and began to run, yelling “Fire!” at the top of her lungs. People at once poured out of the neighboring houses with buckets and little hand-pumps, the idiotic law prohibiting persons from extinguishing a fire until the Serasker officials have arrived upon the scene having already fallen into disuse, and flew of course to the nearest fountain to have them filled. Now, the Pera fountains are only open at certain hours of the day, when the water-carriers who draw the supply for the families of the vicinity can have access to them; once the distribution is over, they are closed and locked, the keys being placed in charge of an official with orders not to give them up “except on receipt of a notice from the authorities.” At this very moment there lounged beside this particular fountain a member of the Turkish municipal guard of Pera, with the keys in his pocket, looking impassively on at the fire; the crowd surrounded him, imploring him in excited tones to unlock the fountain; but this he flatly refused to do, on the ground that he had received no orders to that effect. They pressed closer, grew threatening, and finally laid forcible hands upon him, on which he resisted, defending himself to the best of his ability and declaring that they should never get the key from him alive. In the mean time the flames had made great headway; the original house was completely destroyed, and those next to it were burning merrily. News of the fire had spread rapidly from quarter to quarter; the watchmen on the summits of the Galata and Serasker towers had hoisted the red balloons used in the day-time as fire-signals. All the city guards were running through the streets, striking the pavement with their long staves and raising the dreaded cry, “Yanghen Vahr!” (There is a fire), in response to which was heard the hollow beating of a thousand drums as all the barracks took the alarm. Then three guns fired from Topkhâneh announced the news to every quarter of the great city, from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmora, and at that sound the Seraskerat, the Seraglio, the foreign embassies, all Pera, all Galata, were thrown into an uproar, and in a short space of time the minister of war, accompanied by a crowd of officials, appeared in the Rue Feridee, shortly followed by a troop of firemen eager for the fray. But, as is almost always the case, their first efforts proved wholly unavailing. The narrowness of the streets interfered with their movements; the pumps would not work; the water-supply was both insufficient and distant, while the undisciplined rabble of firemen found it more to their interest to add to rather than allay the general disorder, under cover of which they were able to appropriate many stray pieces of property; and in addition to everything else it was found that an Armenian festival, which was being celebrated at Beikos, had drawn almost all the porters thither, so that hardly any were to be found to transport the contents of the burning houses to places of safety. It must be borne in mind that wooden houses were much more generally the rule than in Constantinople than at present, even those whose walls were of stone or brick being surmounted by a flimsy roof but seldom protected by tiles, and consequently very easily ignited. On this occasion there was not even the advantage of a population of Mussulmans; apathetic and fatalistic as they are, even fire does not arouse them to any great excitement, and consequently, although of little or no help so far as putting it out is concerned, they at least do not interfere by their own ill-directed efforts with what is being done by others. Here the people were almost all Christians, who immediately lost their heads: hardly had the fire spread beyond the first few houses when the entire neighborhood became a scene of the wildest, most indescribable confusion: furniture was thrown recklessly out of upper windows; shrieks and lamentations rent the air; streets were blocked up, and a general state of panic ensued, upon which neither threats nor force availed to make the smallest impression. Hardly one hour had elapsed from the time when the fire first broke

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out before the Rue Feridee was in flames from one end to the other. Officials and firemen beat a hasty retreat in all directions, sometimes abandoning the bodies of the dead and injured in their flight, and all hope vanished of stamping the fire out at its birth. Most unfortunately, a high wind was blowing, and this carried the flames from the burning buildings in horizontal sheets across the roofs of the neighboring houses, like flapping tents of fire, so that they all caught from above as though a volcano were being discharged upon them. In this way the conflagration spread with fearful rapidity, and many families who were still assembled in their homes, feeling that they were perfectly secure for some time yet, and would be able to remove at least a part of their belongings, were first made aware of their danger by having the roof fall in, and barely had time to escape with their lives. House after house caught as though smeared with pitch, and instantly out of each of the innumerable little windows there poured a torrent of flame, long winding sheets, curling and swaying from side to side like great fiery serpents hungry for their prey, reaching down and licking the very stones as though in search of human victims. The fire did not seem to run, but rather fly, and, instead of enveloping the objects in its path, flowed over them like an angry tide. From the Rue Feridee it swept furiously down the Rue Tarla-Bashi, then turned back to pour like a torrent through the Rue de Misc and enfold the entire quarter of Agha-Dgiami as though it had been a forest of dead trees; then the Rue Sakes-Agatshe, then that of Kalindgi-Kuluk, and then street after street with terrifying rapidity until the entire incline of Yeni-Sheir was wrapped in flames; and these met and mingled with the blazing whirlwind which swept, roaring and bellowing, down the Grande Rue de Pera. It was not even as though there had been a thousand disconnected fires to extinguish, a thousand disorganized enemies to vanquish, but rather as though each fresh conflagration were the well-aimed stroke of some master mind controlling and directing all his forces, and having no less object in view than the destruction of the entire city, not one corner of which was to be allowed to escape. The narrow streets were like so many streams of lava, which would meet and swell into rivers or suddenly spread out into fiery lakes, utterly incapable of being stopped or controlled by any one. At the end of three hours half of Pera was in flames; a thousand columns of smoke, red, blue, white, and black, swept over the houses, lightly grazing the roofs, and extending as far as the eye could reach along the hillsides, obscuring and transforming with sinister effect the vast outskirts on the Golden Horn. In all directions could be seen furious whirlwinds of cinders and sparks, while against the houses still standing in the lower quarters of the city the wind beat showers of sparks and bits of charred wood, blowing them about like so much hail. In the burning quarters the streets were simply nothing less than huge furnaces, covered on top with a thick awning of solid flame, and constantly fed with pine wood from the Black Sea used for beams, the light inflammable rafters of *ciardak*, balconies and wooden minarets from the smaller mosques, all of which, falling in with a crackling, splintering noise, sounded as though they were being torn in pieces by an earthquake. Down those streets which were still passable flying forms were seen of mounted lancers, illuminated by what might have been the light of the infernal regions, as they galloped furiously in all directions, carrying the orders of the Seraskerat; Seraglio officials with bare heads and faces blackened with smoke; stray horses whose riders had met with some accident; files of porters laden with all manner of household goods; troops of howling dogs; gangs of homeless fugitives stumbling and falling in their mad flight down the steep inclines, blindly treading down the dead and injured, scaling the heaps of débris, and disappearing finally amid fire and smoke like legions of the damned. Once, at the opening of a burning street, the mounted figure of Sultan Abdul-Aziz appeared for an instant, surrounded by his court, pale as a ghost, staring with dilated eyes at the flames, as though repeating to himself the memorable words of Selim I.: "This is the fiery breath of my victims destined to consume my capital, my seraglio, my very self!" A moment later he had disappeared amid a cloud of smoke and cinders, followed by his courtiers.



Water Seller.

All of the army stationed at Constantinople, in addition to the innumerable brigades of firemen, were pressed into service, being formed into long chains and immense semicircles, which, under the direction of the viziers, officials of the court, pashas, and ulemas, endeavored to surround whole quarters, or, by concentrating their efforts upon some special spot, check the advance of the fire in that direction. Row after row of buildings would fall in the space of a few minutes; the roofs swarmed with intrepid men waging the unequal conflict at close quarters, and ever and anon falling into the yawning crater at their feet, only to be succeeded by others, as when some daring attack is making upon a powerful enemy, sending up hoarse cries and waving their singed fezzes in the midst of the smoke and flames. But, notwithstanding all these efforts, the fire still advanced triumphant, lit up the thousand streams of water directed against it, and leaped at a bound across the gardens, open squares, small cemeteries, and great stone buildings which lay in its path, forcing back soldiers, firemen, and citizens on all sides, like an army in retreat, and beating them about the shoulders as with red-hot muskets. Yet even in all that frightful panic and confusion there were those who preserved their self-possession sufficiently to perform noble acts of heroism and devotion. White-veiled Sisters of Charity could be seen in the midst of blazing ruins leaning over the prostrate forms of the dying; Turks threw themselves into the flames and reappeared bearing in their scorched and blackened arms the bodies of Christian children; other Mussulmans were known to have stood, apparently unmoved, with folded arms watching a burning house, and, while the families of Christians around them, utterly beside themselves with fright, filled the air with useless lamentations, would coldly offer a reward of a hundred Turkish francs to any one who would rescue a European boy who had failed to escape with the rest; and others, again, who made it their business to look after the injured children whom they found in the streets, binding up their wounds with strips torn from their own turbans, and seeing that they were restored to their parents; and still others who generously threw open their doors to the half-naked fugitives; while more than one was seen to set an example of courage and indifference to the things of this world by seating himself upon a rug in front of his burning domicile, calmly smoking a narghileh, and only moving farther off as the flames advanced.

But neither courage nor indifference, real or assumed, availed to check that fiery tempest. Now and then, with some temporary dying down of the wind, it would seem to abate a little of its fury, but not for long: the wind rising again with renewed violence, the flames, which had hardly begun to subside, would burst forth afresh, shooting out their sharp points like well-directed arrows, and accompanied by a deep, rumbling roar, broken from time to time by sharp explosions from the petroleum shops or gas in the dwellings, where the pipes were transformed into streams of molten lead; or when roofs would suddenly fall as though borne down by an avalanche; or a grove of cypress trees all at once begin to twist and writhe, and then burst into flame, sending down showers of burning resin; or some group of old wooden houses explode simultaneously like rockets, and emit such a fury of flame that it would seem as though the bellows of a thousand workshops were being turned upon them. It was a scene of ruin and wholesale destruction and disaster such as might result from fire, flood, earthquake, and the sacking of the city by a victorious army, all going on at once. No one had ever seen or imagined such horrors, and the effect upon the whole population was as though it had gone stark mad. In the streets of Pera the wildest confusion reigned, such noise and panic as are found on the deck of a vessel about to founder. There, in the midst of heaps of overturned furniture, beneath the flashing blades of the officers' swords, the knocks and blows of porters and water-carriers, the hoofs of the pashas' horses, gangs of firemen

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advancing at a dead run, overturning and treading down all they came in contact with,—were French, Italian, Greek, and Armenian families, rich and poor, old and young, men, women, and children, lost, distraught, groping blindly about in search of missing relatives, filling the air with shrieks and lamentations, choked with smoke and blinded with sparks; or a foreign ambassador followed by a troop of servants laden with books and valuable documents; or monks holding the crucifix aloft above the heads of the terrified throng; groups of Turkish women, their arms filled with costly objects from the harem; processions of men bending beneath the spoils of mosque and school, church or theatre; and from time to time a suffocating cloud of smoke, blown down by some sudden gust, would wrap everything in temporary darkness and increase still more the general terror and confusion.

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An added feature of the horrors of that fearful time were the armies of thieves and desperadoes, who, having assembled, in obedience to some secret code of signals in use among them, from every hole and den in Constantinople, arrayed themselves in the guise of porters, soldiers, or respectable citizens, and then, boldly entering houses on pretence of lending assistance, made off with armsful of plunder: sometimes these gentry, being detected, would be pursued as they fled with their booty to Kassim Pasha or Tataola by parties of soldiers, and on being overtaken and surrounded pitched battles would ensue.

Firemen, porters, and water-carriers, reinforced by their numerous families and relatives, organized into bands, and before the very eyes of the distracted owners would all at once strike for higher wages, utterly declining to go on working unless their pay were doubled or quadrupled. Furniture and household goods heaped in the narrow streets and guarded by the families who owned them would be captured by crews of armed plunderers, the owners driven away, and the defences strengthened to afford resistance against other bands of blackguards. Troops of fugitives escaping with some of their personal property, encountering similar parties in some narrow thoroughfare, would dispute the right of way fiercely, desperately, abandoning in their mad flight those who were overthrown or injured in the onslaught.

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But by the time the fire had raged for four hours it had gained such headway that few gave further thought to their property: to escape alive was the most that could be hoped for; two-thirds of Pera were in flames, and the fire had now reached such volume, and was advancing in so many different directions at once, that a whole quarter would suddenly be surrounded and cut off by a girdle of flame before the inhabitants had become aware of its approach. Hundreds of terrified creatures, flying in disorder up some narrow, steep, winding street, intent only on escaping from the hungry fiend in their rear, would at some sudden turn be confronted by a whirlwind of smoke and flame bearing relentlessly down upon them, and turn shrieking back to seek wildly for some other road of escape; entire families, one numbering twenty-two persons, were all at once surrounded, suffocated, burned, charred; some, beside themselves with terror, would take refuge in cellars, where they were soon choked to death; others threw themselves into wells and cisterns, climbed trees, or, after searching vainly through their houses for some spot or corner where they might hope for protection, suddenly losing their heads, would be seen to rush out and fling themselves voluntarily into the flames. Looking down the hillsides of Pera from some high point, families could be seen assembled upon their roofs, who, kneeling in close groups and with outstretched arms in the centre of an ever-narrowing circle of flame, invoked that aid from Heaven which man was powerless to give; herds of frantic people, rushing from the heights of Pera to scatter themselves throughout Galata, Topkhâneh, Fundukli, and the cemeteries in the lower parts of the town, ever running farther and farther, looking for still more distant and protected spots in which to hide themselves from the enemy, whom they imagined to be still pursuing them; children streaming with blood; wild-looking women, with singed hair and torn flesh, bearing dead or dying infants in their arms; men with faces and limbs frightfully burned, who writhed on the ground in their agony; old people sobbing like children; men of wealth reduced in the course of a few moments to penury, who beat their heads against the stones; youths yelling like maniacs, who fell unconscious on the banks of the Golden Horn, spent with excitement and horror; families bearing the blackened corpses of their dead; poor creatures, driven crazy by the sights around them, who hurried along dragging chairs after them attached to strings, or clasped bits of rags or broken pottery to their bosoms as though they were of priceless value, at the same time giving vent to loud lamentations or bursts of insane laughter.

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And still from the lower quarters of Galata, from the arsenals of Tersane and Topkhâneh, from barrack, mosque, and imperial palace, there swarmed fresh battalions of *nizam*, crews of robbers, bands of firemen, shouting "*Yanghen Vahr*" or "*Allah*," advancing as to an attack, scaling the hills under the steady rain of sparks and cinders and burning brands, and through streets filled with smouldering débris, and with them generals, dervishes, messengers from the court, families who had turned back to search for missing members, blackguards and heroes, misery, crime, and charity,—all mingled together in a confused, inextricable torrent which swept through the narrow streets with a roar like that of the ocean in a storm, its surface lighted up with the crimson glare of that mighty furnace.

And just across from this region of torment lay Stambul, peaceful, smiling, and serene as ever, while on the other side the tranquil beauties of the Asiatic shore were mirrored in the waters of the Bosphorus, on whose unmoved bosom the ships rode peacefully at anchor. Enormous crowds of people, blackening the banks for miles, stood silent and impassive witnesses of the horrible sight; the sing-song voice of the muezzin was heard as usual announcing from every minaret the setting of the sun; flocks of birds soared lazily above the mosques on the Seven Hills; and venerable Turks, seated in the shade of plane trees on the verdant heights of Skutari, murmured placidly to themselves, "And so the final hour of the City of the Sultans has sounded? That day which was foretold has come: let Allah's will be done.—So be it, so be it!"

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Happily, with nightfall came the beginning of the end. At seven o'clock the last building took fire—the English embassy—and just after that, the wind suddenly dying down, the fire was either extinguished or went out of its own accord. It had been burning six hours, and in that time two-thirds of Pera were reduced to ashes, nine thousand houses destroyed, and two thousand lives lost.

Next to the famous fire of 1756, which demolished, in the reign of Osman III. eighty thousand houses and wiped out two-thirds of Stambul, no such disaster as this has ever visited the city, nor from the time Constantinople was conquered up to the present day has any one fire been the cause of so much loss of life.

On the following day Pera presented a spectacle which, if less terrifying, was in no sense less heart*-rending, than that during the actual progress of the fire. Wherever the flames had passed there was nothing to be seen but grim wastes broken only by the naked outlines of great hills; unfamiliar views were opened up; broad sheets of light poured down upon vast open spaces covered with ashes, while here and there the melancholy column of a blackened and half-ruined chimney stood like a gravestone marking the site of a desolated hearth. Whole quarters had disappeared as completely as though they had been Bedouin encampments swept away by a cyclone. Through many streets, which could only be traced by the double line of black, smoking ruins, thousands of the homeless wandered up and down, ragged and dishevelled, imploring aid from the hurrying throng of soldiers and doctors, Sisters of Charity, and priests of every religion, while employés of all ranks distributed the food and money or directed the placing of the mattresses, bedding, and army tents issued by order of the government for the use of the entirely destitute. The heights of Tataola and the great Armenian cemetery swarmed with dense crowds of persons formed into a huge encampment; everywhere one stumbled upon piles of household goods, whose owners, utterly exhausted with what they had been through, lay stretched out upon them. The vast Galata cemetery looked like a bazâr which had been turned upside down: piled along the walks and among the tombs was a bewildering mass of household stuff—divans, pillows, bedding, pianos, books, pictures, broken carriages; the gilded sedan chair of an ambassadress; parrot-cages out of the harems; and horses who had sustained injuries tied to the cypress trees,—all watched over by porters and servants blackened with smoke and dropping with fatigue. The dregs and offscourings of the city employed themselves in searching through the ruins for stray valuables, locks off the doors, nails, and bits of iron, avoiding the outstretched forms of soldiers and firemen, who, unable to hold out any longer against sleep and fatigue, had dropped wherever they might happen to be. Here and there persons might be seen endeavoring by the aid of pieces of board and strips of canvas to erect temporary places of shelter above their ruined dwellings; groups of people kneeling before the blackened altar of some roofless church; and men and women passing in review the long lines of charred and disfigured bodies, who, finally recognizing in some pitiful blackened heap the object of their search, would burst into shuddering sobs and wails of despair, while others would suddenly be seen to drop as though they had been shot from their places in some long procession of biers and litters; and over all clouds of dust and smoke and the dense, suffocating atmosphere heavy with the sickening smell of charred human flesh. Now and then the men working with picks and shovels among the ruins would dislodge showers of ashes and cinders upon the close, silent, awe-stricken crowds collected from all parts of Stambul, above whose heads would appear groups of consuls and ambassadors, drawn up at the corners of the streets and gazing in pale-faced consternation at the surrounding ruin.

And yet, overpowering as this disaster appeared at the time, as is always the case in Oriental countries, not many months had elapsed before it was completely forgotten. When I visited Constantinople four years later no traces of it were to be seen except certain tracts of bare ground at the far end of Pera, below the heights of Tataola, and the fire was referred to by the inhabitants as something which had occurred in the remote past. For some little time—that is, as long as the ruins were still warm—the papers were filled with demands that the government should be made to take some precautions against a recurrence of the same thing. They suggested the reorganization of the fire department, the purchase of new pumps, increase of the water-supply, and that regulations should be enacted controlling the manner in which houses were to be built in the future; but, finding that the government turned a deaf ear to these proposals, the Europeans soon ceased to make them, and continued to live in the Turkish fashion; that is, trusting a little to the good God and a little to good luck.

And so, as nothing or next to nothing has been done to improve the conditions, we may assume pretty confidently that the fire of 1870 was not the last of those great conflagrations which, "it is written," are in the course of every few years or so to devastate the City of the Sultans. It is true that many of the houses in Pera are now built of masonry, but most of these are wretchedly constructed by architects without either knowledge or experience, sometimes by any one who happens to come along; and, the authorities not attempting to exercise any sort of supervision in the matter, it is not unusual for them to fall down before being completed, while those which remain standing are not in any way fitted to resist fire. Water, too, is always scarce, especially in Pera, and is everywhere subjected to the most shameful monopoly, and, being mainly derived from the reservoirs built by the Romans in the village of Belgrâd, the supply fails altogether unless abundant rains fall in both spring and autumn; then the rich pay its weight in gold to get it, while the poor people drink mud. The fire-brigade might be likened more to an army of malefactors than an organized corps of employés: it is composed of men of every nationality, accountable, more in name than in actual fact, to the Seraskerat, from which they receive nothing but a ration of bread—untaught, undisciplined, dishonest, feared and dreaded by the people quite as much as the flames which they do not know how to extinguish, and suspected, not without cause, of hoping for fires as affording opportunities for pillage. As for the pumps, while there seems to be plenty of them, and the Turks pride themselves upon these wonderful machines, they are in reality absurd playthings, holding about a dozen quarts of water, which they throw out in gentle little rivulets more suitable for watering flower-beds than extinguishing fires.



Aqueduct of Valens.

And yet the inhabitants of Constantinople might consider themselves fortunate were these the only evils existing in this connection. There is doubtless no foundation for the reports—credited, however, by some—that the government instigates many of the fires with a view to widening the streets: the dangers and inconveniences of such a method would be too great in comparison with the advantages; nor does it now happen, as it has sometimes in the past, that the “opposition” sets fire to a certain quarter in order to intimidate the sultans, or the army to enforce its demands for higher pay; but the general suspicion that many fires are started deliberately by persons who have something to gain thereby has but too often been verified, and hence the people of Constantinople live in a continual state of dread. They are afraid of the water-carriers, porters, architects, lumber- and lime-merchants, and, more than all the rest, of their servants, who are the evil geniuses of Constantinople: these people are all in league with organized bands of thieves, they in turn being in communication with various other secret organizations which manage the sale of every kind of stolen property and facilitate the commission of all manner of crimes, while the local police treat them all alike with a leniency which savors strongly of complicity. No incendiary was ever known to be punished, and thieves are rarely arraigned after a fire; more rarely still are the stolen goods restored to their rightful owners. Moreover, Constantinople being a rendezvous for miscreants from all over the world, the course of justice is constantly being blocked by international complications: consuls demand the surrender of criminals of their own countries; trials drag on for centuries; and so many delinquents escape altogether that the fear of punishment as a restraining influence upon the criminal class is almost *nil*, and they have come to look upon the plundering of houses during a fire much in the light of a privilege tacitly acknowledged by the authorities to be theirs, just as soldiers were formerly allowed to sack and plunder a vanquished city. And so the word “Fire” still means for the inhabitants of Constantinople “every misfortune,” and the cry *Yanghen Vahr* is charged with a dread meaning, terrible, fateful, carrying with it dismay—a cry at which the entire city is moved to its very depths, and pours forth as at the announcement of a scourge from God. And who can tell how often yet the great metropolis is doomed to fall before the flames and rise again ere European civilization shall have planted its triumphant ensign upon the imperial palace of Dolmabâghcheh?

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In the old days, when a fire broke out in Constantinople, if the Sultan happened to be at that moment in the harem, news of the disaster was sent to him in the person of an odalisque dressed in scarlet from head to foot, with orders to present herself before him wherever he might be, were it even in the embraces of the favorite. She had only to appear upon the threshold: the flaming color of her attire would do the rest and be the mute announcement of her errand. Will any one believe that among all the striking and terrible pictures which my mind conjures up at the thought of a Constantinople fire the figure of that odalisque moves my artistic sense the most, and makes me long to be a painter that I might depict the scene as it rises before me? At all events, I shall go on begging every artist I meet to do it for me, until I come across one whose fancy will be struck with the idea, and who will earn my undying gratitude. The picture will represent an apartment in the imperial harem flooded with soft light. Seated upon a broad divan by the side of a fair young pearl-bedecked Circassian, Selim I., the mighty Sultan, suddenly disengages himself from the arms of his companion, and fixes his great black eyes upon the scarlet-clad odalisque standing in the doorway, mute, erect, immovable as a statue, one hand holding back the curtain beyond which is seen the open terrace, and in the blue distance the great smoking city, while her pallid, terror-stricken face would seem to say, “King of kings, Allah summons you to go to the relief of your unhappy people.”

I determined to make the circuit of the ancient walls of Stambul entirely alone, and this plan I recommend to all Italians visiting Constantinople, as the sight of those majestic and beautiful ruins cannot make a profound and lasting impression upon the mind unless one is altogether intent upon receiving it and can freely follow his own train of thought. It is a question of tramping about fifteen Italian miles through deserted streets and exposed to the full blaze of the sun. "Very possibly," said I to my friend, "when I have gone halfway I shall be seized with such a desperate attack of loneliness that I will invoke you like one of the saints, but, all the same, I want to go by myself." And so, having first lightened my purse for fear some suburban pick-pocket might do it for me, and thrown something to the "eager dogs within," so that I might say to myself later on, "Be still, then, accursed wolf!" I set forth in the direction of the Validèh Sultan bridge at eight in the morning, beneath a sky washed clean and bright by a shower which had fallen during the night.

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My plan was to leave Stambul by the gate in the Blachernæ, to follow the line of the walls from the Golden Horn to the Castle of the Seven Towers, and to return along the shore of the Sea of Marmora, thus completing the triangle of the Mussulman city.

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Crossing the bridge, I turned to the right and plunged into that vast district known as *Istambul disciaré*, or Outer Stambul, a long strip of the city shut in between the walls and the harbor, composed of miserable little houses and wood and oil-shops, and more than once destroyed by fire; flights of stairs lead from the banks down to little inlets crowded with boats and shipping, and in the space between these on the one hand, and the narrow lanes and alleyways of the city on the other, there is a constant passing back and forth of porters, asses, and camels, the same mixture of strange people and dirty things which, as well as the unintelligible clamor of tongues, is to be found in those wonderful ports of the Chinese and Indian seas where the people and merchandise of two hemispheres meet and mingle. Those walls which are still standing on this side are five times a man's height, castellated, strengthened every hundred paces by small quadrangular towers, and in many places falling into ruins. They are, from an historic or artistic standpoint, however, the least noteworthy of any of the fortifications of Stambul.

Traversing the Greek quarters, I skirted the bank among the various pastry-cook, fruit, and fritter stalls, passing by groups of handsome Greek sailors standing in the attitudes of their own ancient gods around some cook carrying on his avocation in the open; then, making a circuit around the vast Ghetto of Balata and threading the silent Blachernæ quarter, I finally quitted the city by the gate called *Egri Kapou*, not far from the banks of the Golden Horn. While all this may be said in a few words, to do it requires an hour and a half, now mounting, now descending, passing around lakes of mud and over heaps of stones, through an endless maze of narrow streets and dark passage-ways, across vast desolate wastes, with nothing to guide you but the points on the minarets of the Selim mosque: at a certain place you begin to notice fewer and fewer European faces and costumes; then European houses disappear, then pavements, then the signs on the shops, then names on the streets, then every indication of labor; and the farther you go the more surly the dogs become, the more impudently do the Turkish ragamuffins stare you in the eye, and the common women take pains to conceal their faces; until at last you find yourself in the heart of barbarous Asia, and, instead of a two hours' walk, you seem to have made a two days' journey.

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On issuing from the *Egri Kapou* I turned to the left, and came quite unexpectedly upon a long stretch of those famous walls which formed Stambul's defences upon the land side. Three years have elapsed since that moment, but to this day I can never recall it without a fresh sensation of wonder. There is no other spot in the East, so far as I know, which presents so vividly before the mind the memories of the past, the grandeur of human achievement, the majesty of power, the glory of the centuries, the mystery of decay, and the beauties of nature. You are filled with awe and terror and admiration at this sight, worthy of a canto of Homer, and involuntarily uncover, exclaiming "All honor!" as though called upon to salute the mutilated ranks of some mighty band of heroes.

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The line of walls and lofty towers extends as far as the eye can reach, rising and falling according to the natural character of the land, at some points seeming to sink into the earth, and at others to crown the summit of a mountain: it is diversified by an endless variety of color, and ruin in every stage of advancement, in some places nearly black, in others almost as yellow as gold, and overgrown by a rich, deep-green vegetation, which, scaling the walls to their very summits, falls back in waving garlands from the battlements and loopholes, rears itself in feathery plumes upon the tops of the towers, and overflows in green cascades from curtain and crumbling breach, its billowy waves filling the moat and lapping the very roadside.

There are three lines of fortifications, forming as it were three gigantic ruined steps. The inner one, which is the highest, is strengthened at short regular intervals by massive square towers; that in the middle by round ones; the outer wall, much lower than the others, is protected by a deep, wide moat, formerly filled with water drawn from the Golden Horn and Sea of Marmora, and now choked with grass and shrubbery. These walls, as we see them now, are almost precisely as they were the day after the conquest of Constantinople. The restorations made by Muhammad and Bayezid II. amount to very little. There can be still seen the breaches made by Orban's powerful guns, the marks left by the catapults and battering-rams, the great rents where mines were fired, and all the various indications which mark those spots where the attack was most furious, the defence most desperate. Almost all the round towers of the middle wall are ruined from base to summit, and while those of the inner wall are most of them still standing, they are broken at the corners, dismantled, dwindling off to points at the top, like huge tree-trunks sharpened at the end with blows from some giant axe, or else cracked from top to bottom or hollowed out at the base like cliffs worn by the sea-waves. Great masses of masonry detached from the curtains have rolled down upon the platforms of the middle and outer walls and choke up the moat. Little footpaths wind in and out amid the heaps of stones and thick underbrush, lost to view in the deep shadows of the overhanging vegetation between huge stones and bare patches of earth torn up by the falling of some heavy mass. Each portion of walls between any two towers comprises in itself a complete and wonderful example of ruins and of vegetation, full of power and majesty, wild, colossal, forbidding, and

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adorned with a melancholy and imposing beauty which impels a feeling of reverence. One seems to be looking at the ruins of an endless chain of feudal castles, or of one of those mighty girdles of wall which encircled the fabulous empires of Eastern Asia. Constantinople of to-day disappears, and before us rises the City of the Constantines; we breathe the air of the fifteenth century, and as our thoughts become more and more centred upon the day of her tremendous fall, we find ourselves for a few moments dazed, bewildered, and turned, as it were, to stone.

The Egri Kapou through which I had come is identical with the famous Charsian gate used by Justinian when he made his triumphal entry into the city, and later by Alexius Comnenus when he seized the throne: before it lies a Mussulman cemetery, and here, during the early days of the siege, were placed the gigantic cannon of Orbano, which kept four hundred artillerymen employed and required a hundred oxen to move. The gate was defended by Teodoro di Caristo and Giovanni Greant against the attacks of the left wing of the Turkish army, which reached clear to the Golden Horn. From this point to the Sea of Marmora there are no longer any hamlets, not so much as a group of houses, and, as the road consequently runs between the walls and the open country, there is nothing whatever to distract one's thoughts from the mighty ruins themselves. Setting forth on the road, I walked for some time between two cemeteries, a Christian one on my left, lying directly beneath the walls, and an enormous Mussulman one on my right, shaded by a forest of cypress trees; overhead the sun poured down in straight, direct rays; before me stretched the highway, white, solitary, and rising by a gentle incline, until on the summit of the opposite heights it divided the limpid horizon with a sharp, clear-cut line. On one hand tower succeeded tower, on the other tombstone followed tombstone; not a sound broke the stillness save my own measured tread and the occasional rustle of a lizard in the grass by the roadside. After walking thus for some distance, I suddenly found myself opposite a beautiful square gateway surmounted by a great arch in an excellent state of preservation, and flanked by two massive octagonal towers. This was the Adrianopolis Gate, the Polyandron of the Greeks, which was made the principal point of attack when the Avars besieged Constantinople during the reign of Heraclius in 625. During the attack under Muhammad II. it was defended by the brothers Paoli and Antonino Troilo Bochiardi, and later on was the gate through which the Turks made their victorious exits and entries. Neither ahead nor about me was there a living soul to be seen: all at once a couple of Turkish cavalymen came through the gate and disappeared down the Adrianopolis road at a full gallop, enveloped in a thick cloud of dust, after which everything returned to the same death-like stillness. Following their lead, I too took the Adrianopolis road, and, turning my back for a time upon the walls, descended into the valley of the Lycus, climbed the opposite ascent, and found myself looking out over the vast undulating and arid plain of Dahud-Pasha, where, during the siege of Constantinople, Muhammad II. established his head-quarters. Here I stood for some time, shading my eyes with my hand and searching about as if expecting to find some traces still of the imperial camp to aid me in picturing to myself the strange and imposing spectacle which that spot must have presented toward the close of the spring of 1453. Just here the life of all that mighty army flowed back as to its heart, clasping in its fatal embrace the great dying metropolis; from this point those orders were issued which fell on all sides like thunderbolts, set in motion the arms of a hundred thousand workmen, directed the overland transportation of two hundred galleys^A from the Bay of Beshiktash to the bay of Kassim-Pasha, thrust armies of Armenian miners into the bowels of the earth, despatched heralds in all directions whose flags announced the hour of attack, and in the time it would take to tell the beads of a tespi bent three hundred thousand bows and caused three hundred thousand cimeters to flash in the air. Here the trembling envoys of Constantine came face to face with their Genoese countrymen from Galata selling oil with which to grease Orbano's mighty cannon, and Mussulman scouts stationed upon the banks of the Sea of Marmora in order that they might give warning when the European fleet should appear upon the horizon bringing the last relief of Christianity to the last defences of the Constantines. There too were to be found a swarm of renegade Christians, Asiatic adventurers, old sheikhs, and lean, ragged dervishes, wasted away by long marches, going restlessly back and forth among the tents of the fourteen thousand Janissaries; and interminable troops of horse already harnessed, long files of camels standing motionless in the midst of catapults and battering-rams, and cannons lying overturned where they had exploded, and great pyramids of huge granite balls, among which wound long processions of begrimed and blackened soldiers bearing two by two from the neighborhood of the walls to the open country beyond the mutilated bodies of the dead and groaning forms of the wounded; while over all there hung a perpetual cloud of smoke.

^A There were eighty galleys, according to Ducas.—TRANS.



Mosque of the Chora.

In the centre of the Janissaries' camp rose the many-colored tents of the court, and high above them all the crimson pavilion of Muhammad II. At daybreak he would appear in his doorway pale from the anxious vigil of the night, wearing a great turban to which was affixed a yellow plume, and a long blood-colored caftan. There he would stand, his eagle glance fixed upon the still unconquered city lying before him, one hand toying with his thick black beard, while with the other he fingered uneasily the silver handle of his curved dagger: around him would be gathered a group of his officers—Orbano, inventor of that huge cannon which was destined before many days to explode and scatter his own bones upon the esplanade of the Hippodrome; Admiral Balta-Ogli, already filled with uneasy presentiments concerning his future and the disgrace which the golden sceptre of his mighty lord was to bring about his ears; the hardy governor of the Epepolin, that great movable castle, surmounted by a tower and braced with iron, which was finally burned to the ground in front of the gate of San Romano; and a circle of poets and legislators bronzed by the suns of a hundred battlefields; a retinue of pashas, whose bodies were covered with wounds and their long caftans riddled with arrow-holes; a throng of gigantic Janissaries, with naked blades clasped in their hands, and sciaus armed with great steel clubs, ready to strike off the head or pound the flesh of rebel or coward alike; the flower of that boundless multitude of Asiatics, overflowing with youth, energy, and ferocity, only awaiting the signal to hurl themselves like a mighty torrent of fire and sword upon the feeble remnant of the Byzantine Empire. There they would stand, silent, motionless, in the rosy beams of the rising sun, looking with rapt gaze where, against the horizon, the thousand cupolas of the great city promised to them by the Prophet rose above the sobs and lamentations of its cowardly inhabitants. I saw them thus before me, their very postures, their arms, the folds of their long cloaks and caftans, their gigantic shadows falling athwart the earth seamed and scarred with the passage of heavy cannon and ponderous cars, when all at once, my eye chancing to fall upon a large stone half buried in the ground, I mechanically read the worn inscription upon its face. In a twinkling the imposing warlike scene disappeared, and in its stead the wide barren plain was peopled with a light-hearted multitude of Vincennes soldiers in their red breeches; I heard the cheerful songs of Normandy and Provence, saw Maréchal Saint-Arnaud, Canrobert, Forey, Espinasse, Pelissier, and recognized a thousand faces and brilliant uniforms, alive in my memory and dear to my heart ever since childhood, and read again, with an inexpressible sensation of surprise and delight, that meagre inscription: "Eugène Saccard, Caporal dans le 22° léger, 16 Juin, 1854."

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From this point I recrossed the valley of the Lycus, and again took the road which skirts the walls, still lonely and deserted and still winding between ruins and cemeteries, passing before the ancient military Gate of Pempti, now walled up, and again crossing the Lycus, which enters the city at this point, I found myself in front of the Cannon Gate, so called from the circumstance of Orbano's great gun having been stationed opposite it; here Muhammad II. made his last and successful assault upon the fortifications. Raising my eyes to the top of the wall, I was startled at encountering the gaze of two or three dark, unprepossessing-looking individuals with wild, matted hair, who peered down at me from behind the battlements with an expression of astonishment, and then remembered to have heard that a band of gypsies had established themselves in the ruined towers and more habitable parts of the fortification. The traces left at this point of the fearful conflict are grand and awe-inspiring beyond expression—crumbling, dismantled walls, towers knocked to pieces or battered out of shape, bastions buried beneath huge masses of rubbish, loopholes burst open, the earth ploughed up, and the moat filled with colossal fragments which look like masses detached from the side of a rugged mountain. It is as though the terrific battle had been waged only the preceding day, and these ruins speak more eloquently than could any human voice of the frightful disaster of which they are the witnesses. It was the same, with but slight modification, before every gate in the whole line of the defences. The battle began at daybreak, with the Ottoman forces divided into four enormous columns preceded by a hundred thousand volunteers, who formed an immense vanguard predestined to death. All of this food for the cannon, this reckless, undisciplined horde of Tartars, Caucasians, Arabs, and negroes, directed by sheikhs spurred on by dervishes, driven and lashed from behind by furious bands of sciaus, hurled itself forward to the attack laden with earth and faggots, forming one

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unbroken line and raising one unearthly yell from the Sea of Marmora to the Golden Horn. On reaching the edge of the moat they are momentarily checked by a hailstorm of stone and iron missiles, beating hundreds upon hundreds to the ground, pierced with arrows, blown to pieces by the cannonballs, set fire to by *springals*, beaten, crushed, and torn asunder—old men, boys, slaves, thieves, shepherds, brigands, hewn down by the thousand, until before long the moat and banks are filled with dead bodies, heaps of quivering flesh, blood-stained turbans, bows, and cimeters, across which still other hordes, driven forward by those behind, rush to the attack, only to be beaten back, overturned, repulsed, decimated by a still more furious storm of stones and arrows from the walls; while a dense cloud of smoke and dust envelops alike besiegers and besieged, living and dead, until at length a shrill, wild call from a thousand Ottoman trumpets, heard above the din of battle, sounds the retreat, and the great vanguard, bleeding, exhausted, and reduced to half its number, draws off from the entire length of the walls in an unsteady, wavering line. Then Muhammad gives the signal for a general assault, and at that sign three mighty armies, three great rivers of men, start into motion, advance, spread out, cover the heights, overflow the valleys, and amid the flashing of swords and waving of banners, the din and clangor of drums and trumpets, sweep against those doomed walls with a shock like that of a tempestuous ocean beating against a rock-bound shore, while the savage cry, uttered as with one voice from all that vast multitude of powerful throats, "*La Ilah illa lah!*" echoes like a thunder-clap from the Golden Horn to the Castle of the Seven Towers. Then the great battle really begins, or rather a hundred different battles, carried on before every gate, at every breach, in the ditches, from the bastions, at the foot of the curtains. From one end to the other of Constantinople's mighty ramparts ten thousand bastions pour down death and destruction upon two hundred thousand human beings; rocks, beams, casks filled with earth, and burning faggots are hurled from tower and curtain. Ladders laden with men give way, the high bridges of the attacking towers fall in, catapults take fire; host after host hurls itself forward, wavers, and falls back upon heaps of stone, piles of human bodies, the drawn weapons of comrades, the dying and wounded; here and there the thick clouds of smoke are lighted up by vivid flames of Greek fire, while the air is rent with the shrieks of the injured, whistles of cannon-balls, explosions from the mines, and the forbidding roar of Muhammad's eighteen batteries, which command the city from the neighboring heights. Occasionally there comes a momentary hush, as though the opposing forces had paused for breath: as the smoke clears away glimpses can be caught through the great breach near the San Romano Gate of Constantine's crimson mantle, or the flashing arms of Gustinian and Francesco di Toledo, or the terrible forms of the three hundred Genoese archers; and at that sight the battle is resumed with renewed fury. The smoke, rolling down in thick clouds, again conceals the breach, ladders are flung against the walls, fresh torrents of missiles pour from the defences, and the dead are piled in heaps before the Adrianopolis and Golden, the Selymbria, the Tou Tritou, the Pempton, Rusion, Blachernæ, and Heptapyrgion gates, while legion after legion of armed men, rising as it were out of the very earth, beat against the walls, pour over the moat, surmount the outer ramparts, fall, rise again, dragging themselves up by loosened stones, climbing over dead bodies, through clouds of arrows, beneath hailstorms of stones, in girdles of flame, until at length, decimated and spent, the besiegers draw off, while a wild cry of victory mingled with solemn chants of thanksgiving is heard from the city's walls. From the height facing the San Romano Gate, Muhammad II. has followed the battle's course surrounded by his fourteen thousand Janissaries, and now for a moment he seems in doubt whether to continue the assault or abandon the undertaking altogether; but, turning his glance upon that throng of eager upturned faces, those ranks of sinewy giants, whose mighty frames are trembling with fierce and wrathful impatience, only awaiting the word to throw themselves furiously into the breach, his mind is made up, and, rising in his stirrups with a gesture of haughty disdain, he once more raises the battle-cry. Then is the vengeance of the Almighty let loose upon that doomed city. The fourteen thousand, responding with one terrible cry as from a single throat, sweep forward; throngs of dervishes speed in all directions, threatening and collecting the scattered forces; sciaus beat back the fugitives; the pashas again form their men in line; and the Sultan, brandishing his iron mace and surrounded by a cloud of flashing cimeters and drawn bows, a sea of turbans and helmets, dashes forward to take the field in person. From the San Romano Gate there pours a fresh shower of missiles; Gustinian is wounded and drops; the Italians fall back discouraged; a gigantic Janissary, Hassan d'Olubad, is the first to scale the walls; Constantine, fighting amid the remnant of his Morean heroes, is thrown from the battlements, fights on below outside the gate, until at last, overpowered by numbers, he sinks among the heaps of the slain. And with him falls the Empire of the East.

Tradition says that a mighty tree marks the spot where the emperor's body was found, but I failed to discover any trace of it. Between the huge blocks of stone, where streams of blood once flowed, the ground is all white with marguerites, and clouds of butterflies hover above. Plucking a flower by way of remembrance, to the great bewilderment of the watching gypsies, I resumed my walk. Before me the walls still stretched away into the distance as far as the eye could reach, completely hiding the city at those points where the ground rose, so that one would never have dreamed that just beyond those deserted ruins there could be a great metropolis, crowned with mighty buildings and inhabited by a teeming population; in the hollows, however, above the battlements, points of minarets flashed in the light, and the summits of cupolas, roofs of Greek churches, and tops of cypress trees stood out against the sky, while here and there, through a gap, fleeting views of the city would be obtained, as through a door hastily opened and closed again—groups of houses seemingly abandoned, deserted villages, kitchen-gardens, pleasure-grounds, and still farther away the fantastic outlines of Stambul palpitating in the white heat of the mid-day sun.

I next came to the Tetarte Gate, now only distinguished by means of its two towers standing close together. All this part of the walls is in a much better state of preservation than the rest; long portions of the bastions of Theodosius are still standing almost intact, as well as the charming towers erected by the prefect Anthemius and emperor Ciro Constantine, whose invincible summits, crowned by fifteen centuries, seem to defy the ravages of time and fury of man. At some points peasants have erected upon the curtains huts whose slight construction offers a strange contrast to the massive masonry around them, like birds'-nests built upon the side of some beetling cliff. And to the right are the same interminable, unbroken succession of cypress groves and cemeteries, rising and falling with the rise and fall of the earth, the little valleys all gray with tombstones: here a dervish convent is half hidden by a circle of plane trees; there a solitary café stands with its fountain and willow, and beyond the trees white footpaths wind away and are lost to view in the rising ground of the bare and arid plain, beneath the brilliant sky, against which vultures may be seen slowly circling upward.

Another quarter of an hour's walk brought me to the gate called *Yeni Mevlevi*, from a famous dervish monastery opposite it. The gateway is low, with four marble columns built into it, and a square lower on either side, bearing an inscription of *Ciro Constantine* dated 447, and another of *Justinian II.* and *Sophia*, in which the imperial names are incorrectly spelled—a rather striking proof of the barbaric ignorance of the fifth century. I peered through the gateway up at the walls, into the monastery, and the cemetery, but there was not a living soul to be seen anywhere, so, after resting a while with my back against the parapet of a little bridge thrown across the moat, I resumed my pilgrimage. 121



Dervish.

I would give my memories of the most beautiful view in Constantinople if in exchange I could transfer to my readers any of the profound and singular impressions made upon me by my slow progress between those two interminable chains of ruins and sepulchres, beneath that eastern sun, amid that profound solitude, that utter peacefulness. Often, at some troubled period of my life, I had wished that I might find myself one of a great silent caravan of mysterious persons ever travelling through strange, unfamiliar lands to an unknown goal. Well, that road seemed to answer to this fanciful longing. I wanted it to continue for ever. Far from oppressing me with any feeling of melancholy, I was conscious of a sensation of exhilaration and excitement: the brilliant vegetation, the cyclopean dimensions of the walls, the great rolling surface of the earth like the waves of a mighty ocean, the crowding memories of emperors and armies, of fierce warfare, dead and gone generations, whole nations who had passed away, the great city so near at hand, the mortal stillness, broken only by the beat of an eagle's wings taking its solitary flight from the summit of a ruined tower,—all flooded my soul, and bore me out of myself on a rushing tide of unutterable desires and longings, which my mortal body seemed too small to contain. I felt as though I ought to be two feet taller, clad in that colossal armor of the grand elector of Saxony which hangs in the Madrid armory, that my tread should resound through the stillness like the measured beat of a troop of mediæval halberdiers, and my arms be endued with titanic strength, that I might lift and heave into place the overturned masses of those superb walls; and, walking thus, with head aloft, with bent brows and clenched hands apostrophizing in heroic verse *Constantine* and *Muhammad*, rapt in a sort of warlike delirium, my whole soul in the past, and the blood coursing through my veins with all the heat and fire of first youth, I felt so unutterably happy at being alone, so jealous of that solitude surcharged with life, that, had I suddenly encountered the best friend I have in the world, I am afraid the coolness of my welcome would have estranged him for ever. 122

I next came to the ancient military gate called *Tou Tritou*, now closed. The shattered condition of towers and curtains show that some of *Orbano's* mighty cannon must have been directed against this portion of the defences. It is thought, indeed, that here was one of those three breaches which *Muhammad II.* pointed out to his army on the first day of the assault, saying, "You can ride into Constantinople on horseback through the three openings I have made for you." Next I came to an open gate flanked by two octagonal towers, which, from its small bridge supported on three charming arches of a beautiful golden color, I identified as the *Silivri* Gate, leading to ancient *Selymbria*, corrupted by the Turks into *Silivri*. During the siege this gate was defended by a Genoese, *Maurizio Cottaneo*. Some of the paving laid by *Justinian* can still be seen. Facing it is an enormous cemetery, beyond which stands the celebrated *Balukli* monastery. On entering the cemetery I found without 123

difficulty the solitary spot where are interred the heads of the famous Ali of Tepelen, pasha of Janina, his sons Veli, governor of Trikala; Muctar, administrator of Arlonia, Saalih, administrator of Lepanto, and of his nephew, Mehemed, son of Veli, administrator of Delvino. There are five small stone columns, surmounted by turbans, bearing the date 1827,^B and an inscription of the simplest kind. They were erected by the poor Soliman dervish, Ali's boyhood's friend, who bought the heads after they were removed from the Seraglio walls, and interred them with his own hands. The inscription upon Ali's tombstone, which stands in the middle, reads as follows: "Here lies the head of the celebrated Ali Pasha of Tepelen, governor of the sanjak of Janina, who for upward of fifty years labored for the independence of Albania;" which proves that pious lies may be found even upon Mussulman gravestones. Pausing for a few moments to muse over the little corner of earth covering that once formidable head, Hamlet's interrogations addressed to Yorick's skull came into my mind: "Where now are your kleptis, lion of Epirus? where are your brave Arnaouts, your castles bristling with guns, your charming pavilions reflected in the still waters of Janina's lake, your buried treasures? and where, alas! the beautiful eyes of your beloved Vasilik, that lovely unfortunate who wandered a homeless outcast through the streets of the capital distracted by the memories of her lost happiness and high estate?" At this point my reflections were disturbed by a slight noise behind me, and, turning, I found a tall, emaciated man, clad in a long dark tunic, gazing at me with a look of interrogation. From his gestures I understood that he was a monk from the Greek monastery of Balukli offering to show me the Holy Well, and I accordingly followed him in the direction of the church. Leading the way across a deserted courtyard, he opened a small door, and, having lighted a candle, conducted me down a narrow stair beneath a low damp roof: at the bottom was a sort of cistern, and my guide, holding the candle so that its rays fell upon the water, pointed out some red fishes swimming about, gabbling meanwhile some unintelligible rigmarole, which was no doubt the famous legend of the miracle of the fish. It seems that at the moment when the Mussulmans made their final and successful assault upon Constantinople a Greek monk was engaged in frying fish in the monastery kitchen. Suddenly another monk appeared in the doorway, crying that the city had been taken. "Bah!" replied the first; "I will believe it when I see these fish jump out of the pan;" upon which out jumped the fish as lively and frisky as you please, half brown and half red, because only one side was done; and they were religiously picked up, as any one might suppose, and put back in the water whence they had been originally taken; and there they are swimming to this very day. His recital finished, the monk threw some drops of holy water in my face, and, when these had fallen back in his hand converted into coin, reconducted me to the entrance, where he stood leaning against the doorway watching my receding figure with his dull, sleepy little eyes. 124

^B Ali Pasha was beheaded on February 5th, 1822.—TRANS. 125

And ever on the one hand wall after wall, tower succeeding tower, and on the other shaded cemeteries, sometimes a green field or so, a vineyard, or a group of deserted houses. Now and then, as I looked ahead from some depression in the road, I would fancy that I could see the final outline, but on reaching high ground the same unbroken succession would again be seen stretching away into the distance, seemingly without end: at every few steps new towers would come in sight, far away, one behind the other, two or three at a time, as though they were pressing forward and peering over one another's heads in the effort to see who it could be thus daring to disturb that silence and solitude. 126



Interior View of the Seven Towers.

All along this part of the defences the vegetation is something quite marvellous. Spreading trees grow from the very summits of the towers, as though they stood in gigantic vases; garlands of brilliant flowers, vines, and creepers droop and wave from the battlements; while below, from the midst of a dense undergrowth of

brambles, nettles, wild strawberries, and lentisks, plane and willow trees cast their dark shadows across the moat and its banks. Whole sections of the walls are completely covered with vegetation flung like a green veil over the brickwork and crumbling masonry, and concealing the cracks and fissures. The moat is laid out in truck-gardens; on its banks are flocks of sheep and goats grazing, whose keepers, Greek boys, lie stretched out at full length under the trees; now and then a flock of birds flies out from the walls, and the atmosphere is loaded with the penetrating odor of wild grass; from those hoary ruins there comes something of the joyous spirit of spring-time, and they look as though they had been decked and wreathed for the triumphal procession of a sultana. All at once a salt breath blew across my cheek, and, raising my eyes, I saw far ahead of me the blue bosom of the Sea of Marmora; at the same instant a voice seemed to murmur in my ear, "The Castle of the Seven Towers," arresting me in the middle of the road with a vague feeling of inquietude; but, presently resuming my walk, I passed first the ancient gate of Deuterou, and farther on the Melandesias Gate,^C coming at last face to face with the castle itself. This place of ill omen, erected by Muhammad II. on the site of the ancient Kyklobion of the Greeks^D to defend the city at that point where the sea and land walls join, was later, when further victories had rendered Stambul secure from danger of attack, and it was consequently no longer required as a fortress, converted into a prison. To-day it is merely the skeleton of a castle guarded by a handful of soldiers—a hated ruin, whose dark and gloomy associations and sinister history are bywords among the people of Constantinople, although strangers seldom see more of it than the fleeting glimpse to be had from the decks of the steamer which bears them to the mouth of the Golden Horn. By the Turks it is called Yedi Kuleh, and they regard it much as the French did the Bastille and the English the Tower of London—a monument recalling the most oppressive days of the tyranny of the sultans.

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^C The Melandesias Gate is the same as the Silivri Gate, mentioned above.—TRANS.

^D Some authorities place the site of the Greek citadel outside of the walls, on the Sea of Marmora.—TRANS.

Looking at it from the road, the walls hide all but two of the great towers which gave it its name, only four of which are now standing. Two Corinthian columns indicate the ancient Golden Gate through which Heraclius and Narsetes made their triumphal entry: according to a legend common to Turk and Greek alike, it is through this gate that the Christians will come on that day when they once more take possession of the City of Constantine. A postern beneath a small square tower gives admittance to the interior, and the sentinel in slippers who drowns without usually permits the simultaneous entry of a visitor into the castle and a coin into his pocket. This successfully accomplished, I found myself in a large enclosure combining lugubriously the aspect of a cemetery with that of a prison. All around rose massive blackened walls, forming a pentagon crowned by heavy towers, square and round, high and low, some tottering to pieces, others intact and topped by high conical roofs, overlaid with lead; innumerable flights of half-ruined stairs led to the battlements and loopholes. A thick, tangled growth of vegetation was overshadowed by a group of cypress and plane trees, above whose summits the minaret of a little mosque could be seen, and beneath, half hidden by the undergrowth, a group of small huts occupied by the soldiers; in the centre of the enclosure stood the tomb of a vizier strangled in the castle; here and there appeared traces of an ancient redoubt, while beneath the underbrush and along the walls were fragments of bas-reliefs, shafts of broken columns, and capitals half buried in the earth and covered with moss and slime—a strange, melancholy chaos, forbidding and oppressive, which made me hesitate about exploring farther. After a momentary indecision, however, I proceeded, circumspectly though, as if afraid that a false step might land me in a pool of blood. The huts were shut up, the mosque closed—everything as still and solitary as in some abandoned ruin. On the walls may still be found traces of Greek crosses, the Constantinian monogram, the spread wings of the Roman eagle, and discolored bits of the decorations of the earlier Byzantine building. Some rough inscriptions on the stones in minute Greek characters bear witness to the presence of Constantine's soldiers stationed here under the command of the Florentine Giuliani to defend the citadel; they were evidently executed on the day preceding the fall of Constantinople, and the poor fellows, reconciled to death for themselves, request only that Heaven may preserve their city from pillage and their families from slavery. One of the two towers flanking the rear of the Golden Gate is the dungeon tower, in which the sultan used to confine ambassadors from those countries with which he was at war: a number of Latin inscriptions may be seen upon the walls traced by the hands of the prisoners, the most recent being those of the Venetian envoys confined during the reign of Ahmed III., when the Morean War broke out. The other is that far-famed tower around which cluster all the most horrid traditions of the castle—that tower within whose gloomy walls were perpetrated countless deeds of blood and treachery, where viziers and once-powerful ministers raised their last prayers to Heaven for aid while the steps of the executioner were without the door, or, driven crazy by loneliness and despair, beat their heads against the stones. In one of these living sepulchres stood the great mortar in which the bones and flesh of the ulemas were pounded: on the first floor is the circular room, called the Bloody Prison, where the condemned were secretly beheaded and their heads thrown down a well called the Well of Blood, whose mouth may still be seen in the centre of the uneven floor covered with two slabs of stone. Beneath is the so-called Rocky Cavern, lighted by a lantern hung from the roof, where the skin of those sentenced to be tortured was cut into strips, or boiling pitch poured into the wounds left by the lash, and their hands and feet pounded with clubs, the agonized shrieks of these victims rising faint and muffled to the ears of the prisoners in the tower above. In one corner of the enclosure portions remain of the inner courtyard, where common criminals were beheaded by night, near to which there stood until comparatively recent times a wall of human bones reaching nearly to the ramparts of the castle. Near the entrance is the prison of Osman II., the first imperial victim of the vengeance of the Janissaries. Here the unhappy sultan, only eighteen years of age, his strength redoubled by despair, held his four executioners at bay until the hand of one cowardly ruffian, seizing him unawares, elicited a piercing cry, quickly choked by the fatal noose.

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Throughout all the towers, and parts of the walls themselves, is a network of dark corridors, secret stairways, low, ponderous doors secured with heavy bars and beams, beneath which many a haughty head of pasha or chamberlain, governor or imperial prince, has bent for the last time, hurled in the flower and vigor of

youth from the height of power and success to a dark and ignominious death, their life-blood often staining the castle-walls, while their wives, arrayed in their richest robes, wondered as they sat expectantly amid the splendors of the harem why their lord delayed his coming. Along those narrow passage-ways reeking with moisture, down those steep, uneven stairs, soldiers and executioners with blood-stained hands have passed by night, guided by the uncertain rays of a lantern, or messengers from the Seraglio bringing a faint tantalizing gleam of hope to some poor wretch or else the final "No" of the Sultan, and dead bodies with staring eyes and the horrible silken cord still hanging from the neck been carried in the arms of panting sciaus, exhausted with their long silent struggle in the dim, uncertain light with the fury born of despair.

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View from Interior of the Seven Towers.

At the opposite end from Stambul, on the Seraglio Hill, was that terrible Tribunal of the Court, and hard by it the huge executioner's machine, surmounted by seven great stone gallows, to which living victims were transported by sea and land to be offered up beneath the moon, and brought forth again into the sunlight, mere heads and trunks; from the heights of the tower beside it, in which he was to die, the lonely prisoner could see by night the brilliant lights of the Seraglio where the imperial kiosks were all illuminated for a fête. It gives one a positive sensation of pleasure to see that infamous pile so transformed, as though all its victims, unable to revenge themselves on man, had come to life again on purpose to rend and tear it with teeth and nails. The mighty monster, decrepit and disarmed, gapes with its hundred mouths of ruined doorways and disused loopholes, a mere empty scarecrow, while rats, snakes, and yellow scorpions eat like worms at its very vitals and swarm through its great spent body, and an insolent vegetation decks it out as if in mockery with leafy garlands and radiant bloom. After glancing in through several doorways, and seeing nothing but flying troops of rats, I mounted a grass-grown stair leading to one of the curtains on the western side, whence a view can be had of the entire building—a vast extent of ruined towers and battlements, stairways and ramparts, dark red or blackened with age, surrounding a mass of vivid green, and beyond them more towers and battlements, stretching on, on, on, belonging to the eastern walls of Stambul; so that by half closing the eyes one seems to be looking out over one prodigious abandoned fortress outlined against the blue waters of the Sea of Marmora: to the left a large part of Stambul is visible, cut up into long, winding streets, disappearing from view in the direction of the ancient triumphal way of the Byzantine emperors, which led from the Golden Gate by the forums of Arcadius and Constantine all the way to the royal palace. This broad and smiling view threw the dark, forbidding pile at my feet into sharp contrast. Leaning there against one of the battlements, warmed by the sun, bathed in the flood of vivid light, I gazed for a long time at the great uncovered sepulchre below with something of the same hesitating curiosity with which one looks at the scene of a recently-committed crime: everywhere there reigned a profound stillness; big lizards slid across the walls; below, in the ditch, a toad might occasionally be seen hopping about, and above the tower ravens were flying and cawing to each other. Clouds of insects rose from the damp ruins and buzzed around my head, and presently, as a light breeze stirred the air, my nostrils were saluted with the horrible odor of a dead horse thrown in the moat outside. A feeling of loathing and abhorrence seized me, yet I seemed rooted to the spot, as though detained there by magic. A dull sense of drowsiness crept over me; through the death-like noonday hush and the monotonous buzzing of the insects I seemed to hear the splash of each head as it fell into the Well of Blood; muffled dying cries rose from the dungeons, and the voice of Brancovano's younger son shrieking, "My father! my father!" as he felt the halter about his neck; and, being weary and half blinded by the glare, my eyes gradually closed, and as I lost consciousness for a moment all these frightful fancies crowded into my brain with terrifying distinctness. Fortunately, at that instant I was aroused by a clear, piercing cry, and looking down I saw the muezzin of the castle mosque standing upon the balcony of the little minaret. That voice, so solemnly sweet, so tranquil, speaking to man of his God, heard in that spot and at that moment, stirred me to the very depths of my being: it seemed to proclaim in the name of all who had died within those walls that their sufferings had not been for nothing; that their tears had been caught, their miseries been rewarded; that since they had forgiven it became us to do the same; and that prayer and utter trust in God, even though the whole world may forsake you, are indeed the only paths to peace, while all outside the infinite love and pity is but worse than vain. And then,

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moved and touched, I left the castle.

Taking the road again and skirting the walls of Stambul, I walked toward the sea, passing close by the Adrianopolis station. Here several railroad lines cross each other, and I found myself among a number of long strings of dusty, travel-stained-looking cars. No one was in sight, and had I been one of those fanatic Turks hostile to all European innovations, I might easily have set fire, one after another, to all those cars, and then proceeded leisurely on my way quite unmolested. Starting to walk along the track, I expected every moment to hear the cry of some guard or other warning me off the premises, but nothing of the sort happened, and before long I reached the end of the land-walls, where I supposed I would be able to enter Stambul. In this, however, I was doomed to disappointment. The sea- and land-walls join each other on the shore without any sign of gateway; so, climbing a ruined mole which runs out into the water at this point, I seated myself on a large stone and proceeded to look about me. In front lay the Sea of Marmora, beyond which rose the mountains of Asia, and farther still the blue heights of Skutari, looking very far away indeed. The shore was utterly deserted, and I seemed to occupy the universe alone. The waves broke at my feet, dashing their spray up into my face. I sat there for some time, turning over all manner of vague fancies in my mind: first, I saw myself come out of the Caligarian Gate and proceed slowly down the deserted road between the towers and cemeteries—a lonely figure, which I followed with some curiosity as though it had been some one else; then I amused myself with trying to trace out Yunk through the mazes of the great city; then I watched the waves as one after another they broke upon the shore with a murmuring sound, and one after another melted away in silence, seeing in them a figure of all those peoples and armies which from age to age had successfully hurled themselves against the walls of Byzantium. The phalanxes of Pausanius and Alcibiades, the legions of Maximus and Severus, the Persian bands and hordes of Avars, and the Sclavs, Arabs, Bulgarians, and Croats, the armies of Michael Palæologus and Comnenus, and those of Bayezid Ilderim, of the second Murad, and of Muhammad the Conqueror, vanished one after another into the infinite silence of death, until I felt the same vague, oppressed sensation of melancholy as that which swept over the soul of Leopardi in the "*Sera del di' di Festa*" when the solitary song of the laborer died away little by little, speaking to him with the voice of the ancient peoples, reminding him that everything on earth must pass away like the shadow of a dream. 136

Returning thence by the way I had come, I entered the city through the gate of the Seven Towers, in order to skirt along the entire outer edge of Stambul on the shore of the Sea of Marmora. To tell the truth, I was pretty well tired out by this time, but on these long excursions which have some settled object a kind of dogged obstinacy usually comes to the rescue and revives one's flagging energies. I can see myself now, walking, walking, walking along that lonely high-road, beneath the burning sun, in a sort of waking dream crowded with familiar Turin friends, characters in novels, views of distant countries, and vague reflections upon human life and the immortality of the soul, and, crowning them all, the round dinner-table of the Hôtel de Byzance, brilliant with crystal and lights, afar off on the heights of a city many times the size of Stambul, and already half buried in the shades of evening. Crossing a large Mussulman quarter, apparently uninhabited, and which breathed something still of the sadness and desolation of the Castle of Seven Towers, I came to the vast Psamatia quarter, inhabited by Greeks and Armenians, also quite deserted and forlorn. A long, winding, wretched-looking street, from which the black battlemented walls could be seen below on the right standing out against the water's vivid blue, brought me to the Psamatia Gate, emerging from which I again found myself in a Mussulman quarter, among grated windows, closed doors, little mosques, walled gardens, moss-grown cisterns, and abandoned fountains. I crossed the open space formerly the Cattle Forum: below me, on the right, was the same unbroken line of wall and tower, tower and wall, around me the same solitude and apparent desertion; occasionally a dog would stop and eye me suspiciously, or a youngster seated on the ground stare at me round-eyed, revolving some piece of impertinence in his mind, or the sudden opening and shutting of a window close by reveal for an instant a hand or the edge of a woman's sleeve. Making a circuit around the large Vlanga gardens, which surrounded the ancient Theodosian Gate, I came upon a vast tract of desolate-looking ground showing traces of a recent fire. Then the city seemed to fade and die away in spots and melt into country. Dervish convents, Greek churches, and queer little open squares broke up the line of the streets; occasionally an old Turk would be seated beneath the shade of a great plane tree, dozing with the mouthpiece of the narghileh clasped between his fingers. Proceeding on my way, I came to a Turkish café, and stopped to get a glass of the water which I could see displayed in the window, but, after calling and knocking for some time in vain, I gave it up and went on. 137

Next I came to the Greek quarter of Yeni Kapu, then to another Mussulman quarter, then back again among the Greeks and Armenians of the Kuni Kapu quarter, but all the time never losing sight of the dark battlements and blue sea on my right, and never meeting any living creatures but dogs, beggars, and boys. At last the voice of the muezzin sounded through the lonely streets announcing the hour of sunset, and before long the shadows began to deepen and evening set in, but still the never-ending succession of little houses, melancholy mosques, ugly, deserted streets, and the dark openings of side lanes and byways continued, until I began to feel my strength giving out, and was just on the point of deciding to throw myself down on the mat before the next café I came to, when, quite unexpectedly, the huge mass of St. Sophia loomed up before me through the gloom. Oh joyful sight! My spirits rose at once, my strength revived, and, quickening my steps, I soon reached the harbor, crossed the bridge, and, behold! there before the brightly illuminated entrance to the principal café of Galata, were Yunk, Rosasco, Santoro, all my little Italy, coming to meet me with beaming faces and outstretched hands; and I heaved as long and deep a sigh of satisfaction as ever filled the lungs of a tired, hungry man. 138

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THE OLD SERAGLIO.

At Granada one feels as though his sightseeing had hardly begun until he has been to the Alhambra, and it is the same way at Constantinople so long as the interior of the Old Seraglio has not been explored. Twenty times a day, wherever you may be on sea or land, that hillside covered with vivid green starts into view, tantalizing you with suggestions of what it has to disclose, forcing itself upon your attention, riveting the mind upon itself when you would fain think of other things—an unsolved enigma, a haunting mystery, which gives you no peace until at last you yield and go there before the appointed day, more to have done with it than for the purpose of enjoying the sight. 143

There is, in fact, not another spot of earth in Europe whose mere name calls into life such an extraordinary mixture of awful and pleasing associations, about which so much has been talked and thought and written and guessed, which has given rise to so many vague and contradictory rumors—been the object of so much insatiate curiosity, of so many stupid mistakes and extravagant tales. Now-a-days any one can go there, and many who do so come away quite unimpressed; but of one thing we may be quite certain, and that is that when centuries shall have elapsed, when possibly the Ottoman power will be only a memory in Europe, and that exquisite hill be crowned by the busy streets of a new and populous city, no traveller will pass through them without seeing again, in fancy, the imperial kiosks of former days, and thinking enviously of us in the nineteenth century who can still behold the speaking, breathing records of that storied habitation of the Ottomans. Who knows how many archæologists will concentrate their painstaking research upon the identification of a doorway or portion of a wall discovered in the courtyard of some modern building—how many poets will break forth into verse over a few heaps of stones scattered along the shore? On the other hand, it may be that hundreds of years from now those walls will still be jealously preserved, and scholar, lover, and artist, flocking to see them, that strange picturesque life which was led there for four hundred years be resuscitated and spread over the entire surface of the globe in hundreds of volumes and pictures. 144

It is not owing to any architectural beauty that the interest of the whole world is directed toward the Seraglio. Unlike the Alhambra, it is not a great artistic monument: the Court of the Lions alone in the Arabian palace is worth all the kiosks and towers of the Turkish one put together. No, the value of the Seraglio lies wholly in its great historic interest: it illustrates and gives life to almost the entire history of the Ottoman dynasty; upon its walls and the trunks of its century-old trees are engraved the most secret and intimate records of the empire. Nothing but the period covered by the past thirty^E years and the two centuries preceding the conquest of Constantinople are wanting to complete the chronicle. From Muhammad II., who laid its foundations, to Abdul-Megid, who abandoned it to take up his residence in the palace of Dolmabâghcheh, twenty-five sultans have dwelt there. Hardly had the dynasty conquered its European metropolis when it planted its foot upon this spot; here it climbed to the apex of its glory, and here its decadence began. It was at once a palace, a fortress, and a sanctuary; here was the brain of the empire and the heart of Islamism; it was a city within a city, an imposing and magnificent stronghold, inhabited by a people, guarded by an army, embracing within its walls an infinite variety of buildings, pleasure-grounds, and prisons, city, country, palaces, arsenals, schools, offices, and mosques, where fêtes, executions, religious ceremonies, love affairs, state functions, and wild revels succeeded one another with startling rapidity; here sultans were born, elevated to the throne, deposed, imprisoned, strangled; here were woven the tangled webs of every conspiracy that threatened the empire; here resounded the hoarse cry of every popular tumult; hither flowed the purest gold and bluest blood of the Turkish dominions; here was wielded that shining blade that flashed above the heads of a hundred different peoples; and upon this spot, for nearly three centuries, was concentrated the gaze of uneasy Europe, suspicious Asia, and cowering Africa, as upon some smoking crater which threatened at any moment to overflow and engulf the whole earth. 145

^E This was written in 1874.—TRANS. 146

This huge royal residence is situated upon the most eastern of Stambul's seven hills, the one which inclines gently to the edge of the Sea of Marmora, the mouth of the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn. It is the site formerly occupied by the Acropolis of Byzantium, a part of the ancient city and one wing of the great imperial palace, and is by far the most beautiful hill in Constantinople, as well as the promontory most favored by nature of the whole European shore. Here converge as to a common centre two seas and two straits; to this spot led all the great military and commercial high-roads of Eastern Europe; torrents of water poured into it through the aqueducts constructed by the Byzantine emperors; the hills of Thracia protect it from the north winds; the sea bathes it on three sides; Galata watches over it from the harbor; Skutari mounts guard from across the Bosphorus; and the snow-crowned heights of Bithynia close in the Asiatic horizon. Standing alone at the extreme end of the great metropolis in an almost isolated position, in its beauty and strength it seems formed by nature to act as the pedestal of a great monarchy, and to encircle and screen the life of those princes who were half gods. 147



Panorama of the Seraglio.

The entire hill is surrounded at its base by a high battlemented wall flanked by massive towers. On the sides toward the Sea of Marmora and the Golden Horn this is identical with the city wall. On the land side it was erected by Muhammad II., and shuts the Seraglio Hill off from that one on which the mosque of Nûri Osmaniye stands. Describing a right angle near the Sublime Porte, it passes in front of St. Sophia, and then, making a wide outward curve, joins the walls of Stambul on the shore. This is the outer enclosure of the Seraglio. Properly speaking, what is meant by the Seraglio is only that part which occupies the summit of the hill, shut in behind high walls of its own—the central redoubt, as it were, of the great fortress of the hill.

It would be, however, nothing but wasted time and energy to enter into a detailed description of this spot such as it is at present. The railroad crosses its outer walls; a disastrous fire destroyed many of the buildings in 1865; the gardens are largely despoiled of their beauty; hospitals, barracks, and military schools have been established within its precincts; and of the old buildings which are still standing many have been either so altered or their original function so changed that, although the most salient features still remain, and one finds the outline of the Old Seraglio clearly defined, yet the number and nature of the minor alterations and the abandonment and neglect of the past thirty years have so changed the character of the whole place that it would be impossible to render a faithful description of it as it now appears without disappointing even the most modest expectations.

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It will, then, be better for his sake who writes, as well as his who reads, to describe this famous Seraglio such as it was at the most glorious period of the Ottoman power.

Any one who in those old days—say from a lofty tower or one of the minarets of St. Sophia—could take in the entire Seraglio Hill must have enjoyed a sight of extraordinary beauty. Framed by the deep blue of the sea, the Bosphorus, and the harbor, with their semicircle of white sails, arose the great green mass of the hill, girdled by walls and towers and crowned by guns and sentinels. From the centre of this forest of lofty trees, through which innumerable footpaths glistened and flower-beds flaunted their gay colors, rose the vast rectangle of the Seraglio buildings, divided into three large courtyards, or rather little towns, built around three irregular squares, whose roofs showed in a confused, many-colored mass—terraces filled with flowers, gilded cupolas, white minarets, airy pinnacles of kiosks, great arched doorways, alternating with gardens and groves, and half buried in foliage. It was a little white metropolis, glittering, irregular, light as an encampment of tents, through which there breathed a spirit at once voluptuous, pastoral, and warlike. In one part it was all life and movement, in another silent and deserted as a necropolis; here open and bathed in sunlight, there plunged in perpetual gloom and hidden from human gaze. A thousand zephyrs fanned it, while its unending succession of contrasting lights and shadows, its brilliant coloring, and subdued tints of blue and gray were alike reflected in its marble buildings and tiny lakes, above which soared flocks of doves and swallows.

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Such was the external aspect of the imperial city, not, perhaps, so very large to the eye of one overlooking it from above, but within so divided and subdivided, so intricate and irregular, that servants familiar with its inner courts for upward of fifty years would still grow confused and take the wrong turn, and the Janissaries when they invaded it for the third time again lost their way.

The principal entrance then, as now, was the Bâb-i-Humayûn, or Imperial Gate, opening on the little square in which stands the fountain of Sultan Ahmed, back of St. Sophia. It is a lofty portal of white and black marble, richly adorned with arabesques and crowned by a high superstructure with eight windows and a spreading roof, the architecture being that mixture of the Arabian and Persian styles by which almost everything erected by the Turks in the years immediately following the conquest can be so readily distinguished, before they began to copy the Byzantine architecture around them. Above the entrance, on a marble scroll, are the inscriptions of Muhammad II.: "May Allah preserve the glory of its possessor for ever! May Allah strengthen its buildings! May Allah establish its foundations!"^F Before this gate the populace of Stambul used to assemble in the morning to see which of the great men of the court or state might have been decapitated during the previous night, it being customary in such cases to either suspend the heads in the niches which may still be seen almost intact to right and left of the entrance, or else place them in a silver basin, with the accusation and sentence exhibited

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alongside, the bodies of those victims who were sentenced to be strangled being thrown out into the square. Here detachments of troops from far-off armies awaited the necessary permission to enter the outer court bearing their victorious trophies and heaping on the imperial threshold arms, flags, the skulls of vanquished enemies, and magnificent uniforms stained with blood. 151

F The present gate is built upon the site of (but is not) the original gate of Muhammad II.—TRANS.

The entrance was guarded by a powerful band of *kapuji*, the sons of beys and pashas, gorgeously arrayed, who, from the windows and summits of the towers overlooked the continual procession of people coming and going below, or held back with their great cimeters the silent curious throng collected without in the hope of catching, through some crack, a fleeting glimpse of the courtyard, a brief view of the second gateway, a suggestion at least of that enormous and mysterious abode which was the object of so much conjecture and dread. Passing by, the devout Mussulman would pause to murmur a prayer for his sublime lord; the poor and ambitious youth picture to himself the day when he too might possibly cross that threshold to receive the horse-tail; the pretty ragged little maid of the street dream gorgeous dreams, not unmixed with hope, of the splendid existence of a kady; and the relatives of state victims avert their heads and shudder; while throughout the entire square a strict silence was observed, broken only three times a day by the muezzin's voice on St. Sophia.

From the Humayûn Gate one enters the so-called Court of the Janissaries, which was the first enclosure of the Seraglio. This large courtyard is still surrounded by various long, irregular buildings and shaded by groups of trees, among the latter of which the huge plane tree of the Janissaries is conspicuous with its mighty trunk, which the outstretched arms of ten men cannot span. On the left as you enter stands the church of St. Irene, founded by Constantine the Great, and converted into an armory by the Turks; all around stood the Seraglio hospital, the treasury, the orange storehouses, imperial stables, kitchens, the barracks of the *kapuji*, the mint, and the residences of high officials of the court. Beneath the plane tree may still be seen the two small stone pillars which mark the spot where public executions took place. Through this enclosure every one had to pass on his way either to the Divân or the presence of the Pâdishah: it was like a great open anteroom, always crowded with people and filled with bustle and confusion. In the enormous kitchens two hundred cooks with their assistants presided over a hundred and fifty ovens, preparing all the food consumed by that vast family "who ate the bread and salt of the Grand Seignior," while opposite crowds of guards and attendants, feigning illness, tried to gain admission to the luxurious and sumptuous hospital, in which twenty physicians and an army of slaves were kept constantly employed. Long files of mules and camels brought provisions for the kitchens, or arms taken from victorious battlefields to the church of St. Irene, where, with the sword of Muhammad II., was that of Skanderbeg and the armet of Tamerlane. Tax-collectors went by, followed by slaves laden with gold for that treasury which already, according to Sokolli, grand vizier under Suleiman the Magnificent, contained money enough to pay for the construction of an entire fleet of vessels, with silken rigging and anchors of silver; and handsome Bulgarian grooms led up and down the nine hundred horses of Murad IV., which fed out of mangers of solid silver. All day long there was a never-ceasing flash and glitter of gorgeous uniforms. Here towered the high white turbans of the Janissaries, and there the heron-quills of the *solaks* or silver helmets of the *peiks*; members of the sultan's guard lounged about in their golden tunics fastened about the waist with jewelled belts; the *zuluftu-baltagé*, employed under the officials of the bed-chamber, could be distinguished by the tuft of wool hanging from their caps; the *kasseki* carried their wands of office, and the *balta-gi* their axes; while the grand vizier's pages were furnished with whips ornamented with silver chains. Then there were members of the *bostangi*, or guards of the gardens, in big purple caps—the *courageous guard*, the *impetuous guard*, archers, lancers, treasury guards, a countless variety of colors and devices; white eunuchs and black, esquires, and sciaus; tall, ponderous men, whose haughty bearing savored of the atmosphere of the court, while their scented garments filled the air with heavy perfume. Confused and disorganized as this vast throng may have appeared to the onlooker, it was, in reality, governed by a strict and minute schedule. Every individual who came and went through that courtyard was something like an automaton, moved about on a board by an unseen but powerful mechanism. At daybreak there arrived the thirty muezzins of the court, selected from among the sweetest singers in Stambul, who on their way to announce the sunrise from the minarets of the Seraglio mosques would encounter parties of astronomers and astrologers descending from lofty terraces where they had passed the night in studying the heavenly bodies with a view to determining what hours would be most propitious for the Sultan's various undertakings. Next to arrive would be the head physician of the Seraglio to inquire touching the health of his lord, and after him a member of the *ulema* charged with the religious instruction of his illustrious pupil. Next the private secretary would come to read all the petitions received in the course of the preceding day. Professors of the arts and sciences passed through on their way to instruct the imperial pages, and one after another, each at his appointed hour, every individual in the personal service of the Grand Seignior presented himself to receive the orders for the day. The *bostangi-basci*, general of the imperial guard and governor of the Seraglio and of all the Sultan's villas scattered along the shores of the Bosphorus and Propontis, came to inquire if his mighty lord proposed to make an expedition by water, as in that case to him belonged the honor of steering, and to his *bostangi* that of rowing, the boat. The master of the hunt, head falconer, and chiefs of the vulture, white falcon, and hawk-hunt came to inquire the Pâdishah's will. Then all the superintendents of the kitchens, storehouses, mint, and treasury, and the superintendent-general of the city, arrived, each one in his appointed order, with his memoranda, his set speech, his train of servants, and his distinctive style of dress. Later, the viziers of the cupola, followed by a crowd of secretaries and hangers-on, would be seen on their way to the Divân, while every grade of official, up to the very highest, would alight from horse or chair or carriage at the second gate, beyond which no one was permitted to go except on foot. In some way the position, rank, or office of every individual in all that great crowd was so plainly indicated as to be instantly distinguishable. The shape of the turban, fashion of the sleeves, quality of the furs, color of the facings, ornamentation of the saddle, the wearing of moustaches only or of a beard in addition,—each and all gave the clue, and there was not the smallest room for confusion or mistake. The *mufti* were dressed in white, the viziers in pale green, the chamberlains in scarlet; dark blue indicated one of the six chief justices, the chief of the 152
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emirs, and the judges of Mecca, Medina, and Constantinople; the head *ulema* wore violet, the *murdâs* and *sheikhs* light blue, while pale sky-blue denoted a feudal *sciaù* or vizier's *agha*; deep green was reserved for the aghas of the imperial staff and sacred standard-bearers; Nile green was the uniform of the imperial stables; generals of the army wore red shoes, officials of the Porte yellow, members of the *ulema* turquoise-blue. To all this careful scale of color exactly corresponded the degree of reverence shown in the obeisances. The *bostangi-basci*, chief of the Seraglio police force and commander of an army of jailors and executioners, the mere sound of whose name or echo of whose footfall spread terror and consternation, strode across the courtyard between two ranks of heads bowed to the very earth; the chief eunuch and grand marshal of the court, both internal and external, approached, and down went all those turbans, plumes, and helmets as though struck by a hundred invisible hands. The grand almoner made his progress amid a flutter of obsequious bows. Every one in personal attendance upon the Sultan—such as the master of the stirrup, who assisted him to mount; master of the bed-chamber, who brought him his sandals; the *silidar agha*, who cleaned his armor; the white eunuch, who licked the pavement before spreading out his lord's rug; the page, who poured out the water for his ablutions; he who handed him his arquebuse during the hunt; and those who had charge of his turbans and robes of black fox skin and dusted off his jewelled plumes—were the objects of special curiosity and veneration. A subdued murmur of voices preceded and followed the passage of the *imâm* of the court, and the grand master of the wardrobe, who was charged with the distribution of money among the people during the imperial fêtes; while envious glances followed that fortunate Mussulman to whose lot it fell every ten days to shave the head of the Sultan of sultans. The crowd fell back with marked alacrity before the head surgeon, who circumcised the imperial princes; the chief oculist, who prepared washes and unguents for the eyelids of the *kadynas* and odalisques; and the grand master of the flowers, whose life was passed in carrying out the capricious fancies of a hundred spoiled beauties, and who carried beneath his caftan his diploma of poetry ornamented with gilded roses. The head cook received his adulatory greetings, while smiles and salutations were showered upon the keeper of the nightingales and parrots, to whom the doors of the most secret kiosks were thrown open. 157

It was a vast hierarchy, composed of thousands of persons, subject to a ceremonial filling fifty volumes, and clad in an endless variety of picturesque costume, which thronged the great courtyard, intermingling and separating every moment. From time to time all the heads would turn to look after the hurrying form of a special emissary: now it was the vizier *khara khulak*, despatched by the Sultan to hold a secret consultation with the grand vizier; now a kapuji, hastening to the palace of a pasha fallen under suspicion to acquire his instant attendance before the Divân; or the *bearer of good tidings* on his way to announce to the Pâdishah the safe arrival of the great caravan at Mecca. Other special messengers employed between the Sultan and chief officials of the state, each one distinguished by a title and some peculiarity of attire, would traverse the space cleared before him by the crowd at a run, and disappear through one or other of the two gateways. Files of *kahveji* (coffee-bearers) passed through to the kitchens; troops of imperial huntsmen bending beneath the weight of their gilded gamebags; porters laden with rich stuffs preceded by the Grand Merchant, purchaser for the Sultan; and bands of galley-slaves led by other slaves to perform the heavier kinds of work in the Seraglio,—all could be seen intent upon their several duties. Twice daily the doors of the kitchens opened to emit processions of scullions bearing huge pyramids of rice, and sheep roasted whole, which they distributed among the guards and attendants scattered about beneath the plane trees, under the arcades, and all along the walls, so that the great courtyard presently assumed the festive appearance of an encampment of the army holding a revel. By and by the scene would change, and now it was a foreign ambassador who would make his stately progress between *two walls of gold and silk* to that presence to which, as Suleiman the Magnificent wrote to the Shah of Persia, “flowed the entire universe.” Side by side with ambassadors from Charles V. were those of Francis I.; envoys from Hungary, Servia, and Poland entered with representatives of the Genoese and Venetian republics. The *peskesdgi-basci*, who received all the gifts, would go as far as the Bâb-i-Humayûn to meet the foreign caravans, and return, amidst the curious gaze of thousands of spectators, accompanied by elephants with gold thrones on their backs, enormous gazelles, lions in cages, Tartary horses, and steeds of the desert laden with tiger-skins or shields made out of elephants' ears; envoys from Persia brought vases of costly porcelain, and those from the sultans of India golden boxes filled with jewels; African kings sent rugs made out of the skins of young camels torn from their mothers' bodies, and pieces of silver brocade which the backs of ten slaves could barely carry; and ambassadors from northern kingdoms brought gifts of rare furs and valuable weapons. After a successful campaign conquered generals, laden with chains, would be led through for exhibition before the Pâdishah, and captive princesses veiled and followed by their mournful little company of disarmed and helpless attendants; eunuchs of all colors and ranks, seized as spoils of war or offered as gifts to the victorious princes; and in the mean time officers of the conquering army crowded to the treasury doors to deposit rich booty in the shape of sabres studded with pearls and magnificent brocades taken in the sack of some Persian city, the gold and jewels of the vanquished Mamelukes of Egypt, cups of gold found among the treasures of the chevaliers of Rhodes, statues of Diana and Apollo brought from Greece and Hungary, and the keys of conquered cities and strongholds; and others still, led the youths and maidens stolen from the isle of Lesbos into the inner court. All the enormous quantities of stores of every description brought to the Seraglio from the various ports of Africa, Morea, Caramania, and the Ægean Sea were either received between those walls or flowed through them to the inner courts, and an army of majordomos and clerks were kept constantly occupied in registering what was brought, giving receipts, paying out money, and arranging audiences. Merchants from the slave-markets of Brusa and Trebizond would await their turn to enter with poets come from Bagdad to recite their verses in the presence of the Sultan. Governors fallen into disgrace, bearing basins full of gold coins wherewith to purchase pardon, stood side by side with the messenger of a pasha bringing a beautiful girl of thirteen, found, after months of careful search, in a cabin in Anatolia, as a present to the Grand Seignior, and with them emissaries returned from the farthest confines of the empire, tired little family groups just arrived from some far-off province to seek justice at the hands of their lord, and women and children of the lowest orders in Stambul come to present their grievances before the Divân. On those days when the Divân was to hold its sessions ambassadors from rebel provinces would be seen passing slowly through the curious and mocking crowd, mounted upon asses, with shaven faces and women's caps upon their heads, or the too insolent envoys of some Asiatic prince with their noses split open by the cimeters of the *sciaùs*. Sometimes state officials would pass out bearing a magnificent shawl which they were to take to a distant governor as a present from the 158
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grand vizier, quite unconscious that their own death-sentence was concealed within its folds. Now the radiant face of some ambitious schemer showed that his plots had been so far successful, and a *sanjak* was his, while the pallid countenance of another proved all too plainly that he had heard in the Divân the first dark rumors of approaching disgrace. Messengers went by with those inexorable *hattiscerifs* which they were to carry in their saddle-croups three hundred miles for the purpose of spreading ruin and death through the palace of a viceroy, and those terrible court-mutes sent to strangle illustrious prisoners in the subterranean dungeons of the Castle of Seven Towers. Crowds of *beys*, *mollahs*, and *emirs* passed back and forth, to and from audiences, with bent heads, eyes on the ground, and hands hidden in their big sleeves; viziers who made it a habit to carry a copy of the Koran about with them, so as to be prepared at a moment's notice to read the office of the dead; the despotic grand vizier, constantly shadowed by an executioner, who never went abroad without a copy of his will concealed somewhere about his person, so as to be ready to face death at any moment. 162

And all of them maintained the most perfect decorum, passing by with measured steps and serious mien, either silent or else conversing only in undertones and in such circumspect and correct language as was suitable to the sacred precincts of the Seraglio. There was a constant interchange of grave, scrutinizing looks; hands were laid on the forehead or breast, and momentary breaks occurred in the murmured conversations—a discreet rustling and patter of slippers and long cloaks, a subdued clanking of cimeters, a something monastic and mournful, which contrasted strangely with the haughty, warlike faces, pompous coloring, and splendid armor seen on all sides. In every eye could be read the reflection of the same ruling idea, on every brow was written the awe and dread of a single man, high above them all, wielding an absolute power over each and every one of them, and before whom all were ready to bow down, cringe, crawl, efface themselves; it seemed as though every object bore the imprint of his image, every sound carried the echo of his name. 163

From this court the Bâb-el-Selam,^G Gate of Health, gives access to the second court. It is still standing intact, flanked by two massive towers, and can only be passed even now on presenting a firman or order from the Sultan. Formerly the great doors which shut it on either side enclosed a space between them which was used as a chamber of execution, where persons could be detained and secretly despatched. The cell of the executioner was just below, and communicated by secret passage-ways with the hall of the Divân. Persons of rank who had incurred the displeasure of the Divân would be detained there while awaiting their sentence, which not infrequently was first made known to them by being carried out. At other times a suspected governor or vizier, summoned to the Seraglio on some pretext or other, came, passed unsuspectingly beneath that sinister roof, entered the council hall, and, being received with benevolent smiles or such mitigated severity as laid his fears to rest, would pass tranquilly forth again, to suddenly feel a knife beneath his shoulders or a cord about his neck, and sink to the ground without seeing any one or being able so much as to make one effort at resistance. At the sound of his dying cry a hundred heads in the outer court would turn quickly, but in an instant every one would have resumed his occupation in perfect silence. Presently the head would be carried out to the Bâb-i-Humayûn, the body thrown to the ravens on the shore near St. Stephen's, the news sent to the Sultan, and the whole matter be finished. 164

^G The name of this gate is the Orta Kapu, or Middle Gate.—TRANS.

To the right and under the roof can be seen the small iron doorway of the chamber into which those victims were cast whose death-sentence had been recalled just in time, or others whose agony it was wished to prolong or who were to be sent into exile instead.

Passing beneath the gateway, you enter the second court, and begin to breathe more unmistakably the sacred atmosphere which surrounded the lord "of the two seas and two worlds." Entering there for the first time, one pauses involuntarily on the threshold, held back by feelings of awe and veneration and fear. It was a huge, irregular courtyard, a sort of enormous open hall, surrounded by graceful buildings with gold and silver domes: here and there were groups of tall trees, while two avenues crossed each other, flanked by great cypresses. All around it ran a low gallery, supported on graceful marble columns and protected by a spreading roof covered with lead. To the left as you enter was the hall of the Divân, surmounted by a glittering dome, and beyond it the reception chamber, before which stood six huge columns of Marmora marble supporting a wide roof with undulating border. Bases and capitals, walls, roofs, doorways, arches, all were embossed, carved, chiselled, painted, and gilded, and as light and graceful as pavilions made of lace and encrusted with gems, while a group of superb plane trees cast their shadows over it all. On the other side were the apartments where the robes of state were kept, the archives, the tents, the residence of the chief of the black eunuchs, and the kitchens of the court. Here was to be found that intendant on whom far more devolved than on one of the ministers of state, under whom were employed fifty sub-lieutenants and a whole army of cooks, supplemented on great occasions by chefs collected from every corner of the empire. On the days of the Divân, dinner was served here for all the viziers, and, when such functions as imperial weddings or circumcisions were in progress, were prepared those far-famed pastry gardens, sugar swans, giraffes, falcons, and camels; and roasted sheep from which flocks of birds issued, to be carried later on in great pomp to the Hippodrome square; here too were manufactured those sweetmeats of every conceivable form and flavor designed to melt away in the thousand greedy little mouths of the harem. On fête-days eight hundred workmen swarmed close by the kitchens, occupied in getting out the Sultan's tents and those of the harem, which they were to erect all about the Seraglio gardens and on the hillsides overlooking the Bosphorus; and when even these apparently inexhaustible storehouses gave out, pavilions were constructed from the sails of the fleet, and cypress trees taken up by the roots from the gardens of the imperial villas. 165

The residence of the chief eunuch near by was a small royal palace in itself, between which and the third court flowed a constant stream of black eunuchs, slaves, and servants. Foreign ambassadors passed through on their way to the reception-chamber of the Sultan, and then the gallery would be hung from one end to the other with scarlet cloth, while the walls and pavements were as polished and glittering as the floor of a room. Two hundred Janissaries, spahis, and silidars, members of the Divân guard, would stand drawn up in the shade of 166

the cypress and plane trees, dressed and armed like princes, while troops of white and black eunuchs, perfumed and anointed, flanked the entrance. Everything within this second enclosure indicated the vicinity of the Grand Seignior: voices were pitched in a lower key, steps were more measured, and all noises which indicated labor or toil, and the sounds of horses' hoofs, were rigorously banished. Soldiers and servants alike went back and forth in silence, and a certain sanctuary-like stillness reigned over the entire courtyard, broken only from time to time by the sudden cry of a bird winging its way among the high branches of the trees or the resounding clang of the great iron doors being swung to by the kapuji. 167

The only one of the buildings in this court visited by me was the hall of the Divân, which is almost precisely as it was in the days when the deliberations of the chief assemblage of the state were held within its walls. It is a large, vaulted apartment, lighted from above by small Moorish windows, lined with marbles, covered with gold arabesques, and without other furniture save the long divan upon which the members of the council took their seats. Directly above the grand vizier's place may still be seen the small window covered with a gilded lattice from behind which first Suleiman I., and after him all the other pâdishahs, took part unseen, or at all events were supposed to take part, in the sessions.^H A secret passageway led from this hidden recess to the imperial apartments in the third enclosure. Here the great assembly, composed of all the chief ministers of the empire, met five times a week, presided over by the grand vizier. It was a most impressive sight: facing the entrance sat the grand vizier, and near him the viziers of the dome, the *kapudan pasha*, or chief admiral, the two chief justices of Anadoli and Rumili, representing the judiciary of the provinces of Asia and Europe; on one side the imperial treasurers, on the other the *nisciandgi*, whose duty it was to affix the Sultan's seal to all decrees; beyond, to the right and left, two long lines of ulemas and chamberlains, and in the angles the sciaüs to whom were assigned the duties of bearing the orders and despatches of the assembly and carrying out the sentences, and who were trained to comprehend at once the exact significance of every look and gesture. Before this gathering the boldest quailed and the most innocent began to fearfully interrogate their own consciences. Every one sat with immovable countenance, crossed arms, and hands concealed in the folds of his garment; from overhead a flood of pale golden light fell upon the white turbans, long beards, rich furs, jewelled dagger-hilts, and motionless figures of the council, lending them a death-like pallor, as though a row of statues had been dressed and colored in imitation of life. Thick matting muffled the footfall of all who came and went, heavy perfumes filled the air from the rich furs of the ministers, and the green branches of the trees in the court without were reflected in the polished marbles of the walls, while from time to time the silence was broken by bursts of melody from the birds, which echoed and re-echoed beneath the gilded roof. All the surroundings of that awful tribunal were graceful, charming, delicate. One at a time the different voices of the members could be heard, subdued, monotonous, like the murmur of a brook, so that the accused, standing erect in the centre of the hall, would not know even from which particular mouth the sounds issued. A hundred great eyes were fixed with penetrating scrutiny upon a single face, whose every shade of expression was noted, and every smallest word that dropped from whose lips was taken account of. The deepest, most hidden secrets of the heart were guessed from a change of countenance. Sometimes the death-sentence would be pronounced in a few calm words after long dialogues carried on in subdued tones and listened to in sepulchral silence; or, again, it would fall suddenly, unexpectedly, like a clap of thunder, having its echoes in the passionate remonstrances of a tortured soul in its supreme moment, cut suddenly short when, at a sign from the vizier, a cimeter would descend, cleaving the skull in twain and staining the marbles and matting with blood. Aghas of spahis and Janissaries would fall to the earth, thrust through with daggers; governors and *kaimacan* sink with staring eyes, the noose drawn tight about their necks. In a few moments the body would have been laid beneath the plane trees with a green cloth thrown over it, the blood have been wiped up, the air perfumed afresh, and, the executioner having returned to his post, the council would resume its deliberations with countenances unmoved, hands still concealed, and unruffled, monotonous voices, while from the little Moorish windows above the same long, slanting rays of pale yellow light fell upon the same white turbans and black beards. It was those haughty judges' turn to tremble, however, when, the Divân having incurred the displeasure of Murad IV. or the second Selim by some of its measures, the gilded grating which concealed the imperial recess was suddenly heard to resound beneath the furious fist of their supreme lord; even then, after a long and profound silence, during which terrified eyes furtively took counsel of one another, the deliberations were resumed in solemn tones and with impassive faces, but their icy fingers trembled beneath the great sleeves and their souls they commended to the mercy of God. 168

^H The sultans sat behind this lattice when giving audience to foreign ambassadors.—TRANS. 169

At the end of this second courtyard, which may be called, in a certain sense, the diplomatic court of the Seraglio, stood the third gate, flanked by marble columns and covered by a wide, overhanging roof, before which, night and day, a troop of white eunuchs and a band of kapuji, armed with sabres and daggers, stood on guard. This was the famous Bâb-i-Sâdet, or Gate of Felicity, leading to the third and innermost enclosure—that sacred portal which for nearly four centuries remained obdurately closed to every Christian who was not the representative of a reigning sovereign or a state; that door at which the supplicating curiosity of thousands of celebrated and influential travellers has knocked in vain; that door from out of which flowed, to spread abroad through every country on the surface of the earth, so many wild and fantastic and romantic tales, so many strange and mournful rumors, so many recitals of love and adventure and shadowy whispers of intrigues and dark conspiracies—so many volumes of poetry, voluptuous, fantastic, and horrible. It was the sacred threshold of the sanctuary of the king of kings, whose name was only pronounced by the common people with bated breath and feelings of secret awe and terror, as though it were the portal leading to some region of enchantment, passing which a profane mortal might suddenly find himself turned to stone or else behold sights which human language would be powerless to express—a door, in short, before which even now the most matter-of-fact, unimaginative traveller pauses with some slight feeling of awe, while his incredulous glance rests upon the lengthened shadow of his own stiff hat as it falls athwart the heavy half-closed doors. 170

And yet even this sacred precinct was not respected by the mad billows of military revolt. Indeed, it may be 171

said that this particular corner of the great courtyard, situated between the hall of the Divân and the Bâb-i Sâdet, is the precise spot in which the blind fury of rebellion has committed some of its most daring acts of insubordination. The vicar of God sometimes beheld that gleaming sword with which he ruled the world turned against himself, and that despotism which so jealously guarded every approach to the Seraglio was the very same which, on occasion, violated its most secret recesses. Once the dazzling blades of the cimeters were withdrawn from around that threatening colossus, it was easily seen upon how fragile a support its power rested. Armed hordes of Janissaries and spahis, pounding down the first and second doors with clubs, poured through in the dead of night, waving lighted torches and brandishing on the points of their gleaming blades the names of those ministers upon whom they were determined to wreak their vengeance, while their fierce shouts, reaching far beyond those invulnerable walls, spread terror and dismay in the very innermost recesses of their sovereign's abode. In vain were bags of gold and silver coins thrown down from the summits of the walls; in vain did terrified muftis, sheikhs, ulemas, and all the most powerful and influential members of the court plead, reason, implore, promise, try by every means their fears or ingenuity could suggest to lower those brawny arms rigid with rage and fury; in vain the validéh sultans, half dead with fright, appeared at the grated windows holding up to view their little innocent children. The blind beast with a thousand heads was unchained, and nothing would satisfy it but living human victims, flesh to tear, blood to pour out, heads to carry stuck on the points of spears; and then the Sultan would appear in person between the battlements, even adventure as far as the barricades of the gateway, surrounded by trembling eunuchs and terrified pages armed with useless daggers, and, one by one, plead for each victim, promising, weeping, begging for mercy in the name of his mother, his sons, the Prophet, for the glory of the empire, the peace of the world; but nothing would avail. A fresh outburst of insults and threats, a waving of torches and brandishing of cimeters, was the only response to all entreaties; and so at last forth from the Gate of Felicity were led ministers, viziers, generals, eunuchs, favorites, one after another, cowering, shrieking, swooning with terror, and on the instant were torn in pieces by the howling pack, hacked by a hundred blades, trodden underfoot, mangled past recognition. Thus Murad III. surrendered his favorite falconer to be torn in pieces before his very eyes, as did Muhammad III. the kislaraghâ Otman, and Ghaznêfer, chief of the white eunuchs, being moreover forced to salute the troops in the actual presence of their bleeding and mutilated corpses. And Murad IV. cast down the shrinking form of his grand vizier, Hafiz, into which seventeen daggers were instantly buried to the hilt, while Selim III. sacrificed his entire ministry to the fury of the mob; and then, as these weak pâdishahs returned to their own apartments beside themselves with shame and impotent rage, the triumphant rebels paraded the streets of Stambul, the lights from thousands of torches falling upon the torn and bleeding bodies of their victims dragged in brutal exultation in their midst.

The Gate of Felicity, like the Bâb-el-Selam, is a sort of passageway out of which one issues directly into that mysterious enclosure, the abode of the "brother of the sun."

For my description to be effective, or for it to give a really good idea of the character of this part of the Seraglio, it should have a running accompaniment of subdued music full of sudden breaks and changes.

This small enchanted city, with its strange, confused architecture, whimsical, graceful, charming, was buried in a forest of great plane trees and cypresses, whose mighty branches stretched far above the roofs, casting their thick shade over an intricate labyrinth of gardens filled with roses and verbenas, courtyards reached by small, heavy doorways, and narrow streets flanked by rows of pavilions and Chinese kiosks. Footpaths led off under the trees to little lakes fringed with myrtle, in whose sparkling bosoms were reflected tiny white mosques and the silver domes of buildings built to resemble temples and cloisters, connected by covered galleries and long files of airy columns, and wooden roofs, inlaid and painted, overhanging arabesqued doorways, and flights of stairs leading to balconies furnished with carved balustrades. In every direction were long, dim perspectives, through which fountains could be seen sparkling in the distance, while glimpses of marble arch and column and terrace alternated with broad views of the Sea of Marmora, two shores of the Bosphorus, the harbor, and Stambul, all framed in by the deep green of the pines and sycamores; and spreading above this paradise that wonderful sky.

The buildings had been added on to one another without any settled plan or design, just as the needs or whims of the moment might dictate, both imposing and flimsy, like a stage-setting, and fairly bristling with secret passage-ways and hidden chambers, planned by a childish jealousy which, unseen itself, desired to see and hear everything. Although swarming with life, this little imperial city looked almost deserted upon the surface, as though the contemplative, pastoral character of the ancient Ottoman princes still brooded over the abode of their descendants—an encampment of stone, which, with all its pomp and splendor, still brought to mind that other one of canvas of the wandering tribes of Tartary; a great, spreading royal residence composed of a hundred little princely dwellings hiding behind one another, combining something of the confinement and melancholy of a prison with the decorum of a temple and the gay abandonment of the country. Before this spectacle, so full of princely magnificence and fantastic ingenuity, the new-comer pauses to ask himself what country he lives in or if he has fallen into another world.

This was the heart of the Seraglio, whence all the arteries of the empire drew their life, and to which all its veins led back.

The first building you see on entering is the throne-room, which is open to visitors. It is a small square edifice, surrounded by a beautiful marble portico, entered through a richly ornamented doorway flanked by two charming fountains. The roof is covered with gold arabesques, and the walls are lined with slabs of marble and faïence set in a symmetrical design: in the centre is a marble fountain, and it is lighted by means of lofty windows of stained glass. At the farther end stands the throne, fashioned like a great bedstead, covered by a canopy edged with pearls and supported on four slender columns of gilded copper, ornamented with arabesques and precious stones, and surmounted by four golden balls and crescents, from which horses' tails—the emblem of the military power of the pâdishahs—are suspended.

Here the supreme lord held his solemn receptions of state in the presence of the assembled court, and here at the feet of the newly-installed Sultan were thrown the bodies of his brothers and nephews murdered to secure his reign from plots and conspiracies. My first thought on entering that room was of the nineteen

unfortunate brethren of Muhammad III. The sound of the guns which announced their father's death to Europe and Asia was heard in their prisons as well, where it meant the death-knell of them all, and soon after the Seraglio mutes threw them in one ghastly heap at the foot of the throne: young and old, it made no difference—some babies whose golden heads rested upon the sturdy chests of grown men, while even grizzled locks flowed over the pavement beneath the feet of boys of ten or twelve, rough prison caftans and muslin swaddling-bands all alike unwrapping stiffened limbs and staring faces. What rivers of blood have been reflected in those polished marbles and beautiful porcelains in this spot where the savage fury of Selim II., of Murad IV., of Ahmed I., and of Ibrahim burst all bounds, and they stood exulting witnesses of their victims' agonies! Here viziers have been beaten down and trodden under foot by the sciaùs, their brains dashed out beneath the marble fountain, and governors conducted all the way from Syria or Egypt, tied to an agha's saddle, to have their heads struck off at last; any one whose conscience accused him did well to turn on this threshold and bid an everlasting farewell to the blue sky and beautiful hills of Asia, while he who came forth alive greeted the sunshine with the feelings of a man who had just escaped death.

The throne pavilion is not the only building to which the public is now admitted. On coming out from thence we pass through a number of flower-gardens and courtyards surrounded by small buildings and Moorish archways supported upon slender marble columns. Here stood the college where the imperial pages received such instruction as should fit them for the highest offices of the state and court, and their princely residences and recreation halls; troops of servants waited upon them, and their masters were selected from among the most gifted and learned men of the empire. In the centre stood the library, consisting of a row of graceful Saracenesque kiosks with open peristyles; one of these is still standing, and is chiefly noticeable for its great bronze door ornamented with reliefs in jasper and lapis lazuli and covered with marvellous arabesques of foliage, stars, and figures of every conceivable device, so intricate and so delicately executed as to hardly seem like the work of mortal hands. Not far from the library stands the treasury, glistening with tiles, once the repository of fabulous riches, consisting for the most part of weapons seized by, or presented to, victorious sultans, and preserved by them as curiosities; but Muhammad II., who prided himself upon his skilful penmanship, left his inkstand studded with diamonds to the collection. The greater part of these treasures have now passed, converted into gold coins, into the coffers of the public treasury, but in the great days of the empire this pavilion contained a glittering array of Damascus cimeters whose hilts were solid masses of pearls and precious stones; huge pistols, their handles studded with as many as two hundred diamonds; daggers, a single one of which was worth a year's tribute from an Asiatic province; massive silver and steel clubs, whose hand-pieces were of solid crystal, all chased and gilded; and among them the jewelled aigrettes of the Murads and Muhammads, the agate goblets in which once sparkled the wines of Hungary at imperial banquets, cups hollowed out of a single turquoise which once graced the tables of shahs of Persia, necklaces of Caramanian diamonds the size of walnuts, pearl-studded belts, saddles overlaid with gold, rugs glittering with gems; so that the whole building seemed to be on fire and one's sight and reason alike became dazed. A little farther on, in the middle of a lonely garden, is the famous "cage" in which, from the fourth Muhammad's¹ time on, those of the imperial princes whose liberty seemed to offer a menace to the peace of the throne were kept in confinement, until, on the death of the reigning monarch, the shouts and acclamations of the Janissaries should call one of them to succeed him, or the appearance of the executioner warn them to prepare for death. It is built in the form of a small temple, with massive walls unbroken by windows, and lighted from above. Against the single door, made of iron, a heavy stone was always rolled. Here Abdul-Aziz passed the few days which elapsed between his downfall and death. Here the Caligula of Ottoman history, Ibrahim, met his horrible and wretched end, and his image is the first which rises to confront the visitor as he pauses at the entrance to that necropolis of the living. The military aghas, having torn him from the throne, dragged him hither like any common criminal, and imprisoned him with two of his favorite odalisques. After the first wild paroxysms of despair he grew resigned. "This doom," said he, "was written upon my forehead; it is the will of God." Of all his great empire and that vast harem, the scene for so many years of such acts of mad folly, nothing remained to him but a prison-cell, two slaves, and the Koran. Believing his life, at all events, to be safe, his mind was at rest, and he even cherished a hope that his boon-companions of the barracks and taverns of Stambul might bring about a popular reaction in his favor. But, unfortunately, if he had forgotten that admonition in the Koran, "When there are two khalifs, kill one of them," the muftis, their memories jogged by the aghas and viziers, had not. And so it came to pass that he sat one day upon a mat in a corner of his prison reading aloud from the Koran to the two slaves who stood erect before him, their arms crossed upon their breasts; he wore a black caftan fastened about the waist with a tattered scarf, and upon his head a red woollen cap, while a ray of pale light falling from above upon his face showed it to be wasted and waxen, but composed. Suddenly there was a dull, hollow noise without, and, leaping to his feet as the door opened, he confronted a sinister group upon the threshold whose significance he understood at once. Raising his eyes to a small grated balcony extending out from the wall near the roof, he could distinguish the impassive faces of a group of muftis, aghas, and viziers upon which his doom was plainly written. Beside himself with terror, he poured out a torrent of prayers and supplications: "Mercy! mercy for the Pâdishah! spare my life! If there be any among you who have eaten my bread, save me now in God's name! You, Mufti Abdul-rahim, be careful of what you are about to do; you will see very soon that people are not all blind and stupid. I will tell you now that Insuf-pasha advised me to have you executed for a traitor, and I refused, and now you want to kill me! Read the Koran, as I am doing; read the word of God, and see how ingratitude and injustice are condemned! Let me live, Abdul-rahim! Life! life!"

¹ It was during the reign of Muhammad III., 1595-1603, that the custom of confining the imperial princes in the kafess, or cage, was first introduced.—TRANS.

The trembling executioner raised his eyes inquiringly toward the gallery; but a hard, dry voice was heard issuing from among those calm faces as unmoved and devoid of all expression as so many statues. "Kara-ali," it said, "perform your duty." The executioner at once attempted to seize Ibrahim by the shoulders, but he, uttering a loud shriek, flung himself into a corner behind the two slaves. Kara-ali, assisted by the sciaùs, however, threw

the women aside, and again laid hold of the Pâdishah. There was an outburst of curses and maledictions, the sound of a heavy body being thrown violently to the ground, a piercing cry which ended in a dull rattle, and then profound silence. A bit of silken cord had launched the eighteenth sultan of the house of Osman into eternity.

Other buildings, in addition to the ones already described and those of the harem, were scattered here and there throughout the woods and gardens; as, for instance, the baths of Selim II., comprising thirty-two vast apartments, a mass of marbles, gilding, and painting, and every variety of kiosk, round and octagonal, surmounted by domes and fantastic roofs, and enclosing rooms lined with mother-of-pearl and decorated with Arabian inscriptions. In every window hung a parrot's or nightingale's cage, and the light streamed through stained-glass panes in floods of blue or rose color. In some of these kiosks the pâdishahs were wont to have the *Thousand-and-One Nights* read aloud to them by old dervishes; in others the little princes would receive their first lessons in reading with appropriate solemnities. There were little kiosks designed for meditation, and others for nocturnal meetings; nests and graceful little prison-houses erected and destroyed in obedience to some passing fancy, and commanding the most exquisite views of Skutari empurpled by the setting sun, or the Olympus bathed in silver by the rays of the moon, while the soft winds from the Bosphorus, heavy with perfume, made the golden crescents tremble and sway from the summit of each slender pinnacle. 183

At last we come to where, in the most retired part of the harem, stands the Temple of Relics, or *apartment of the robes of state*. It was built in imitation of the Golden Room of the Byzantine emperors, and closed with a door of silver. Here were preserved the mantle of the Prophet, solemnly exhibited once a year in the presence of the entire court, his staff, the bow enclosed in a silver case, the relics of the Kaaba, and that awful and highly venerated standard of the Holy War enveloped in no less than forty silken wrappings, upon which should any infidel be daring enough to fix his eyes, he would be struck with instant blindness as from a stroke of lightning. All the most sacred possessions of the race, the most precious belongings of the royal house, the most valuable treasures of the empire, were preserved in that retired spot, that little veiled shrine toward which every portion of the huge metropolis seemed to converge, as a vast multitude turns to prostrate itself in adoration before some common centre. 184

In one corner of the third enclosure, that one where the shade of the trees was thickest, the murmur of the fountains most musical, the twittering of the birds loudest, rose the harem, like a little separate district of the imperial city, composed of a great number of small white buildings surmounted by leaden domes, shaded by orange trees and umbrella pines, and divided from one another by little walled gardens overrun with ivy and eglantine and interspersed with footpaths covered with tiny shells laid out in mosaic patterns, which wound out of sight among roses, ebony, and myrtle trees. Everything was on a small scale, enclosed, divided up, and subdivided, the balconies roofed, windows grated, loggias hidden behind rose-colored hangings, the windows of stained glass, doors barred, and streets open at one end only. Over all there brooded a soft twilight, the freshness of the forest, and a dreamy sense of mystery and calm. Here lived and loved, suffered and obeyed, all that great female family of the Seraglio, constantly changing and being reinforced. It was like some large conventual establishment whose religion consisted in pleasure, and whose god was the Sultan. Here were the imperial apartments; here dwelt the kadyns, those four members of the imperial harem who had a recognized position and rank, each one with her own kiosk, her little court, her state officials, her barges hung with satin, her gilded coach, her eunuchs and slaves, and her *slipper-money*, which consisted of the entire revenue of a province. Here too dwelt the validéh sultan with her innumerable court of *ustàs*, divided into companies of twenty, each one charged with a special duty, and all the female relatives of the Sultan, aunts, sisters, daughters, nieces, who, with the royal princes, formed a court within the court. Then there were the *gheduelüs*, the twelve most beautiful of whom, having each her special title and duty, were selected for personal attendance upon the Sultan; and the *shaghirds*, or novices, undergoing the necessary course of instruction in order to fit them for the vacant posts among the *ustàs*; and a swarm of slaves gathered from all lands, of every shade of complexion and type of beauty; carefully selected from among thousands of others, who filled the hive-like compartments of that huge gynæceum with a rush and stir of eager, radiant youth, a hot breath of Asiatic and African voluptuousness, which, mounting to the head of the god of the temple, expended itself in his fierce passions throughout the entire empire. 185



A Turkish Woman.

What associations are connected with the trees of those gardens and the walls of those little white kiosks! How many beautiful daughters of the Caucasus, the Archipelago, the mountains of Albania and Ethiopia, the desert and the sea, Mussulman, Nazarene, idolator, conquered by pashas, bought by merchants, presented by princes, stolen by corsairs, have passed like shadows beneath those silver domes! Can these be the selfsame walls and gardens amid which Ibrahim, his head crowned with flowers, his beard glittering with jewels, committed his mad acts of folly—he who raised the price of slaves in every market in Asia, and caused Arabian perfumes to increase to double their usual value; which witnessed the frantic orgies of the third Murad, father of a hundred sons, and of Murad IV., worn out by excesses at the age of thirty-one, and which re-echoed to the delirious ravings of Selim II.? Here were celebrated those strange nocturnal revels when ships and vases of flowers were traced in fiery outlines upon the domes and trees and roofs, their dancing flames reflected in innumerable little mirrors like a great burning flower-garden. Crowds of women pressed around the bazârs overflowing with precious objects, while eunuchs and slaves went through the swaying measures of the dance half hidden in clouds of burning spices and perfumes, which the breezes from the Black Sea wafted over the entire Seraglio, and accompanied by strains of barbaric and warlike music. 186

Let us try to bring it all to life again, just as it appeared on some soft April day during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent or the third Ahmed.

The sky is clear, the atmosphere heavy with the odors of spring, the gardens a mass of bloom. Through the network of paths still wet with dew black eunuchs wearing gold-colored tunics and slaves clad in garments of every hue carry baskets and dishes covered with green cloths back and forth between the kitchens and the various kiosks. Ustâs of the validéh, coming hurriedly out of the little Moorish doorways, run against the Sultan's *gheduclùs*, passing by with haughty mien and followed by novice slaves carrying the imperial linen. All eyes follow the youngest of all the *gheduclùs*, the cup-bearer, a Syrian child, singled out by Allah, since she has found such favor in the eyes of the Grand Signior that he has bestowed upon her the title of "*daughter of felicity*," and the sable mantle will follow so soon as she shall have given signs of approaching maternity. In the distance the Sultan's jesters are playing in the shade of the sycamores dressed in harlequin costumes, and with them a number of dwarfs with huge turbans on their heads, while beyond them, again, half concealed by a hedge, a gigantic eunuch with a slight movement of head and hand directs five mutes charged with the duty of carrying out punishments to present themselves before Kizlar-aghâsi, who needs them for a secret affair. Youths of an ambiguous beauty and clad in rich feminine-looking garments run and chase one another among the borders of a garden shaded by a single huge plane tree. At another place a troop of slaves suddenly pause, and, separating in two lines, bow low before the khasnadâr, superintendent of the harem, who returns their greetings with a stately wave of her staff adorned with tiny silver blades and terminating in the imperial seal. At the same moment a door opens, and out comes one of the *kadyns*, dressed in pale blue and enveloped in a thick white veil. She is followed by her slaves, and is on her way to take advantage of the permission obtained from the superintendent on the previous day to play at battledore and shuttlecock with another *kadyn*. Turning down a shady alley, she meets and exchanges soft greetings with one of the Sultan's sisters going to the bath accompanied by her children and maid-servants. At the end of a sequestered path a eunuch stands before the kiosk of another *kadyn*, awaiting permission to admit a Hebrew woman with her wares consisting, though not 187
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entirely, of precious stones. She has only obtained the right of entrance to the imperial harem after endless wirepulling and scheming, and now carries concealed among her jewels more than one secret missive from an ambitious pasha or daring lover. At the extreme end of the harem enclosure the hanum charged with the duty of examining slaves for admission is looking for the superintendent to inform her that the young Abyssinian brought in the day before is, in her opinion, worthy of being admitted among the *gheduclùs*, if a tiny lump on the left shoulder-blade may be overlooked. In the mean time, the twenty nurses of the little princes born in the course of the current year are assembled beneath a high arbor in a pasture planted with myrtles; a group of slaves play upon flutes and guitars surrounded by a party of children, dressed in blue velvet and crimson satin, who jump and dance about or scramble merrily for the sugarplums which the validéh sultan throws from a neighboring terrace. Up and down the shady avenues pass teachers of music, dancing, and embroidery, on their way to give instruction to the *shaghirds*; eunuchs carrying great platters heaped with sugar parrots and lions and sweetmeats of various fantastic shapes; slaves clasping vases of flowers or rugs in their arms, the gifts of a *kadyñ* to a sultana or the validéh, or from the validéh to a granddaughter. Presently the treasurer of the harem arrives, accompanied by three slaves, and wearing the look of one who has welcome news to communicate. Sure enough, word has been received that the imperial ships sent to intercept a fleet of Genoese and Venetian galleys came up with them twenty miles from the port of Sira, and succeeded in buying up the entire cargo of silk and velvet for the Pâdishah's harem. A eunuch, arriving breathless to announce to a trembling sultana that her son's circumcision has been successfully accomplished, is followed by two others bearing upon silver and gold dishes to the mother and validéh respectively the instruments used by the surgeon. There is a continual opening and shutting of doors and windows, a raising and dropping again of curtains, that messages, letters, news, gossip may pass in and out. 189

Any one whose gaze could have pierced through those different roofs and domes would have looked upon many a contrasting scene. In one apartment a sultana, leaning against the window, gazes mournfully between the satin curtains at the blue mountains of Asia, thinking, possibly, of her husband, a handsome young pasha, governor of a distant province, who, in accordance with a certain practice, had been torn from her arms after six short months of happiness, so that he might have no sons. In another small room, entirely lined with marble and looking-glasses, a pretty fifteen-year-old *kadyñ*, who expects to receive a visit from the Pâdishah during the day, is frolicking with the slaves who are engaged in perfuming and anointing her, setting off her charms to the very best advantage, and raising little flattering choruses of delight and surprise at every fresh revelation of her beauty. Youthful sultanas run up and down the walled gardens, chasing each other around gleaming marble basins filled with goldfish, and making the shells with which the paths are laid rattle beneath their tiny flying feet encased in white satin slippers; others, shrinking back in the farthest corner of darkened rooms with pale set faces and averted looks, seem to be brooding over some act of despair or revenge. In one apartment, hung with rich brocades, children who from the hour of their birth have been condemned to death nestle upon satin cushions striped with gold beneath walls of mother-of-pearl; beautiful princesses lave their shapely limbs in baths of Paros marble; *gheduclùs* lie stretched full length upon rugs fast asleep; groups of slaves and servants and eunuchs pass back and forth through covered galleries and dim corridors and secret stairways and passages; and everywhere curious faces peering from behind grated windows, mute signs interchanged between terrace and garden, furtive signals from behind half-drawn curtains, low conversations carried on in monosyllables in the shadow of a wall or archway, broken by a ripple of half-suppressed laughter, followed by the swish of feminine garments and patter of flying slippers dying away among those cloister-like walls. 190

But lovers' intrigues and childish escapades were not the only pursuits which occupied the time and attention of the occupants of that labyrinth of gardens and temples. Politics crept in through the cracks of doors and between window-bars, and the power exercised there by beautiful eyes over affairs of state was not one whit less far-reaching than in any other royal palace of Europe; indeed, the very monotony and seclusion of the life led by the inmates gave an added force to their jealousies and ambitions. Those little jewel-crowned heads from their perfumed and luxurious prisons bent the court, the Divân, the entire Seraglio, to their will. By means of the eunuchs they were enabled to hold direct communication with the muftis, viziers, and the aghas of the Janissaries, and, as they were allowed to have interviews with the administrators of their personal property from behind a curtain or through a grating, they had opportunities of keeping themselves thoroughly informed as to every minutest detail of the court and city, knew what especial dangers threatened them, and were perfectly familiar with the name and character of every official from whom they had anything to hope or fear. Thus equipped, they move with a sure hand and infinite patience all the tangled threads of those conspiracies by which they compassed the overthrow of their enemies and the elevation of their especial favorites. Every department of the court, every corner of the empire, had a root, a hundred roots, in the harem, nourished in the hearts of the validéh sultan, the sisters of the Pâdishah, the *kadyñs* and odalisques. There was a continual plotting and scheming for the education of this one's son, the marriage of that one's daughter, to secure a dowry, to obtain precedence at the fêtes, or the royal succession for one of the princes—to bring about war or peace. The whims of these spoiled beauties sent armies of thirty thousand Janissaries and forty thousand spahis to strew the banks of the Danube with dead bodies, and fleets numbering a hundred sails to dye the blue waters of the Archipelago and Black Sea with blood. European princes provided themselves with letters to the harem in order to ensure the success of their missions. Little white hands assigned the government of provinces and positions of rank in the army. It was the caresses of Roxalana which drew the noose about the necks of the viziers Ahmed and Ibrahim, and the kisses of Saffié, the beautiful Venetian, "pearl and shell of the khalifate," that maintained for so many years friendly relations between the Porte and the Venetian republic. Murad III.'s seven *kadyñs* ruled the empire for the last twenty years of the sixteenth century, while the beautiful Makpeiker, "image of the moon," the *kadyñ* of the two thousand seven hundred shawls, held undisputed sway over two seas and two worlds from the reign of Ahmed I. to the accession of the fourth Muhammad. Rebia Gulnuz, the odalisque of the hundred silver carriages, ruled the imperial Divân for the first ten years of the latter half of the seventeenth century, and Shekerbuli, the "*little lump of sugar*," kept the sanguinary Ibrahim travelling back and forth between Stambul and Adrianople like an automaton to suit her own ends. 191

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Gateway of the Imperial Palace at the Sweet Waters of Asia.

What opposing interests, what an intricate web of jealousy, suspicion, intrigue, and petty ambition, must have been drawn close about that omnipotent and voluptuous little city! Wandering up and down those paths and alley-ways, I seemed to hear all about me the murmur of female voices, now rising high and shrill, now dying away in the distance—expostulations, questionings, explanations, supplications—the entire secret chronicle of the Seraglio; and a varied and curious one it must have been, treating of such questions as—which of the *kadyns* had been chosen by the Sultan to accompany him in the summer to his kiosk at the Sweet Waters; what dot the Pâdishah's third daughter, who was to marry the grand admiral, would have; if it were really true that the herbs procured by the superintendent Raazgié from the magician Sciugaa for the third *kadyn*, childless these five years, had been the cause of her having a son; if it were settled that the favorite, Giamfeda, was to have the governorship of Caramania for the governor of Anatoli. From one kiosk to another the news flew that the first *kadyn* had a child, and that the new grand vizier, in order to outshine his predecessor, had presented her with a cradle of solid silver set with emeralds; that the Sultan's favorite was not the slave sent by the governor of Caramania at all, but the one presented by the Kiaya-harem: that the chief of the white eunuchs was about to die, and that in order to obtain the long-coveted position the young page Mehemet was to sacrifice his manhood: it was whispered about that the plan proposed by the grand vizier Sinau for a canal in Asia Minor was to be abandoned, so that the progress of the work on the new kiosk building for Baffo Sultan might not be kept back; that *kadyn* Saharai, who was thirty-five years old, had been crying her eyes out for the past forty-eight hours for fear she was going to be put in the Old Seraglio; that the buffoon Ahmed had sent the Sultan off into such a hearty fit of laughter that he had made him an agha of Janissaries on the spur of the moment. And then there would be thousands of choice bits of gossip and news to exchange in connection with the approaching nuptials of Otman Pasha with Ummetulla Sultan, when a bronze dragon was to vomit fire in the At-Meidan; and about the validéh sultan's sable robe, whose every button was a jewel valued at a hundred golden scudis; or the new carriage of *kadyn* Kamarigé, "moon of beauty;" or the tribute from Wallachia; or the little blood-colored rose found on the neck of the *Shamas-hirusta*, care-taker of the Sultan's linen; or the pretty, curly, golden hair of the Genoese ambassadress; or the wonderful letter written with her own hand by the first wife of the Shah of Persia in reply to one sent her by Sultana Khurrem, "*the joyous one.*" All the news received in the city, every topic discussed by the Divân, every rumor afloat in the Seraglio, was talked over and commented upon in each individual kiosk and garden among groups of busy, inquisitive little heads. Anonymous madrigals written by pâdishahs were passed about from mouth to mouth—the independent and melancholy verses of Abdul-Baki, the *immortal*; the sparkling poems of Abu-Sud, whose "every word was a diamond;" Fuzuli's songs, redolent of wine and opium; and the licentious verses of Gazali. The whole character and life of the place, however, would change according to the tastes of the reigning Pâdishah. Now a current of tenderness and melancholy would creep across the face of that little world, leaving the imprint of a certain gentle dignity upon every brow; the passion for ease and luxury would subside; morals and customs undergo a process of reformation; language become purified; a taste for devotional reading, meditation, and religious exercises come into fashion; the very fêtes themselves, although conducted upon the same scale of royal magnificence, assume more the character of gay but dignified ceremonials. And then a prince ascends the throne trained from infancy in every form of vice and dissipation, and immediately the scene changes: the god of self-indulgence regains his kingdom; veils are

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thrown back, noisy laughter, free language, and shameless immodesty prevail; messengers travel the length and width of Georgia and Circassia in search of beauty; a hundred slaves boast of the Grand Seignior's preference; the kiosks are crowded, the gardens overrun with children; the public treasury pours out rivers of gold; the wines of Cyprus and Hungary sparkle on flower-bedecked tables; Sodom raises its head, Lesbos is triumphant; faces lit up by great black eyes become paler and more wasted; the entire harem—mad, fevered, glutted with self-indulgence, intoxicated with the fumes of that heavy, sensual perfumed air, awakes one night dazed and helpless to find itself confronted by the vengeance of God under the form of the flashing cimeters of the Janissaries. It was indeed too true that those nights of horror fell upon the little flower-imbedded Babylon as well. Revolt respected that sacred third enclosure no more than it did the other two, and, beating down the Gate of Felicity, poured even into the harem itself. A hundred armed eunuchs, fighting desperately with daggers at the doors of the kiosks, beheld the Janissaries climb upon the roofs and break open the cupolas, from whence, leaping into the rooms below, they tore the infant princes from their mothers' arms; validéhs were dragged feet foremost from their hiding-places, fighting furiously with teeth and nails, to be overpowered finally, pinned to the floor by a *baltagi's* knee, and strangled with the silken cords of the window-curtains. Sultanas returning to their apartments would utter a piercing shriek at sight of the empty cradle, and, turning wildly to interrogate their slaves, read the answer in an ominous silence, which meant, "Go seek your son at the foot of the throne." Terrified eunuchs would bring word to a favorite, whom the sound of distant tumult had already rendered uneasy, that her head was demanded by the mob, and she must at once prepare for death. The third Selim's three *kadyns*, condemned to the noose and sack, were aroused one after another in the dead of night and heard each other's screams, dying in the darkness in the convulsive grasp of the mutes. Vindictive jealousy and bitter revenge filled the kiosks with tragedies and spread terror and dismay throughout the entire harem. The Circassian mother of Mustafa tore Roxalana's face; rival favorites cuffed and boxed Shekerbuli; Tarkan Sultan beheld the dagger of Muhammad IV. flash above the head of her offspring; the first *kadyn* of Ahmed I. strangled the slave who dared to be her rival with her own hands, and in her turn fell at the Pâdishah's feet stabbed in the face and uttering shriek on shriek of rage and pain. Jealous *kadyns* lay in wait for one another in dark passages, flinging out the insulting words "bought flesh" as they pounced like tigresses and tore their victims' skin or buried poisoned stilettos in their backs. Who can form any idea of the number of secret unrecorded tragedies?—slaves held in the fountains until they were drowned, struck down by a blow on the temple from a dagger-hilt, beaten to death by the eunuch's *colbac*, or crushed in the deadly embrace and arms of steel of a dozen jealous furies. Veils choke the cries of the dying, flowers cover up the blood-stains, and two dusky figures, moving down the dimly-lighted path, carry a sinister something between them. The sentinels pacing up and down upon the battlements which overlook the Sea of Marmora are startled for a moment by the sound of a heavy splash; then all is still, and the dawn, awakening the harem to another day of laughter and pleasure, whispers no tales of that one among its thousand rooms found empty.

Such fancies as these kept crowding through my mind as I wandered about that famous spot, raising my eyes from time to time to the grated windows of one or another of those kiosks, now as mournful and neglected-looking as sepulchres. And yet, notwithstanding all the horrible associations of the place, one is conscious of a thrill of delicious excitement, a throbbing of the pulses, a languid, voluptuous, half-melancholy sense of pleasure, at the thought of all the youth and beauty and loveliness which once had its being here. These little stairways, up and down which I pass, once felt the pressure of their flying feet; these shady alleys, through which I walk, have heard the soft rustle of their garments; the roofs of these little porticoes, against whose pillars I brush in passing, have echoed the sound of their infantile laughter. It seems as though some actual token of their presence must still linger within those walls, hover in the very air, and I long to search for it, to cry aloud those famous names, one after another, over and over again, when surely some voice, faint, distant, ghostly, will reward my efforts, some shadowy white-robed figure flit across a lofty terrace or appear for a moment at the end of a dim, leafy vista. What would I not have given, as I scanned each barred door and grated window, to have known behind which of them the widow of Alexius Comnenus was confined—the most beautiful of all the fair Lesbos prisoners, as well as the most fascinating Grecian of her time—or where the beloved daughter of Errizo, governor of Negropont, had been stabbed for preferring death to the brutal caresses of Muhammad II.! And Khurrem, Suleiman's favorite, at what window did she linger, graceful, languid, her great black eyes fixed upon the Sea of Marmora beneath their veil of silken lashes? How often must this very path have felt the light pressure of that fascinating Hungarian dancer's feet who effaced the image of Saffié from the heart of Murad III., slipping like a blade of steel between the imperial arms! Above this flowery bank must Kesem, that beautiful Grecian and jealous fury who beheld the reigns of seven sultans, have bent her pale proud face to pluck a flower in passing. And that gigantic Armenian who drove Ibrahim insane for love of her, has she not plunged her great white arms into the cool depths of this very fountain? And whose feet were the smaller? The fourth Muhammad's "*little favorite*," two of whose slippers together did not measure the length of a stiletto, or Rebia Gulnuz, "*she who drank of the roses of spring*"? And who had the prettiest blue eyes in the Archipelago? And whose foot left no trace on the white sand of the garden-walk? Was the hair of Marhfiruz, "*the favorite of the stars of the night*," thicker and more golden than that of Miliklia, the youthful Russian odalisque, who kept the ferocity of the second Osman in check? And those Persian and Arabian children who lulled Ibrahim to sleep with their fairy-tales, and the forty maidens who drank the third Murad's blood, is there nothing left of them all—not so much as a tress of hair, a thread from a single veil, an imprint on the walls? For answer I saw a strange, weird vision far off where the great trees grew thickest. Beneath the long shadowy arcades I beheld a mournful procession: one after the other, in ghostly, never-ending succession, they filed by—validéh sultans, sisters of pâdishahs, *kadyns*, odalisques, slaves, children hardly arrived at womanhood, middle-aged, old and white-haired, timid young maidens, faces contorted with savage jealousy, rulers of an empire, favorites of a single day, playthings of an hour, representatives of ten generations and a hundred peoples—leading their children by the hand or clasping them convulsively to their breasts. Around this one's neck the noose is still hanging; from that one's heart sticks a dagger-hilt; the salt waters of the Sea of Marmora drip from another's clothes. Brilliant with jewels, covered with dagger-thrusts, their faces contorted from the action of poison or the long-drawn-out agonies of the Old Seraglio, on they came, an interminable, mute, but eloquent procession, fading away one after another in the gloom of the cypress trees, leaving behind them a trail of faded flowers, of tears, and of drops of blood, which swept over my heart in a great wave of indescribable horror and pity.

Beyond the third enclosure there extends a long level stretch of ground covered with a luxuriant vegetation and dotted over with pretty little buildings, in the midst of which rises the so-called Column of Theodosius, of gray granite, surmounted by a beautiful Corinthian capital and supported upon a large pedestal, on one side of which may still be traced the last two words of a Latin inscription which ran as follows: "*Fortunæ reduci ob devictos Gothos.*" Here the elevated plain upon which stands the great central rectangle of the Seraglio buildings comes to an end; beyond, as far as Seraglio Point, and covering the entire space between the walls of the three courts and the outer boundary-walls, rose a great forest of plane trees, cypresses, pines, laurels, and terebinths, all along the hillsides, and poplars draped with vines and creepers, shading a succession of gardens filled with roses and heliotropes, and laid out in the form of terraces, from which wide flights of marble stairs led down to the shore. 203

Along the walls facing Skutari rose the new palace of Sultan Mahmûd, opening out on the water by a great door of gilded copper. Near Seraglio Point stood the summer harem, a vast semicircular building, designed to accommodate five hundred women, with its great courtyards and magnificent baths and gardens—the scene of those ingenious illuminations which under the name of "*tulip festivals*" became so famous. Beyond the walls, opposite the harem and just above the shore, was placed the celebrated Seraglio Battery, consisting of twenty guns of different designs and covered with sculptures and inscriptions: each of these was captured on some battlefield and from Christian armies in the course of the earlier European wars. The walls were furnished with eight gates, three of them on the city side and five facing toward the sea. Great marble terraces extended from the walls along the banks, and subterranean passage-ways leading from the royal palace to the gates on the Sea of Marmora offered a means of escape to the sultans, who could thus take ship for Skutari or Topkhâneh in case they were besieged from the land.

Nor yet was this all of the Seraglio. Near the outer walls and all along the sides of the hills there arose numberless other kiosks, built to imitate little mosques or forts or tunnels, each one of which communicated by a narrow footway, concealed behind lofty screens of foliage, with the smaller gates of the third court. There was the Yali Kiosk, now destroyed, which was reflected in the waters of the Golden Horn; there stands to-day, almost intact, the New Kiosk, a little royal residence in itself, circular and covered with gilt ornaments and paintings, to which the sultans used to repair at sunset to feast their eyes upon the spectacle of the thousand ships riding at anchor in the port. Near the summer harem stood the Looking-glass Kiosk, where the treaty of peace by which Turkey ceded the Crimea to Russia was signed in 1784, and the kiosk of Hassan Pasha, all resplendent with gilding, its walls covered with mirrors which threw back fantastic reflections of the fêtes and nocturnal orgies of the sultans. The Cannon Kiosk, out of whose windows bodies were thrown into the Sea of Marmora, stood hard by the battery on Cape Seraglio. The Kiosk of the Sea, where the validéh of Muhammad IV. held her secret councils, overhung the spot where the waters of the Bosphorus mingle with those of the Sea of Marmora. The Kiosk of Roses looks out upon the esplanade where the pages were exercised, and it was here that in 1839 the new constitution of the empire, embodied in the Hatti Sherif of Gül-Khâneh, was signed. Some of the kiosks on the other side of the Seraglio which are still standing are the Review Kiosk, from which, himself unseen, the Sultan could watch all who passed by to the Divân; the Alai Kiosk, at that angle of the walls near St. Sophia whence Muhammad IV. flung to his mutinous soldiers his favorite Meleki, together with twenty-nine officials of his court, to be torn to pieces before his eyes; and at the far end of the wall the Sepedgiler Kiosk, near which the sultans gave final audiences to their admirals about sailing for the seat of war. 204

Thus the huge palace spread out and down from the summit of its hills—where were gathered and carefully defended all its more vital parts—to the seashore crowned with towers, bristling with cannon, decked with flowers, its gilded barges shooting across the waters in all directions, its thousand perfumes floating heavenward in a great cloud as from some huge altar; the myriad torches of its fêtes reflected in the placid waters; flinging from its battlements gold to the people, dead bodies to the waves—yesterday the plaything of a slave, to-day the sport of a maniac, to-morrow at the mercy of the mob, beautiful as an enchanted island and forbidding as a living sepulchre. 205

The night is far advanced: each glittering star is reflected in the calm bosom of the Sea of Marmora, while the moon turns the Seraglio's thousand domes to silver and whitens the tips of the cypress and plane trees. Deep shadows are cast across the open spaces below, and, one by one, the lights in all those innumerable little windows are extinguished. Mosque and kiosk rise white as snow against the dark background of the woods, and each spire and pointed minaret, ærial crescent, door of bronze, and gilded grating shines and sparkles among the trees as though part of a golden city. The imperial residence sleeps, the last of the three great gates has just been closed, and the far-off rattle of its huge keys can be heard as the kapuji turns away. In front of the Gate of Health a troop of kapujis stand watch beneath the lofty roof, while stationed along the wall by the Gate of Felicity, their faces in the shadow, immovable as so many bas-reliefs, thirty white eunuchs mount guard. From the walls and towers hundreds of hidden sentinels keep an active watch upon all the approaches, the sea and harbor, the deserted streets of the city, and the huge silent pile of St. Sophia. An occasional light still gleams in the huge kitchens of the first court, where some belated worker is finishing his task; then that too disappears, and the building becomes dark. Lights are still burning, though, in the houses of the Veznedar Agha and the Defterdar Effendi, and there seems to be some stir about the residence of the chief of the black eunuchs. Eunuchs patrol the deserted paths and wander in and out among the dark and silent kiosks, hearing no sounds save the sighing of the trees rocked by the sea-breeze and the monotonous murmur of the fountains. Perfect peace seems to enfold all that little world in its calm embrace, but only seemingly, for underneath those myriad roofs a tide of passionate life is stirring. That vast family of slaves, soldiers, prisoners, and servants, with their ambitions and heart-burnings, their loves and hates, let loose into the stillness of the night a brood of restless longings, dreams, and visions, which, scaling the Seraglio walls, find their way to every corner of the globe, seeking out homes of childhood, mothers lost in infancy, resuscitating half-forgotten scenes of horror. Prayers and supplications mingle with plots of vengeance in the moonlit walks and the overmastering impulses of secret ambition. The great palace sleeps, but it is a restless, disturbed sleep, interrupted by sudden fearful visions of alarm and terror; mutterings in a hundred different languages mingle with the voices of the night. Close together, divided by but a few walls, sleep the dissolute page, the imâm who has preached the word of God, the executioner who has strangled the innocent, the imprisoned prince awaiting death, and the enamored sultana 206

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on the eve of her nuptials. Unhappy wretches, stripped of everything they possessed in the world, find themselves side by side with the possessors of fabulous riches. Beauty which is almost divine, absurd deformity, every form of vice and misfortune, every prostitution of soul and body, are to be found shut in between the same walls. 208

Against the starlit sky are outlined the bizarre shapes of Moorish tower and roof, and shadows of garlands and leafy festoons play over the walls; the fountains shimmer in the moonlight like cascades of diamonds and sapphires; and all the perfumes of the gardens, gathered into one powerful odor, are swept by the breeze through every open lattice, every crack and crevice, leaving in their wake soft, intoxicating dreams and memories.

At such an hour as this the eunuch seated in the shadow of the trees, his eyes fixed upon the soft light issuing from a neighboring kiosk, gnaws out his heart and touches with trembling fingers his dagger hilt, and the poor little maid, stolen and sold into bondage, gazes from the window of her lofty cell with streaming eyes upon the serene horizon of Asia, thinking with unutterable longing of the cabin where she was born and the peaceful valley where her fathers lie buried. At this hour, too, the galley-slave laden with chains, the mute stained with blood, the despised miserable dwarf, reflect with a thrill of dismay upon the infinity of space which separates them from that being before whom they all must bow, and passionately interrogate the "*hidden powers*" as to why they must be deprived of liberty, speech, and the ordinary shape of the human form, while everything is given to one man. And this, too, is the hour in which the neglected and unhappy weep, while those who are great and successful are haunted with misgivings as they think uneasily of the future. In some of the buildings lights are still burning, illuminating the pale, anxious brows of the treasurers bending over their accounts. Odalisques, embittered by neglect, toss restlessly among their pillows, vainly seeking sleep. Janissaries lie stretched out upon the ground, the savage smile upon their bronzed faces telling of dreams of carnage and plunder. Through those thin walls come voluptuous sighs, sobs, broken expostulations. In one kiosk flows the accursed liquor amid a circle of dishevelled revellers; in another a wretched sultana, mother for but one short moment, stifles her shrieks beneath the pillows that she may not see her child's life-blood flowing from the artery opened by order of the Pâdishah; and in the marble niches of the Bâb-i-Humayûn blood is still dropping from the heads of beys executed at nightfall. Within the loftiest kiosk of the third enclosure there is a room hung with crimson brocade and flooded with soft radiance from a Moorish lamp of chased silver suspended from the cedar-wood roof. Upon a sable-covered couch, surrounded by a magnificent disorder of pearl-embroidered cushions and velvet draperies worked in gold, there sits a beautiful brunette, enveloped in a great white veil, who not many years before conducted her father's herds across the plains of Arabia. Bending her timid gaze upon the pallid countenance of the third Murad, who reclines half asleep at her feet, she begins in gentle murmuring tones: "Once upon a time there lived in Damascus a merchant named Abu-Eiub, who had accumulated great riches and lived in honor and prosperity. He had one son, who was handsome and who knew all sorts of wonderful things, and his name was Slave of Love, and a daughter who was very beautiful, and she was named Power of Hearts. Now, it came to pass that Abu-Eiub died, and he left all his possessions and all his wealth wrapped up and fastened with seals, and upon everything was written 'For Bagdad.' So, then, Slave of Love said to his mother, 'Why is "For Bagdad" written on everything my father left?' And his mother replied, 'My son——'" But the Pâdishah has fallen asleep, and the slave lets her head sink gently down among the cushions, and sleeps as well. Every door is closed, every light extinguished, a hundred cupolas gleam like silver in the moonlight, crescents and gilded lattices shine through the foliage; the fountain's splash and gurgle are heard through the stillness, and at last the entire Seraglio slumbers. 209

And so for thirty years has it slept the sleep of neglect and decay upon its solitary hill. Those verses of the Persian poet which came into the mind of Muhammad the Conqueror when he first set foot in the despoiled palace of the emperors of the East are equally appropriate here: "In the dwellings of kings see where the loathsome spider weaves her busy web, while from Erasciab's proud summit is heard the raven's hoarse cry." 210

THE LAST DAYS.

At this point I find that the chain of my reminiscences is broken. I can no longer recollect clearly what I did and saw, nor give those long, minute descriptions which flowed so readily from my pen when writing of the earlier part of my visit. It was nothing now but a succession of hurried expeditions back and forth across the Golden Horn, and from Europe to Asia and back again, followed in the evening by visions of populous towns, throngs of people, forests, fleets, hills, all tinged with a faint touch of melancholy by the ever-present shadow of the day of departure now drawing rapidly near, as though already these sights were only memories of what had been. And yet through all the sense of hurry and confusion which the thought of those last days is sure to bring up, certain objects stand out clearly in my memory. I remember, for instance, very distinctly that beautiful morning on which I visited for the first time the greater number of the imperial mosques, and at the mere thought of it I seem instantly to find myself surrounded by an immense space and a solemn stillness. The tremendous impression made upon one's mind by St. Sophia does not seem to detract from the effect produced by the first sight of those titanic walls. Here, as elsewhere, the religion of the conquerors has appropriated to itself the religious art of the conquered. Almost all the other mosques are built in imitation of Justinian's great basilica, with huge domes and semi-domes, courts, and porticoes, some even having the form of a Greek cross. But Islamism has tinged everything with a light and color all its own, which, joined to these familiar features, results in an altogether different style of building, where one sees, as it were, the horizon of an unknown world and breathes the atmosphere surrounding a strange God. 215

These mosques have enormous naves, white, austere, majestic in their simplicity, over which a flood of soft, uniform light pours from numberless windows; every object stands out distinctly from one extremity to the other, and mind and sight seem lulled to sleep by a dreamy sense of utter peacefulness and calm, as though in some misty valley surmounted by a serene white heaven; only the reverberation of your own footsteps recalls the fact that you are in an enclosure. There is nothing to distract the mind; the imagination, spanning directly and without effort the intervening space and light, arrives at once before the object of adoration. There is nothing to suggest either melancholy or terror—no illusions, no mysteries, no shadowy corners in which the symbols of a complicated hierarchy of supernatural beings glimmer vaguely before the confused senses. There is the one clear, distinct, all-compelling idea of a sole and omnipotent God, who demands in his temple the severe nakedness of the sunlit desert, and permits no likeness or image of himself other than the sky. All the imperial mosques of Constantinople possess these common characteristics—a majesty which uplifts and a simplicity which concentrates upon one single object the mind of the worshipper, differing so little from one another, even in the matter of detail, that it is difficult to preserve any distinct recollection of them. 216

The Ahmediyeh has a peculiarly graceful and pleasing exterior, possessing, notwithstanding its great size, the airy lightness of a fabric built of clouds; its dome is supported on enormous white marble piers around which four small mosques could be built, and it is the only one in Stambul which can boast of the glorious girdle of six minarets. The mosque of Suleiman, more like a little sacred city than a single temple, where a stranger might readily lose his way, has three great naves, and its dome, higher than that of St. Sophia,^J rests upon four marvellous columns of red granite, suggesting the trunks of those gigantic trees in California. The mosque of Muhammad is a white and radiant St. Sophia; that of Bayezid has the pre-eminence for elegance of outline; that of Osman is built entirely of marble; the Shazadeh mosque possesses the two most exquisite minarets in Stambul; that in the Ok Serai quarter is the most charming example of the renaissance of Turkish art. The Selimiyyeh is the most severe, the mosque of Mahmûd the most elaborate, the Validéh Sultan the most ornate. Each one has some peculiar beauty of its own, or else a legend or special privilege attached to it. The Ahmediyeh guards the standard of the Prophet; the Bayezidiyyeh is crowned by clouds of pigeons; the Suleimaniyyeh can boast of inscriptions written by the hand of Kara Hissari; in the mosque of the Validéh Sultan is the imitation gold column which cost the conqueror of Candia his life. Sultan Muhammad sees, "eleven imperial mosques bow their heads around him, even as the sheafs of Joseph's brothers bowed themselves before his sheaf." In one may be seen the columns carried away from the imperial palace and Augusteon of Justinian which formerly supported statues of Venus, Theodora, and Eudoxia; in others are marbles from the ancient churches of Chalcedon, pillars from the ruins of Troy, columns from Egyptian temples, precious stained glass stolen from Persian palaces, building materials, the plunder of circus and forum, aqueduct and basilica, all engulfed and lost sight of in the white immensity of the religious art of the victors. 217

^J "The dome itself is 86 feet in diameter internally and 156 feet in height. At St. Sophia the dome is 108 feet in diameter and 175 feet in height, or 22 and 19 more, respectively."—Fergusson, *Hist. Architecture*.—TRANS. 218



Panorama of Mosque of Bayezid.

The interiors differ from one another even less than the exteriors. At the farther end is a marble pulpit, facing it, the Sultan's seat enclosed within a gilded lattice; beside the *mihrab* stand two huge candelabra supporting tapers which look like the trunks of palm trees; innumerable lamps composed of large crystal globes are disposed about the nave in so singular a manner as to seem more fitting adjuncts of a grand ball than of religious solemnities. Inscriptions encircling the columns, doorways, and windows, friezes painted in imitation of marble, and floral designs executed in stained glass are the sole attempts at ornamentation which break the white monotony of those lofty walls. The marble treasures of the pavements in the vestibules, the galleries surrounding the courtyards, the ablutionary fountains, and minarets do not impair at all the character of charming yet severe simplicity which marks those great white fabrics, framed in verdure, whose lofty domes stand out clear and sparkling against the blue sky.

And, after all, the *jami*—that is, the mosque proper—covers only a minor part of the enclosure which goes by its name, the rest being taken up by a labyrinth of courtyards and buildings, consisting of auditoriums, where the Koran is read; treasuries, where private individuals deposit their valuables for safe-keeping; academies, 220 medical colleges, children's schools, quarters for students, and soup-kitchens for the poor; insane asylums, hospitals, *khâns* for travellers, and baths—a little philanthropic settlement nestling at the base of the lofty temple as at that of a mountain, and shaded by mighty trees.

Now, however, all these things have faded into one another in my memory. I only see the tiny black speck of my own insignificant self wandering like a detached atom up and down those vast naves, between two lines of diminutive Turks prostrated at their devotions. As I move on, dazzled by the pervading whiteness, stupefied by the strange light, awed and subdued by the immensity around me, dragging my worn slippers—and my humbled pride as a descriptive writer as well—it seems as though one mosque melted into another, and that all around me in every direction there arose interminable ranks of roofs and pilasters, a white illimitable throng in which sight and sense are swallowed up.

My recollections of how I passed another day are full of mystery and crowded with phantom shapes. Entering the courtyard of a Mussulman private house, and descending by the light of a torch to the very lowest of a flight of damp, mouldy stairs, I found myself beneath the vaulted roof of the Yeri Betan Serai, the great cistern basilica of Constantine, whose confines, according to vulgar belief in Constantinople, are unknown; the greenish waters lose themselves in the distance beneath the black roof, lit up here and there by a vivid ray of light, which seems only to increase the horror of the surrounding darkness. The crimson flame from our torch throws a lurid glare over the arches nearest to us, falls in slanting rays upon the dripping walls, and brings into view dim, confused tiers of columns intercepting the perspective in all directions like the tree-trunks of some vast submerged forest. The imagination, drawn on in spite of itself by a sort of horrible fascination, penetrates those sepulchral galleries, hovers above the face of those gloomy waters, and finally loses itself amid the intricate windings of those endless columns. Meanwhile the dragoman is murmuring in one's ear blood-curdling tales of adventurous persons who have embarked upon those waters and started off with the intention of exploring their farthest limits, only to return, long hours afterward, with blanched faces and hair on end, while behind them could be heard boisterous shouts of mocking laughter and piercing shrieks, which echoed and re-echoed beneath the vaulted roof; and others, again, who never returned at all, having met their end—who knows how?—driven insane, perhaps, by terror, or possibly starved to death, or drawn by mysterious currents to some unknown abyss far away from Stambul, God only can tell where. Issuing once more into the broad, sunny light of the At-Meidan square, all these gloomy fancies at once take flight, and a few minutes later we again descend, and find ourselves surrounded by the two hundred pillars of the dry cistern of Binbûr, where a hundred Greek silk-spinners are singing a martial song as they work in the pale, unearthly light broken by interlacing lines of arches, while from overhead comes the dull, confused rumble of a passing caravan. Then fresh air and sunlight again, followed by another plunge into semi-obscurity, more rows of columns and vaulted roofs, and the stillness of the tomb broken by far-away voices; and so on until evening—altogether a mysterious, unearthly sort of pilgrimage, which left a haunting mental impression for long after of a vast subterranean sea 222

which, having already engulfed the Greek empire, was destined one day to draw gay, thoughtless, unheeding Stambul into its shadowy depths as well.



Ancient fountain at Scutari.

These depressing fancies, however, were entirely dispelled by the gay image of Skutari. Whenever we went there, embarking upon one of the crowded little steamers for the purpose, my friend and I used invariably to get into a discussion as to which ranked first in point of beauty—Skutari or the two banks of the Golden Horn. Yunk preferred the former, but I held out for Stambul. Nevertheless, Skutari captivated me by its sudden, unexpected changes of aspect: it seems to mock all those who approach it by water. From the Sea of Marmora it is only a big village scattered over a hillside; from the Golden Horn you realize that it is a town; but when the steamboat, after rounding the most advanced point on the Asiatic shore, proceeds in a straight line toward the harbor, the little town spreads out in the most astounding fashion; other hills, quite covered with buildings, come into sight, rising one behind the other; the valleys are filled with houses; villas crown the heights; the outskirts stretch away along the shore as far as the eye can reach; and you find that you are approaching a great city, which in the course of a few minutes has come into view from some obscure hiding-place, much as though a huge curtain had been rolled back, and you gaze stupidly at it, half expecting to see it disappear at any moment with the same suddenness with which it came. Landing by means of a wooden gang-plank, and amid the shouts and vociferations of boatmen, dragomen, and others with horses to hire, we mount the principal street, which winds up the hillside among yellow and red houses decked with vines and creepers, and between garden-walls, over which a mass of verdure trails and clammers; overhead tall trellisworks and lofty plane trees cast their shade, the latter so large as to sometimes nearly close the street. As we go on we pass Turkish cafés, before which lounges the usual crowd of Asiatic idlers, smoking, stretched out at full length, their gaze fixed on no one knows what. Then we meet a herd of goats; heavy country carts jolt slowly by, drawn by oxen with wreaths of flowers on their heads; peasants, some in fez and others in turban, pass us on the road; Mussulman funeral processions, and groups of *hanums*, spending the summer in their country-houses, carrying great bunches of flowers or sprays of blossoms in their hands. We seem to be in another Stambul, less mysterious, but gayer and more cheerful than she of the Seven Hills. This one is more like a great city of villas into which the country is making inroads on every side. The little back streets lined with stables rise and descend again over hill and valley, swallowed up at last by the green of park and garden. On the heights the profound peace of the country still reigns, but lower down there is all the stir and activity of a seaport town. From the huge barracks which rise here and there comes a confused sound of bugle-calls, snatches of songs, and the beating of drums, while clouds of birds fly about and settle in the quiet lanes and byways.

Following in the wake of a funeral procession, we finally leave the town, and, entering the famous cemetery, are soon lost in that vast forest of mighty cypress trees which extends in one direction toward the Sea of Marmora and in the other toward the Golden Horn, covering a large area of undulating ground. On all sides there is nothing but group on group, row on row, of glimmering white tombstones outlined against the turf and gay colors of the wild flowers, and an intricate network of footpaths winding in and out among the trunks of the trees, crowded so closely together as barely to allow any view of the horizon stretching away in a long shimmering line. We wander aimlessly among the little painted and gilded columns, some erect, others toppling over or fallen flat, and between railings of family sepulchres, mausoleums of dead pashas, rude tombstones of the poor. Here and there lie bunches of faded flowers, and sometimes, where the earth has been disturbed, the light falls upon a half-buried skull; on and on, no sound save the cooing of doves concealed overhead amid the branches of the cypress trees; and the farther we go the more does the forest seem to expand, the tombstones multiply, the paths increase in number, the shining strips of the horizon recede into the distance, and the reign of death keeps pace with us step by step, until at length, just as we begin to despair of ever finding our way out, we issue quite unexpectedly upon the wide avenue leading to the vast open plain of Haidar Pasha, where the

Mussulman troops once assembled preparatory to setting out for the Asiatic wars. The view from thence, embracing the Sea of Marmora, Stambul, the mouth of the Golden Horn, Galata, and Pera, all veiled beneath the light morning mist and tinted with the colors of paradise, is so exquisitely lovely that we catch our breath with something of the same incredulous wonder with which we first beheld those shores. 226

CHERAGAN PALACE.

Another morning we found ourselves seated in a tram-car between two colossal black eunuchs charged by one of Abdul Aziz's aides-de-camp with the duty of escorting us over the imperial palace of Cheragan, situated on the Bosphorus just below Beshiktash. I recall distinctly the mingled feeling of curiosity and repulsion with which I looked out of the corner of my eye at the eunuch beside me, towering above me by nearly a head, and with one mighty hand resting open upon his knee. Every time I turned I could catch the faint perfume of essence of bergamot with which his sleek, correct court costume was scented. When the car stopped I put my hand in my pocket to draw out my purse, but the enormous hand of the eunuch closed upon my own like a steel vise, and his great eyes met mine with a warning look, as who should say, "Christian, refrain from offering me such an insult, or I will break every bone in your body."

Alighting before a small door covered with arabesques, we entered a long corridor, where we were presently met by a party of servants in livery, who conducted us up a wide stairway leading to the royal apartments. Here, at all events, there was no need to recall historical associations in order to obtain a vivid and life-like impression. The air was still warm with the breath of the court. The wide divans covered with satin and velvet which extended along the walls were the very same upon which but a few weeks before the Sultan's odalisques had reclined: a vague suggestion of warm, sensuous life still floated in the air. We walked through a long succession of gorgeous rooms, some decorated after the European fashion, others after the Moorish, all rich and beautiful, but possessing a sort of stately simplicity which awed us, making us talk in subdued tones, while all the time the eunuchs, muttering a string of unintelligible remarks and explanations, pointed out now a certain corner, now a doorway, with the wary gestures of those who reveal something secret and mysterious. Silken hangings, many-hued carpets, mosaic tables—rich oil paintings hung where the light could fall upon them—graceful archways of the doors, divided in the middle by little Arabian pillars, lofty candelabra—resembling crystal trees—which tinkled musically as we shook them in passing,—all these things followed so close upon one another that they became a confused medley almost as soon as seen, our minds being more intent upon visions of possible flying odalisques taken by surprise. The only thing of which I retained any distinct impression was the Sultan's bath-room, of white marble and carved to represent stalactites, hanging flowers, lace, and delicate fretwork, all so airy and light that one feared to touch it with so much as the point of a finger for fear of its breaking. The arrangement of the rooms reminded me a little of the Alhambra. We passed through them hurriedly, noiselessly over the thick carpets, almost furtively. From time to time a eunuch would pull a cord, a green curtain would roll up, and through a wide window would be seen the Bosphorus, Asia, hundreds of vessels, floods of light; then it would all disappear, and we would be left dazed and blinded as though a lamp had been flashed in our eyes. From one window we caught sight of a little garden the high blank walls of which, as bare and forbidding-looking as those of a convent, suggested at once all sorts of fancies about beautiful women deprived of love and liberty, and then it was suddenly shut out of view by the dropping of the curtain. The rooms seemed unending, and at the sight of each new doorway we would quicken our steps, hoping this time to enter before we were expected; but all in vain: not so much as the flutter of a garment rewarded our efforts; every odalisque had vanished, and a profound and death-like stillness hung over the entire building. That rustling sound which made us turn and glance back so quickly was but the noise of the heavy brocade curtain as it fell back in place, while the silvery tinkle of the crystal candelabras mocked us by its resemblance to the light laughter of some hidden fair one. 227
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Cemetery of Eyûb and View of the Golden Horn.

And so at last we became utterly wearied out by this never-ending progress through the silent palace and amid that lifeless magnificence—tired of seeing the black faces of the eunuchs, the watchful, sedate crowd of servants, and our own incongruous Bohemian countenances reflected in the huge mirrors which lined the walls; and, reaching the last door almost on a run, we breathed a sigh of heartfelt satisfaction at finding ourselves once more in the open air surrounded by the miserable dwellings and ragged, clamorous population of the Topkhâneh quarter.

EYÛB.

And can I ever forget the necropolis of Eyûb? We went there one evening at sunset, and I always think of it just as it looked at that time, lit up by the last gleams of daylight. A small kâik landed us at the farther end of the Golden Horn, and we climbed up to the “consecrated ground” of the Osmons by a steep, narrow path lined with sepulchres. At that hour the stone-cutters who work at the tombstones during the day, making the vast cemetery resound beneath the sharp blows of their hammers, had dispersed to their homes, and the whole place was completely deserted. We moved forward circumspectly, peering cautiously around to see if we could detect the menacing form of imâm or dervish, as the profane curiosity of a *giaour* is less tolerated there than in almost any other sacred spot; but, seeing neither turban nor stiff hat, we finally reached the mysterious Eyûb mosque, whose shining domes and airy minarets we had so often beheld from the hilltops of the opposite shore, as well as from every little bay and inlet in the Golden Horn. In the court, shaded by a mighty plane tree, stands the kiosk-shaped mausoleum of the famous standard-bearer of the Prophet, Abu Eyûb, perpetually lit up by a circle of lamps. He lost his life when the Arabs first besieged Byzantium, and his place of sepulture having been discovered eight centuries later by Muhammad the Conqueror, he consecrated this mosque to his memory; and it is there that each successive sultan presents himself on his accession to be girded with the sword of Osman. It is considered the most sacred mosque in Constantinople, just as the cemetery which surrounds it is more highly revered than any other. In the shade of the great trees which surround the mosque stand türbehs of sultanas, viziers, and distinguished officials of the court, encircled by flowers, gorgeous with marbles and gilt arabesques, and covered with pompous inscriptions. On one side is the small mortuary temple of the muftis, surmounted by an octagonal dome, beneath which repose the bodies of great ecclesiastics in enormous catafalques ornamented with huge muslin turbans. It is a city of tombs, white, shaded, whose sedate beauty combines a religious melancholy with a breath of worldliness, like a very aristocratic neighborhood whose well-bred quiet proceeds from pride. The paths run between white walls and graceful railings, over which vines trail and clamber from the little gardens surrounding the graves; acacia trees stretch forth their branches to meet and mingle overhead with those of oak and myrtle, and through the gilded latticework of the arched windows of the türbehs may be seen, in the dim, soft light within, marble mausoleums tinged with green from the reflections of the trees. In no other place in Stambul is seen to such advantage the Mussulman art of rendering the idea of death agreeable and robbing it of all its terrors. It is at once a necropolis, a royal dwelling-place, a garden, a pantheon, full of gentle melancholy and charm, and simultaneously with the prayer which rises to your lips there comes a smile. On all sides extends the cemetery, shaded by the hundred-year-old cypresses, crossed by winding paths, white with innumerable tombstones, which seem to be hurrying down the hillside to dip themselves in the sparkling water or pressing forward curiously to the pathways to watch the passage of phantom shapes. And from any number of secluded little nooks, through the spreading branches of the trees, confused glimpses are caught—far off to the right—of Stambul, looking like a succession of blue towns detached from one another; and below—the Golden Horn, reflecting the last rays of the sun, while opposite lie Sudlujè, Kaliji Oghlu, Piri Pasha, Haskeni; and beyond—the large district of Kassim and the vague profile of Galata,

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fading away in the wonderful blending of soft, tremulous tints which hardly seem as though they belonged to this world.

THE JANISSARY MUSEUM.

All these impressions have been temporarily effaced, and I find myself marching through a long suite of bare rooms between two rows of immovable, staring figures, which are like those of so many corpses fastened upright against the walls. I never remember to have experienced so decided a feeling of shrinking anywhere else, unless it was in the last room of Mme. Tussaud's exhibition in London, where, in the somewhat subdued light, you are confronted with the life-like presentments of all of England's most notorious criminals. This, however, is like a museum of spectres, or rather like an open sepulchre in which you behold the mummified forms of all the most famous personages of that magnificent, savage, ferocious Turkey which no longer exists, save in the memory of a few old men or the imaginative brain of some poet. There are a hundred large wooden figures colored like life and clad in various styles of ancient costume, standing erect in stiff, haughty attitudes, with heads thrown back and blank staring eyes, and hands resting upon their sword-hilts, as though only awaiting the word to draw and begin shedding human blood, just as in the good old times. First, there is the household of the Pâdishah—the chief eunuch and grand vizier, the muftis, chamberlains, and head officials—wearing turbans upon their heads of every color, pyramidal, round, square, huge, exaggerated; long caftans of every conceivable hue, made out of brocade and covered with embroidery; tunics of white or crimson silk, bound about the waist with Cashmere scarfs; gold-embroidered waistcoats, the breasts all glittering with gold and silver medals; and magnificent armor—two long, spectral files, at once fantastic and gorgeous, from which a pretty fair idea may be obtained of the character of the ancient Ottoman court with its savage pomp and haughty pride. Next come the pages bearing the Pâdishah's furs, his turbans, stool, and sword; then the guards of the gardens and gates, the Sultan's guard, and the white and black eunuchs, with faces like Magi or idols, glittering, plumed, their heads covered with Persian fur, or wearing metal helmets or purple caps, or odd-looking turbans shaped like crescents, cones, and reversed pyramids: they are armed with steel clubs, murderous-looking daggers, and whips, like a band of cut-throats and assassins. One regards you with a look of suspicious contempt; another grinds his teeth; another gazes straight ahead of him, with eyes grown callous from the sight of blood; while a fourth wears upon his lips a smile that is truly devilish. After these follows the corps of the Janissaries, accompanied by its patron saint, Emin Baba, an emaciated individual clad in a white tunic, and officers of every grade, each personating some office connected with the kitchen: all the ranks of the soldiers are represented, wearing the various uniforms and emblems of that insolent corps which finally met its end under the grape-shot of Mahmûd. The childishness, at once grotesque and puerile, of these costumes, combined with the ferocious memories they evoke, produces the impression of a savage Carnival. No artist, however unbridled his imagination might be, could ever succeed in portraying such a mad confusion of royal costumes, ecclesiastical vestments, and garments suitable for brigands and buffoons. The "water-carriers," the "soup-makers," the "chief cooks," the "head of the scullions," soldiers to whom were assigned all sorts of special duties, succeed one another in long lines, with brushes and ladles fastened to their turbans, bells hung from their tunics, carrying leather bottles and the famous kettles which sounded the signal for revolt, clad in large fur caps and long cloaks falling from neck to heels like magicians' mantles, with their wide belts made of round disks of engraved metal, their huge sabres, their fishy eyes, their enormous chests, and faces set in every variety of derision, menace, and insult. Last of all come the Seraglio mutes, silken noose in hand, and the dwarfs and buffoons, with cunning, spiteful faces, and mock crowns on their heads.

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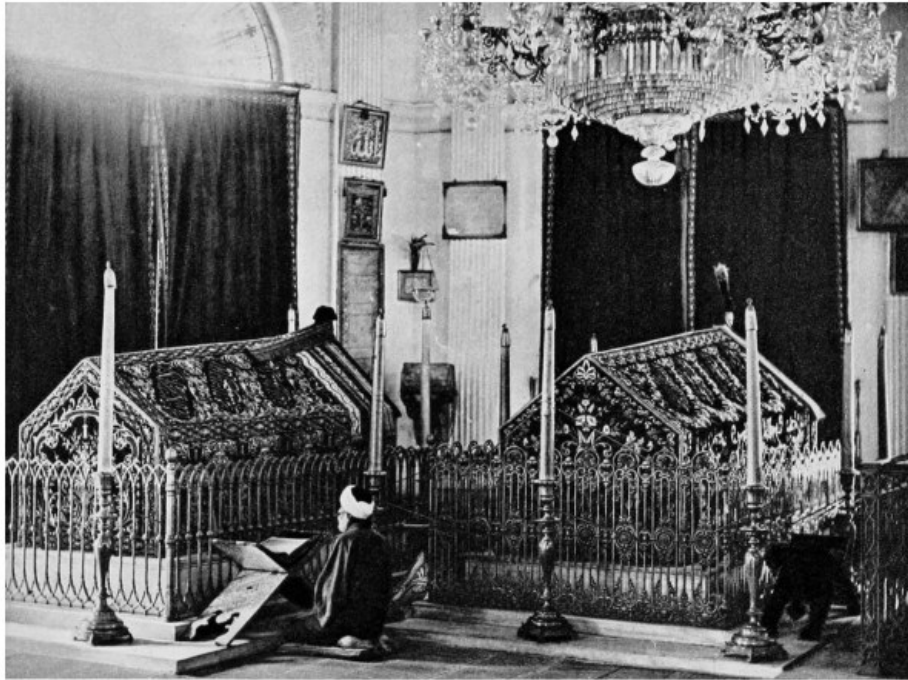
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Türbeh of the Mosque Shabzadeh.

The great glass cases in which all these worthies are enclosed lend something of the look of an anatomical museum to the place, and increase their likeness to mummified human beings, so that from time to time you are conscious of a disagreeable creeping sensation down your backbone, or feel as though you might just have passed through a room of the Old Seraglio in the presence of the entire court whom some threatening outburst from the Pâdishah has frozen stiff with terror. When you at last come out upon the square of the At-Meidan, and your eye falls upon pashas clad all in sombre black, and nizams modestly attired in the uniform of zouaves, oh how gentle, amiable, almost timid, does the Turk of our day and generation appear!



Tombs of Sultan Mahmûd II and of his Son, Abdul Aziz.

An irresistible attraction calls me back once more among the tombs: this time it is those numberless imperial türbehs scattered throughout the Turkish city, those charming examples of the Mussulman's art and philosophy, which occupy so conspicuous a place in our recollections of the East. By means of a firman we gained admission, first of all, to the türbeh of Mahmûd the Reformer, which stands in a garden full of roses and jasmine not far from the At-Meidan. It is a beautiful circular building of white marble, whose leaden dome is supported upon Ionic pilasters:^K there are seven windows, furnished with gilded gratings, some of which overlook one of the principal streets of Stamboul. Inside, the walls are ornamented with bas-reliefs and covered with silken and brocade hangings. In the centre stands the tomb, covered with costly Persian shawls, and lying on it is the imperial fez, emblem of reform, with its plume and diamond aigrette, and within the enclosure, which is surrounded by a graceful railing inlaid with mother-of-pearl, are placed four massive silver candlesticks. The tombs of seven sultans stand along the walls; costly rugs and carpets of many hues cover the pavement; and here and there rare MSS. copies of the Koran with gold lettering lie upon rich reading-desks. A silver case contains a curiosity connected with Mahmûd's youth, which he directed should be placed on his tomb at his death. It consists of a long strip of muslin covered with minute Arabian characters, extracts from the Koran, which with infinite patience the Sultan traced when he was confined as a prisoner in the Old Seraglio before his accession. From the interior of the türbeh glimpses are caught through the window gratings of branches of trees without, the scent of roses pours in, and the little building is filled with light and the stir and movement of the city, as though it were an open gallery. Women and children pause as they go by to look through the windows and murmur a prayer. There is something primitive and very sweet about it all that touches the heart, as though, not the skeleton, but the soul of the dead sultan lay within those walls, listening to his people who greet him in passing; in dying he has merely exchanged his kiosk in the Seraglio for this one, which is no less cheerful than the other; he is still in the sunlight, in the noise and bustle of Stamboul; still among his children—nearer to them, indeed, than before; just on the edge of life and in sight of all; still exhibiting before their eyes his plume glittering as it was ever wont to do when he appeared before them, glowing with life and magnificence, on his way to the mosque to pray for the prosperity of the empire. And it is the same with all the other türbehs—that of Ahmed, of Bayezid (whose head rests upon a brick made of the dust collected from his clothing and slippers), of Suleiman, of Mustafa, and Selim III., of Abdul-Hamid, and of Roxalana: they are small temples whose pillars are of white marble and porphyry, and which glitter with amber and mother-of-pearl. Some of them have openings in the roof through which the rain falls upon the flowers and turf which surround the tombs, all hung with lace and velvet; ostrich eggs and gilded lamps hang from the roofs, lighting up the tombs of the various princes which encircle the paternal sarcophagus, and on them are exposed the handkerchiefs which were used to strangle infants and little children, possibly with a view to impressing upon the minds of the faithful, together with a natural sense of pity for the victims, the fatal necessity for such crimes. I well remember how I, myself, by force of constantly picturing such deaths as these, began at last to be conscious of a certain acquiescence, in my own mind, with the iniquitous reasons of state which sanctioned them—how by dint of seeing ever before me in mosques and fountains and türbehs, and under every conceivable form, the glorification and worship of one man, of one absolute and supreme power, something within me too began to yield itself up to that power; and how, at last, after wandering very frequently in the shaded cemeteries and fixing my attention for long periods on tombs and sepulchres, I came to regard death in

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a new and much more tranquil light, to experience a certain indifference toward life, and to drift half unconsciously into a state of sluggish philosophy and vague indifference, in which the highest good seemed to consist in dreaming away one's life, allowing what is written to be accomplished without let or hindrance. And thus it came about that I found myself, quite unexpectedly, seized with a feeling of weariness and aversion when, in the midst of these peaceful reveries, something would recall to my mind our toiling cities, our dark churches, and walled and dreary cemeteries.

K The pilasters are Corinthian.—TRANS.

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THE DERVISHES.

I am reminded, too, of the dervishes when I recall those last days.

The Mevlevi—or dancing dervishes (the most celebrated of the thirty-two orders)—have a well-known fekkh on the Grande Rue de Pera. We proceeded thither prepared to behold rapt, saintly countenances lit up by celestial visions. But our minds were quickly disabused of all such ideas. Alas! among dervishes as well the flame of faith “laps a dry wick,” and the celebrated holy dance appeared to me to be nothing more than a cold and formal theatrical performance. It is unquestionably both curious and interesting to watch them as they enter the circular mosque in single file, each one enveloped in a long dark mantle, with arms concealed and head bowed, to an accompaniment of savage music, monotonous and sweet, which resembles the sound made by the wind among the cypress trees of the Skutari cemetery, soothing one into a sort of waking slumber. And when they begin to turn, prostrating themselves two by two before the mihrab with dreamy, languid movements which arouse sudden doubts as to their sex: there is something fascinating too in the way in which, with a sudden rapid movement, they fling aside their cloaks and appear all in white, with long woollen skirts, and, opening their arms with an amorous gesture and inclining their heads to one side, abandon themselves one after another to the evolutions of the dance, as though pushed forward by an invisible hand, and when they all whirl around in the centre of the mosque together and at equal distances from one another, without diverging from their respective posts by so much as a hair's breadth, as though each one were on a pivot, white, rapid, light, with waving, inflated skirts and half-closed eyes; and when with a sudden simultaneous movement, as though overpowered by some superhuman vision, they cast themselves upon the ground with a thundering cry of “Allah!” or when, commencing again, they bend low and kiss one another's hands, then circle around once more, close to the wall, with a light, tripping step, between walking and dancing,—all of this, I acknowledge, makes a beautiful and entertaining performance, but the ecstasies, the transports, the transfigured faces, seen and described by so many enthusiastic travellers, I failed to discover. All I saw was a number of extraordinarily agile and indefatigable dancers, who went through their task with the most utter indifference, sometimes even with suppressed smiles. One young dervish was manifestly pleased at finding himself observed by an English girl in the gallery just opposite him, and I detected more than one in an attempt to bite instead of kiss his neighbor's proffered hand, the other retaliating with a sharp pinch—the hypocrites! What struck me most was that every one of those men—and they were of all ages and conditions—possessed a grace and elegance of movement and pose which might well arouse envy in the breasts of many of the frequenters of our ball-rooms, and which I take to be a natural attribute of the Oriental races, due, no doubt, to certain peculiarities in their structure and build. I had an opportunity of observing this still more closely on another occasion, when I visited one of them in his cell just at the hour when he was preparing to take part in the dance. He was a tall, slender youth, with a beardless and somewhat effeminate face: when we entered he was standing before a mirror in the act of fastening on his white cassock. Greeting us with a smiling glance, he continued his toilet, passing his hand lightly over his slim figure, adjusting rapidly, but at the same time tastefully and with the sure eye of an artist, all the various parts of his costume, just as a lady gives the finishing touches to her dress; and, really seen from behind with his trailing gown, he did look very much indeed like a pretty slip of a girl who, all dressed for the ball, gazes in the mirror to judge of the effect. And he was—a monk!

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But among all my last memories there are none so beautiful as those of the summit of Mount Chamlejah, which rises up above Skutari. It was there that I gave Constantinople my final greeting, and, as it was the last, so was it also the most superb of all my great visions of the metropolis. We crossed over to Skutari at daybreak one foggy morning: when we arrived at the top of the mountain the fog was still there, and, though the appearance of the sky gave promise of a clear day, everything below us was hidden. It was an extraordinary sight. An immense gray curtain was spread between us and Skutari, the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, all of Constantinople, completely concealing them, just as though the great city with its harbors and outskirts had been blotted out of existence. It was like an ocean of mist, from out of which the summit of Chamlejah arose like a lonely island. As we gazed down at the gray sea at our feet we pretended that we were two poor pilgrims from the interior of Asia Minor, who, having reached that spot before daybreak, were looking at the mist below them without any idea that it covered the mighty metropolis of the Ottoman empire; and then we amused ourselves greatly by picturing what their growing sensations of wonder and bewilderment would have been as, little by little, the rising sun rolled back the veil and exposed the marvellous and unlooked-for spectacle to view. The thick clouds began to break away at various points at the same moment; here and there on the great gray surface little groups of houses appeared like tiny islands—an archipelago of small towns, floating in the mist and scattered far away from one another. These were the peaks of Stambul's seven hills, the heights of Pera, the highest villages along the European shore of the Bosphorus, the crest of Kassim Pasha, a confused suggestion of the more distant suburbs along the Golden Horn near Eyûb and Haskeui—twenty little Constantinoples, rosy, airy, bristling with innumerable white, green, and silver points. Then each began to grow larger and larger, as though slowly arising from that vaporous sea, and on all sides thousands of roofs, domes,

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towers, and minarets floated gayly into sight, crowding close together or chasing after one another as though each were skurrying to take his place before being caught by the sun. Already Skutari lay exposed to view, as well as nearly all of Stambul; on the other bank of the Golden Horn we could see the higher parts of all those outskirts which stretch from Galata to the Sweet Waters; and on the European shore of the Bosphorus, Topkâneh, Fundukli, Dolmabâghcheh, Beshiktash, and so on, as far as the eye could reach, village after village, great tiers of buildings, and still more distant towns, of which only the roofs could be seen, bathed in a soft pink glow. But the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus, the sea were still invisible. Our two pilgrims would have been completely puzzled: apparently it was an immense city built above two deep valleys, perpetually enveloped in fog, one opening into the other; and they might well have wondered what those two mysterious abysses could possibly contain. But, behold! Yet a few moments and the dull gray of the remaining clouds begins to melt into blue; then a shimmer appears. Water? a bay? No, a strait, a sea, two seas! All of Constantinople at length stands forth revealed, bathed in light, framed in blue and green, looking as though she might just have left the hands of the Creator. Oh the beautiful vision! What avails it that we have already gazed enraptured upon you from a hundred different heights, examined your every minutest detail, and given voice over and over again to our wonder and admiration? Once more we must engage in the vain struggle to express our sense of your all-inexpressible loveliness; and this time it is with the knowledge that yet a few short days and you are destined to fade for ever from our eyes, henceforth to be only a vague, confused memory; the veil of mist will settle down, to lift again no more for ever; the moment of parting is at hand. I know not why, but it is as though we were going into exile, and the horizon of our lives seems to grow indistinct.

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And yet even in Constantinople, and when there are only a few days left, one is sometimes bored. The mind, completely wearied out, refuses to receive any more new impressions. We would cross the bridge without turning our heads: everything seemed to be the same color; we wandered aimlessly about, yawning and uninterested like a couple of idle vagabonds; spent hour after hour sitting in front of a Turkish café staring at the ground, or lounging at the hotel windows watching the cats climb over the opposite roofs. We were satiated with the Orient, and felt within us a growing desire for work and activity.

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Coffee-Maker.

Then came two days of steady rain. Constantinople became one huge mud-puddle and turned gray all over. That was the final stroke. We plunged head foremost into outrageously bad humors, abused the whole place, grew rude and stupid, and assumed no end of conceited European airs. Who on the day of our arrival would ever have imagined such a condition of things? And to think of the lengths to which it carried us!—actually to the point of holding high festival on the day when we came out of the Austrian Lloyds with a couple of tickets for Varna and the Danube in our pockets! But there was one feature that dampened our rejoicings, and that was the approaching parting from our kind friends in Pera, with whom we passed all our last evenings in the most cordial and friendly fashion. How depressing this everlasting saying good-bye becomes—this continual breaking of pleasant ties, and leaving a fragment of one's heart wherever one may go! Is there nowhere to be found on the surface of the earth a magic wand by whose aid I shall one day be enabled, at a given moment, to assemble around some well-spread board all my friends scattered at present over the surface of the globe—you, Santoro, from Constantinople; you, Selam, from the coast of Africa; and Ten Brink from the dunes of Holland; and Segovia from the Guadalquivir; and Saavedra from the banks of the Thames—that I may tell you how ever-present you all are in my thoughts and in my heart? Alas! the wand is not yet found, and in the mean time the years go by and one's dreams fade away.

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THE TURKS.

And now, before embarking upon that Austrian boat which is getting up steam in the Golden Horn opposite Galata, preparatory to sailing for the Black Sea, it remains for me to set forth, modestly as becomes a simple traveller, certain general observations bearing upon the question, "What did you think of the Turks?"—observations altogether spontaneous in themselves, and wholly uninfluenced by current events, resting, in short, entirely upon my personal recollections of those days. At that question, "What did you think of the Turks?" the first thing that comes into my mind is the impression made upon me from the moment I set foot in Constantinople to the last day of my stay there by the outward appearance of the male population of Stambul. Setting aside all merely physical differences, this impression is something altogether unlike that produced upon one by the men of any other city of Europe: it is as though they were all—I am at a loss how to express my meaning more clearly—thinking of precisely the same thing. Now, this idea might occur to a Southerner as he observed superficially and for the first time the inhabitants of a city of Northern Europe, but that is not the same thing at all. With them it is the seriousness and preoccupation of a busy people who are thinking of actual things, while the Turks all seem to be considering something intangible and remote: they have the air of philosophers possessed by a fixed idea, or of somnambulists unconscious of their whereabouts, gazing ahead of them with far-seeing eyes, as though accustomed to contemplate distant horizons, while in the expression of the eyes and lines of the mouth there is that look of vague melancholy noticeable in people who live shut up in themselves. In all there is the same gravity, the same composed manner, the same reserve of language, look, and gesture. They seem all to be gentlemen educated after one pattern, from the pasha to the shopkeeper, and animated in common by a certain well-bred dignity, which, were it not for the differences in dress, would lead one to suppose that Stambul had no plebeians. The expression is almost universally cold, revealing nothing of the soul and mind within, it being exceedingly rare to come across one of those open countenances so common among us which reflect, like mirrors, the passionate or loving or spiteful nature below, and lend themselves to a quick and accurate reading of the man. Among the Turks, on the contrary, every face is an enigma; their look interrogates, but never responds, and their mouths betray nothing of the impulses of the heart within. It is impossible to convey any idea of the depressing effect made upon a stranger by these expressionless faces, this coldness, this statuesque uniformity of attitude and bearing, and the steady, passionless gaze which seems to see nothing. Sometimes you are seized with an insane desire to shout aloud in the middle of the crowd: "Rouse yourselves just once—wake up, speak out, tell what you are thinking of, what you are, what you see, staring ahead of you, with those great glass eyes!" At first it seems all so unnatural that you cannot realize that it is a normal condition, and fancy that this manner must have been assumed by common consent, or else result from some moral malady by which all the Mussulmans are temporarily afflicted. There is a variation, though, and a remarkable one, in the general uniformity, which strikes you at once: the original physical traits of the Turkish race—a race both handsome and robust—are now preserved only by that portion of the population which, either from necessity or religious enthusiasm, follows the same simple and austere manner of life as their forefathers did. Their characteristics are—a spare, vigorous build, well-formed head, bright eyes, aquiline nose, prominent jawbone, and general air of activity and strength. The Turk of the upper classes, on the contrary, where vice has long prevailed and the mixing of alien blood is much more common, has usually a fat, overgrown body, small head, low forehead, dull eyes, and drooping lips. A correspondingly great, or even greater, moral divergence exists between the true, pure Turk of a former generation and that colorless nondescript being calling himself "a reformed Turk." Hence, any one who may desire to study the characteristics of what may, in general terms, be called the Turkish people, is confronted by a serious difficulty at the outset, since with that half of it which has preserved intact the national traits there is either no way of mixing or no medium of communication, while the other half, while they offer every facility for intercourse and observation, do not faithfully represent either the national character or aims. Neither corruption nor the modern coloring of European civilization, however, has yet deprived the upper-class Turk of that indefinable air, at once severe and melancholy, which is seen in the lower classes as well, and which, not considered individually, but in the general mass of the people, produces an undeniably favorable impression. In fact, judging only from appearances, one would be inclined to pronounce the Turkish population the most civilized and well-behaved of any city in Europe. Even in the most deserted quarters of Stambul a stranger never is in danger of being insulted: he may frequent the mosques, even during the hours of prayer, with much greater certainty of meeting with respectful treatment than if he were a Turk visiting one of our churches; one never encounters a look that is, not insolent,—but so much as disagreeably curious; in the crowded streets it is rare to hear a laugh, and very rare to see a street-row in which blows are given and received; there are no bold glances from women at doors or windows or in the shops, no open indecency. The market-place is but little less dignified than the mosque, and everywhere the utmost restraint is put upon both language and gesture—no singing, no loud laughter, no vulgar scuffling, no importunate rabble blocking up the way; clean faces, hands, and feet; rarely is any one to be seen ragged, still more rarely dirty; there is no brawling, and a universal and reciprocal respect exists between all classes of society.

But all this is merely what appears upon the surface; the dry rot is covered up; the separation of the sexes prevents the corruption from being apparent. Sloth wears the mask of leisure, dignity is a cloak for pride. That well-bred composure which seems to indicate a thoughtful nature hides in reality a mortal intellectual inertia; what appears to be sombre moderation in their manner of life is nothing in the world but an utter absence of any life at all. The character and philosophy, the entire life, of this people may be understood by a particular condition of the body and spirit called *kief*, which represents their ideal of supreme happiness. This is it, after partaking sparingly of food, drinking a glass of water from the fountain, and saying some prayers, to establish yourself, with the body thus satisfied and the conscience at ease, in some spot from whence a wide stretch of the horizon may be seen, and there, beneath the shade of a tree, to remain, following the movements of the pigeons in the opposite cemetery, the distant ships, the insects close at hand, the clouds in the sky, and the smoke from your narghileh, reflecting the while vaguely on God and death, on the vanity of earthly things, and the sweetness of the eternal repose and the other life. That is *kief*; in other words, to be an idle spectator in the world's great theatre is the Turk's most lofty aspiration toward which he is impelled by the originally pastoral

temperament of his race, at once slow and contemplative, his religion, which ties men's hands in committing all to God, and his traditions as a soldier of Islamism for whom there exists no other really great or necessary sphere of action but that of the battlefield, upon which he must gain the mastery for his own faith; that done, every duty has been performed. His point of view is that of the fatalist: man is merely an instrument in the hands of Providence, and it is quite useless for him to attempt to alter the course of events as it has been prescribed in heaven; this world is but a caravansary, through which man has been created by God to pass, praying and admiring His works: leave all to God; let what is dying, die, what is passing away, pass; why should we trouble ourselves to restore or preserve? The supreme desire of the Turk is for peace, and he protects himself with the utmost care from all that threatens the calm monotony of his existence; consequently, no thirst for knowledge disturbs him, no passion for gain, no vague, unsatisfied longings either of love or ambition. The utter absence of those innumerable intellectual and physical tastes, in order to satisfy which we are willing to labor so incessantly, prevents him from being able to so much as understand why we do it, and he sees in it only an indication of a morbid aberration of mind. The final aim of all endeavor being, in his judgment, the attainment of that peace which he enjoys without being at any trouble to obtain, it seems to him self-evident that his course is the most sensible. The most stupendous intellectual and physical achievements of the other European nations seem to him nothing more than the results of a puerile restlessness, since they fail to gain for them an increased possession of his ideal of happiness. Never working himself, he has no sense of the value of time, and so neither desires nor appreciates all those fruits of human ingenuity which tend to quicken and facilitate the progress of the human race: he is quite capable of questioning the benefits to be derived from a railroad unless it could transport you to a place where you would be happier than you were before. This fatalistic belief, which leads him to condemn as useless any taking of thought for the future, is the cause of his utter disregard of everything apart from the certain and immediate advantage it may bring him. Thus a European who looks ahead and plans and schemes, and lays the foundations of enterprises whose completion he cannot hope to see, exhausting his powers and sacrificing his ease for a distant and uncertain end, he regards in the light of a visionary. We seem to him to be a frivolous people, despicable, presumptuous, degenerate, whose only boast lies in a sort of science of those earthly things which he scorns just as far as he is able to without allowing them to get the better of him. And how he despises us! For my own part, I am convinced that this is the ruling sentiment with which we inspire those real Turks who still constitute the large majority of the nation: one may deny or pretend not to believe this, but any one who has lived among them more or less cannot fail to be conscious of it. This feeling of disdain comes from various causes: first of all—and this, from their standpoint, is a most significant circumstance—they have maintained their supremacy over a large tract of Europe, whose population is of a different faith from their own, for more than four centuries, notwithstanding their comparatively small numbers and in the teeth of all that has happened and is still happening. To a small number of Turks this is merely to be attributed to the rival jealousies and discords of the great European powers, but the rest of the nation see in it only additional proof of their own superiority and our degradation. Indeed, it has never entered the mind of a Turk of the lower orders that Islam Europe ever could or would submit to the affront of Christian conquest from the Dardanelles to the Danube. To the boasts of our civilization they oppose the fact of their dominion. Naturally haughty, their pride fed and strengthened by the habit of ruling, accustomed to being assured in the name of God that they belong to a race of conquerors, born to fight, but not to work, and wont to subsist off the labors of the vanquished, they cannot so much as take in the idea that the people subdued by their arms could ever lay claim to the right of civil equality with themselves. Possessed as they are by a blind faith in the visible overrulings of Providence, their conquest of Europe was but a fulfilment of the will of God, and it is God who invested them, as a mark of His power, with this earthly sovereignty. The fact of His continuing to maintain them in it in the face of so many hostile forces is an incontestable proof of their divine right and of the truth of their religion. Against this line of argument the claims of civilization for human rights and equality are urged in vain. For them civilization means nothing but a hostile force which is trying to disarm them without coming to an open fight: little by little, and stealthily, it would lower them in the estimation of their own subjects and steal away their ascendancy. So, in addition to despising it as a vain thing, they fear it as an enemy, and, unable to oppose it by force, they offer the resistance of their own invincible inertia. To be transformed, civilized, is to put themselves on an equality with the people they have conquered, to endeavor to emulate them in intellectual achievements, study, work, acquire a new superiority, win again, this time with the mind, the victory already gained by their swords. To such an enterprise as this is opposed, apart from their natural interests as rulers, their religious contempt for unbelievers, their military pride, their indolence, which is second nature, and the character of their intellect, entirely wanting as it is in the creative faculty and dulled and blunted by the continued iteration of those same few ideas which form the entire intellectual patrimony of their nation. Moreover, those among themselves who have adopted what they are pleased to call European civilization, and represent the state to which they believe Europe would like to see all the sons of Osman brought,—those of their brethren who wear long coats and gloves and chatter French and neglect the mosque, hardly set such an example as might reasonably be expected to convert the others. In what way has the so-called civilization affected them? On this point at least there is little difference of opinion: the new Turk is not worth as much as the old; he has adopted our dress, our conveniences, our vices, and our vanity, but thus far neither our beliefs nor our ideas, and has succeeded, moreover, in the course of this partial transformation, in losing whatever good points he may once have possessed in the depths of his genuine Ottoman nature. Thus far, the only fruits of civilization evident to the conservative Turk is a more widely diffused *peste dicasterica*, an innumerable host of idle, inefficient, discreditable, rapacious officials, wearing the mask of Europeans and despising all the ancient traditions of the nation, and a sort of *jeunesse dorée*, corrupt and shameless, who give promise of being many degrees worse than their fathers were. To live and dress as they do is, in the opinion of the real Turk, to be civilized, and as a matter of fact he calls it doing or thinking or living, as the case may be, like the Frank whenever it is a question of anything which not only the conscience of a strict Mohammedan would condemn, but that of any decent man of whatever religion. And so the "uncivilized," instead of looking upon these others as enlightened Mussulmans who have gained certain advantages in advance of their fellow-countrymen, regard them as degenerate beings, led astray, hardly less than apostates, traitors to the nation; and they fear and resist everything like change with all the force they possess, if for no other reason than because it proceeds from that quarter where its fatal results are daily before their eyes. Every European innovation means to them simply a fresh attempt upon their national life and

interests. The government is revolutionary, the people conservative; the seed of the new ideas falls upon a dry, compact soil, which refuses to yield up the necessary moisture for its nutriment; he who rules the nation's affairs draws and manipulates the hilt, but the blade merely spins around in the haft. That is why all those efforts at reform which have been started during the past fifty years have never penetrated farther than the national skin; if in some instances names have been changed, the things have remained the same. What little has been accomplished has been by force, and at its door the people lay the increasing audacity of the unbelievers, the corruption which is eating away the heart of the empire, and all the national misfortunes. Why, they ask, should we change our institutions, since they are the same with which we have prevailed against and overcome our enemies for centuries? Why adopt those of the people who were unable to withstand the power of our sword? The organism, life, and traditions of the Turkish people are like those of a victorious army encamped upon European soil, enjoying the idleness and privileges, wielding the authority, and exhibiting the pride of conquerors, and, like all armies, they prefer that iron discipline which accords the pre-eminence to them over the vanquished, to a milder rule which would restrict their arbitrary rights. Now, the idea that this state of things, which has existed unchanged for centuries, can be altered in the course of a few years is simply an idle dream. The light vanguard of the "civilized" may march ahead as rapidly as they choose, but the body of the army, laden still with the ponderous armor of mediæval times, either remains stationary or else follows at a great distance and with hardly perceptible steps. 261

Blind despotism, the corps of the Janissaries, the Seraglio adorned with human heads, a firm belief in the invincibility of the Osman dynasty, the *rayâh* regarded as an unclean being, the French ambassadors dressed and fed at the confines of the throne-room to symbolize the miserable poverty of the unbeliever in the eyes of the supreme lord,—all of these, it must be remembered, are but things of yesterday, and, as a matter of fact, I suppose there is not much divergence of opinion on this head, even between Europeans and the Turks themselves: that about which there is the greatest disagreement, and consequently great difficulty for a stranger who wishes to arrive at a correct judgement, is the estimation in which the private and personal characteristics of the individual Turk is held. If you question a *rayâh*, you hear only the complaints of the oppressed against the oppressor, while from the free European colonists, who have no cause either to dislike or fear the Ottomans, but, on the contrary, every reason for congratulating themselves on the existing condition of things, you get nothing, as a rule, but opinions which are possibly sincere, but certainly are excessively favorable. The majority of these last agree in pronouncing the Turk to be frank, loyal, honest, and sincerely religious; but in crediting him with this sentiment of religion, it must always be borne in mind that the faith which he upholds so loyally does not interfere with any one of his tastes or interests; in fact, it caters to his sensual nature, justifies his indolence, upholds his rule: he clings to it tenaciously because his national life is in its dogmas and upon belief in it depends his fate. With regard to his probity, many individual cases are brought forward of the same kind as hundreds of others which might be cited with equal force about the most corrupt peoples of Europe; and it must be remembered in this connection that the Turk in his dealings with Christians often assumes a sort of ostentatious honesty, acting, out of sheer pride, in a manner which he would never dream of doing if he were influenced by his conscience alone; he simply cannot bear to appear of small account in the eyes of those whom he considers his inferiors both in race and in moral worth. Hence his attitude as a ruler gives birth to certain characteristics, praiseworthy enough in the abstract, such as frankness, pride, and dignity, but which he would certainly never have developed had he been subjected to the same conditions as the people under his sway. At the same time, though, he undoubtedly possesses some admirable qualities, such, for instance, as liberality in the giving of alms, which, even though it does encourage sloth and thus add to the general wretchedness, constitutes almost the sole alleviation for the innumerable miseries of his ill-ordered society; and he has other traits indicative of a kindly spirit, such as his undying gratitude for the smallest act of kindness, his reverence for the dead, his cordial hospitality, and his gentleness toward animals; then his attitude in regard to the equality of all classes of society is admirable, and there is no denying that there is a sort of severe moderation in his character, which crops out in innumerable proverbs full of wisdom and sagacity; a certain patriarchal simplicity, a dreamy love of solitude, and a vague melancholy which tend to rid the soul of vulgarity and vice. All these qualities float, as it were, on the surface as long as the tranquillity of his ordinary life remains undisturbed, but below them sleep his violent Asiatic nature, his fanaticism, his warlike ardor, and barbarous ferocity, ready to blaze forth and transform him into another being. Thus the saying that the Turk is the most amiable of men except when he cuts off people's heads is really quite correct. The Tartar, chained and sleeping, is in him still, and his natural vigor too, rather preserved than otherwise by the slothful ease of his habit of life, which only makes demands upon it at some great crisis. He has preserved his physical courage intact, not having loosened its springs by the cultivation of the intellect, which raises the value of human life and makes men less willing to throw it away, as it offers them more to live for. In him the sentiment both of religion and warfare finds a field unspoiled by doubts or the spirit of rebellion or clashing beliefs; it is a soil which can be instantly set fire to—a man cut out of a single block, who needs but a touch to unsheathe his sword and strike out in all directions, while upon its blade is inscribed the name of but one God and one sovereign. Social life has worked but very little change in him from the ancient inhabitant of the steppe and hut: in the city he still leads, in spirit, much the same sort of life as he formerly led among his tribe—surrounded, that is, by people, but alone with his thoughts. And there is really no social life among the Turks. The existence of the two sexes suggests the idea of two rivers which run parallel to one another, their waters never mingling except here and there in some subterranean passage-way. The men meet together, but there is no actual intimacy between them; they approach, but obtain no hold on one another, each one preferring what a great poet has called the *vegetazione sorda delle idee* to the expansion of himself. Our conversations, rapid, varied, playful, instructive, or humorous, our demand for the interchange of ideas, for human intercourse, for the spur to our intellects and warmth for our hearts which are obtained by association with others, are hardly known among them. Their discourse is all of earthly things, comprehending only the material necessities of life; love is excluded from it, literature is the privilege of the few, science is a myth, politics but little more than a question of names, and business occupies but a very small place in the lives of most of them. The nature of their intellect prohibits discussions upon abstract topics, as they can only grasp clearly the idea of such things as they are able to see and touch, their language itself giving proof of this in its inability to express an abstraction. When such a necessity arises the learned Turk has recourse to the Arabic or Persian or some European language. 262
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They see, moreover, no necessity for making any mental effort in order to understand what lies outside their own immediate sphere: the Persian is inquiring, the Arabian curious. As for the Turk, he experiences only the most supreme indifference toward all he does not know, and, as he has no ideas to interchange, he naturally does not care for the society of Europeans, disliking their interminable and subtle discussions, and, still more, themselves. There cannot, in the nature of things, be anything like confidence between them, since the Turk resolutely keeps back all that part of himself which relates to his household, his pleasures, his closest ties, and, what is still more important, the real nature of his feeling for the other, which is nothing less than an invincible distrust. He tolerates the Armenian, despises the Jew, hates the Greek, distrusts the Frank. Generally speaking, he puts up with them all in much the same spirit that a big animal will allow a swarm of flies to alight on his back, contenting himself with giving an occasional sweep with his tail when they begin to sting; he lets them interfere and change his surroundings as much as they want to; knows how to value those Europeans who can be of use to him; accepts such innovations in material things as can offer some palpable advantage; listens without a tremor of the eyelid to all the lectures on civilization which are read to him; alters laws, customs, and ceremonials, learns by heart and repeats fluently the sayings of our philosophers; allows himself to be travestied, caricatured, burlesqued; but at bottom he remains immutably, hopelessly the same. 266

And yet reason refuses to believe that the slow onward march of civilization will not eventually succeed in implanting a spark of new life in this gigantic Asiatic soldier who lies sprawling fast asleep across two continents, only arousing to brandish the sword. But when we consider the efforts which have been made as compared with the results obtained up to the present time, that day appears to be so very distant, especially in view of the needs and the impatience of the Christian population of the East, that it seems vain to hope that the question which is occupying the mind of all Europe can have for its solution the progressive and orderly civilization of the Turkish people. Such, at all events, is the conclusion arrived at by me in the course of my brief sojourn in Constantinople. What other solution is there? Ah, gentlemen, that is a question which you must really excuse me if I decline to answer. Were I to do so, it would seem as though I were giving advice to Europe, an idea which shocks my modesty. And, moreover, as I have already mentioned, there is a certain Austrian boat getting up steam down there in the Golden Horn off Galata, which is ready to start for the Black Sea, and the reader knows very well what that boat is going to pass through. 267

THE BOSPHORUS.

Hardly were we well on board when a gray curtain seemed to stretch itself over Constantinople, upon which were portrayed the outlines of the Moravian and Hungarian Mountains and the Alps of Lower Austria. Such rapid changes of scene occur not infrequently upon the decks of outgoing steamers, where one is apt to recognize the features and hear beforehand the language of the country for which he is bound. On this occasion we found ourselves hemmed in by a circle of German faces and felt a premonitory breath of the cold and dampness of the North. Our friends have left us. Three white handkerchiefs fluttering from a distant kâik show where they are threading their way through the dark mass of boats coming and going in front of the custom-house. We are in the same spot as that in which our Sicilian boat anchored on the day of our arrival. It is a lovely autumnal evening, clear and warm, and Constantinople has never appeared so vast nor so radiantly beautiful. Yet once again we endeavor to imprint upon our memories her mighty outlines, her matchless coloring, like that of an enchanted city, and for the last time drink in the unutterable beauties of the Golden Horn, so soon to be for ever hidden from our gaze. Now the white handkerchiefs have disappeared and our boat is in motion. Everything seems to have moved out of place: Skutari has come forward, Stambul stepped back, while Galata revolves around in a circle as though trying to see the last of us. Farewell to the Golden Horn! One forward bound of the vessel robs us of Kassim-Pasha, another carries off Eyûb, another the sixth hill of Stambul; then the fifth disappears, the fourth is hidden, the third vanishes, the second fades away; only the Seraglio Hill is left, and that—Heaven be praised!—will still remain to us for a little longer at least. Already we are in mid stream, advancing rapidly up the Bosphorus; Topkhâneh flies by, then Fundukli, then the white and sculptured façades of Dolmabâghcheh; Skutari presents to us for the last time her amphitheatre of hills covered with gardens and villas. 271



Bosphorus: View of Shores of Asia and Europe.

Farewell, Constantinople, vast and dearly-loved city, dream of my childhood, desire of my youth, and unfading memory of my life! Farewell, exquisite and immortal queen of the Orient! May time soften thy lot without impairing thy beauty, and may my children one day greet thee with the same ecstasy of youthful enthusiasm with which I bid thee farewell!

The sadness of parting was, however, soon forgotten in the delight of finding a new Constantinople, even larger and more exquisitely lovely than the one we had left upon the banks of the Golden Horn, extending for about sixteen miles along the two most beautiful shores on earth. 272

The first village to come into sight upon our left—that is, upon the European shore—is Beshiktash, a large Turkish suburb of Constantinople, lying at the foot of a hill and enclosing a small harbor; behind it a charming valley—the ancient valley of the *allori di Stefano* of Byzantium—ascends in the direction of Pera; a group of plane trees rising in the midst of the houses marks the sepulchre of the famous corsair Barbarossa; and a large café, always crowded, extends out over the water supported on piles; the harbor is gay with kâiks and other boats, the shore covered with people, the hillsides with verdure, and the valley filled with houses and gardens; but it is no longer like a suburb of Constantinople: already we note the distinctive character, the matchless radiance and charm peculiar to the villages along the Bosphorus; the objects are smaller, the foliage thicker, the coloring more brilliant: it is like a nest of smiling little houses suspended between sky and water, a tiny city inhabited by lovers and poets, only designed to last as long as the fires of passion or genius may burn, and placed there to gratify a whim on some fair summer's night. Hardly have our eyes rested well upon it than it is already gone, and we find ourselves opposite the Cheragan palace, or rather row of white marble palaces, at once chaste and magnificent, adorned with long lines of columns and crowned with terraces and balconies, above which floats an airy cloud of innumerable white birds of the Bosphorus, standing out clearly against the brilliant foliage of the hillsides. 273

But now a most tantalizing experience begins. While our attention is concentrated upon one beautiful sight we are missing a thousand others. While we stand gazing at Beshiktash and Cheragan, the Asiatic shore, whose 274

charming villages tempt one to buy and carry them off like jewels, is flying by. Kuzgunjik disappears, tinted with every color of the rainbow, where tradition says the heifer Io landed after swimming the Bosphorus in order to escape from the gad-flies of Hera; and Istavros, with its beautiful mosque and two minarets; and the imperial palace of Beylerbey, with its conical and pyramidal roofs and its gray and yellow walls, wearing the same strange, mysterious look that a convent of princesses might have; and then Beylerbey village, reflected in the water, with Mount Bûlgurlû rising behind it; and all those other villages, with houses grouped closely together or else scattered about at the foot of little bright green hills, and so overgrown with vegetation that it seems as though they would sink out of sight altogether. Long garlands of villas and little houses, and avenues of trees connect them, running along the bank or descending in zigzag lines from the neighboring heights to the water's edge, through numberless flower and vegetable gardens, and meadows laid out in squares, connected by little flights of stone steps and bright with every conceivable shade of green. 275



Mosque of Validêh at Ak Serai.

Well, there is no help for it; we must resign ourselves to catching nothing more than a flying glimpse of it all, and can only get that by turning our heads from side to side with the monotonous regularity of automatons.

After leaving Cheragan behind, we see on our left the large village of Orta, above which appears the shining dome of the mosque erected by the Validêh Sultan, mother of Abdul-Aziz, and the graceful roofs of the palace of Riza-Pasha at the foot of a hill from whose summit the light and shining walls of the imperial kiosk of the Star peep out from amid a dense mass of foliage. Orta Keui contains the residences of a number of Greek, Armenian, and Frankish bankers, and as we passed, the Constantinople boat was in the act of landing her passengers. A crowd of persons went ashore, other crowds stood waiting to embark; there were Turkish and Armenian gentlemen, officers, monks, eunuchs, dandies, fezzes, turbans, hats like bushel-measures, little caps, all jumbled together—a scene similar to that which may be witnessed at any one of the twenty boat-landings along the Bosphorus, more especially toward evening. Opposite Orta Keui is the gay little village of Chengel—village of the *anchor*; from an old iron anchor found on its shore by Muhammad II.^L It is surrounded by villas, while on the shore stands that imperial kiosk of infamous celebrity from which Murad IV., transported with envious rage, ordered the execution of those groups of country-people whom he saw passing happily through the fields singing as they went. 276

^L Chengel Keui takes its name from the bend in the shore at that point.—TRANS.

Turning again toward the shore of Europe, we find ourselves on a line with the pretty village and charming harbor of Kuru Chesmeh, the ancient Anaplus.^M Here Medea landed with Jason and planted the famous laurel tree. Then, looking back again to Asia, we see the smiling villages of Kulehli and Vani spread out along the shore to right and left of a huge barrack whose reflection in the water resembles more that of a royal palace. Back of the two villages rises a hill whose summit is crowned by a large garden, in the midst of which, barely discernible among the branches of the trees, glimmers the white kiosk where Suleiman the Great passed three

years of his life, hidden away in a little tower, to escape the spies and executioners of his father, Selim. While we are trying to identify the tower amid the trees the steamer has passed Arnaût-Keui—the Albanian village—now peopled by Greeks, whose houses surround a small bay in the European shore full of sailing vessels. But there is no use in attempting to see everything. One village draws away our attention from another; a beautiful mosque distracts us from an exquisite landscape; and while we are gazing at villages and harbors we have missed palaces of viziers, pashâs, sultans, chief eunuchs, and other prominent persons; yellow, blue, and purple houses hung with vines and creepers, seeming to float upon the top of the waves or overflow with bloom, half buried in groves of cypress, laurel, and orange trees; buildings with Corinthian façades ornamented with rows of white marble columns; Swiss châlets, Japanese huts, little Moorish palaces, Turkish kiosks, whose three stories project one beyond the other, the grated galleries of their harems overhanging the Bosphorus, while little flights of stairs lead down to gardens washed by the waves. All the buildings are small, light, unsubstantial, corresponding precisely to the nature of the power wielded by those who inhabit them—the triumph of youth, the success of an intrigue, a high office which may be forfeited to-morrow, a glory doomed to end in exile, a fortune destined to evaporate, a greatness which will crumble away. There is hardly an unoccupied spot on the Bosphorus: it is like a sort of Grand Canal running through a huge rural Venice. Villas, kiosks, and palaces rise one behind the other, so placed as to leave the façade of each in view, those in the rear seeming to perch upon the roofs of those in front, while between and behind them is a mass of green, the tops and points of oaks, plane trees, maples, poplars, pines, and fig trees, through whose branches may be seen sparkling fountains and the gleaming domes of lonely türbehs and solitary mosques.

M Arnaût-Keui, the next village, is the Anaplus of the ancients.—TRANS.

Looking back at Constantinople, we can still make out, indistinctly, the Seraglio Hill and the huge dome of St. Sophia rising darkly against the gold and limpid background of the evening sky; meanwhile, Arnaût-Keui, Vani, Kulehli, Chengel, Orta have all disappeared, and our surroundings undergone an entire change. We now seem to be on an immense lake; to right and left on either shore there opens a little bay; around that on our left lies in a semicircle the pretty Greek town of Bebek shaded by lofty trees, among which stand a fine old mosque and the imperial kiosk of Humayun-Habad, where in former days the sultans used to grant secret audiences to foreign ambassadors; on one side the town is buried in the thick foliage of a little valley, on the other it climbs the steep ascent of a hill covered with oak trees and crowned by a grove famous for its echo, where the noise of a single horse's hoofs resounds like the tramp of a regiment. The view here would throw a queen into raptures, and yet it is straight-way forgotten when we turn to look at the opposite shore. There, indeed, it is a veritable earthly paradise which is spread out before our eyes. Kandili, variegated as a town of Holland, with its white mosque and train of villas, describes a wide arc upon a bold promontory; behind it rises the flowery hill of Igiadié, crowned by a battlemented tower where a watchman is stationed to keep a lookout for any appearance of fire on either shore. Two valleys open on the bay to the right of Kandili, and quite close together, called respectively Big and Little *Blue River*, and between them are the charming grounds of the Sweet Waters of Asia, planted with sycamore, oak, and plane trees, above which stands the magnificent kiosk erected by the mother of Abdul-Mejid in the style of the Dolmabâghcheh palace, surrounded by its gardens all red with roses. Beyond the "Large Blue River" may be seen the brilliant colors of Anadoli Hissar, built upon the side of a hill upon whose summit rise the graceful towers of the Bayezid Ilderim, which exactly faces the castle of Muhammad II. on the opposite shore.

At that hour this enchanting part of the Bosphorus is full of life and movement; hundreds of little boats cover the bays and inlets of the European shore; steamers and sailing vessels pass, bound for the harbor of Bebek; Turkish fishermen busy themselves with their nets suspended over the water from lofty poles and cross-beams; a throng of passengers disembark from the Constantinople boat upon the stairs of the European town—Greek gentlemen, Lazarists, students from the American Protestant college, and family parties laden with shawls and wraps. On the other side we can see with the aid of the glass parties of Mussulman ladies walking about beneath the trees of the Sweet Waters or seated in little groups on the banks of the "Blue Water," while numberless kâiks and small boats with awnings, filled with Turkish men or women, come and go along the shore. It is all so festive, so Arcadian, so irresistibly charming, that I feel as though I must fling myself overboard, and, swimming to one or the other of the two banks, plant myself there with the fixed determination, come what may, to live and die in the midst of that Mussulman paradise. All at once, with a new change of scene, such ideas take flight: the Bosphorus now stretches away directly ahead of us, with something of the look of the Rhine, only it is a modified, softened Rhine, decked with the gorgeous and varied coloring of the Orient. On the left a cemetery shaded by groves of cypresses and pines forms the first break in the hitherto uninterrupted chain of villages, and immediately after it, on the rocky sides of Mount Hermæon, rise the three large towers of Rumili Hissar, the Castle of Europe, surrounded by battlemented walls and lesser towers, covering the incline to the water's edge with picturesque ruins. This is the renowned fortress erected by Muhammad II. a year before the conquest of Constantinople in defiance of the indignant remonstrances of Constantine, whose envoys, as every one knows, were sent back threatened with death by way of reply. This is the narrowest part of the Bosphorus, it being here only eight hundred and ten yards wide, and the current is consequently so swift that it has obtained the name of the "Great Current" from the Greeks and the "Devil's Current" from the Turks. It was here that Mandrokles of Samos constructed the bridge of boats across which Darius conducted his seven hundred thousand soldiers, and, as it is supposed, that the "Ten Thousand" crossed on their return from Asia; but no trace can now be found either of the two pillars of Mandrokles nor of the rock-hewn throne of Mount Hermæon from whence the Persian king watched the passage of his army. A little Turkish village nestles at the foot of the castle, and the Asiatic shore stretches away in the distance, ever greener and more picturesque. There is an unbroken succession of boat-landings, little houses, gardens, tiny valleys overflowing with vegetation, small inlets across which the limbs of the gigantic trees which line their banks nearly meet, while beneath white-sailed fishing-boats pass slowly along on the placid surface of the water, and charming pleasure-grounds, gay with flowers, shelve gently down to the shore, or terraced gardens

framed in verdure, while from the summits of the neighboring hills gleam the white stones of little cemeteries.



Sweet Waters of Europe.

Next Kaneijeh comes unexpectedly into view, its red houses covering two rocky promontories on the Asiatic shore, against whose bases the waves break with a musical sound, while above, the minarets of its two charming mosques glisten among a dark mass of cypress trees and umbrella pines. Along here the gardens rise one above the other like terraces, and the villas recommence, among the latter being the marvellously beautiful palace of the celebrated Fuad Pâsha, poet and diplomat, vain, voluptuous, and charming, who has been called the Ottoman Lamartine. A little farther on we come to the pretty village of Balta Limân, situated at the opening of a small valley on the European shore, through which a narrow stream flows, emptying itself into the harbor. Above rises a hill whose sides are covered with villas, conspicuous among which is the ancient palace of Reshid Pâsha. Then comes the bay of Emir Ghian Oghlu Bagche, whose waters look green from the surrounding cypress trees, among which gleams, white as snow, a solitary mosque surmounted by a great globe with golden rays. The boat meanwhile approaches first one shore and then the other, close enough for us to distinguish clearly all the little details of the landscape. Now it is the vestibule of the *selamlık* of a wealthy Turk, opening on the water, in front of which a big majordomo is stretched upon a divan smoking; then a eunuch who stands upon the lowest step of a landing-stair assisting two veiled Turkish ladies into a *kâik*; farther on an old Turk is seated cross-legged, meditating upon the Koran, at the foot of an immense plane tree, which shades a garden enclosed between green hedges; family parties are assembled upon the terraces of their country-houses; herds of sheep and goats feed upon high pasture-lands; horsemen gallop along the shore, and strings of camels pass across the brows of the hills, their strange, unfamiliar shapes outlined against the clear sky. 283

All at once the Bosphorus widens out, and the aspect of everything changes anew. Again we are between two bays, in the centre of a large lake: that on the left is narrow and deep, and around it lies the little Greek city of Stenia, formerly called Sosthenius from the temple and winged statue placed there by the Argonauts in honor of their tutelary genius, who had awarded them the victory in their encounter with Amycus, king of Bebryces. Thanks to the inward course of the steamer at this point, we are able to distinguish quite clearly the cafés and small, closely-built houses along the shore, the villas scattered about among their vineyards and olive trees, the valley opening up from the harbor, the cascade which falls from a neighboring height, and the celebrated Moorish fountain of pure white marble, shaded by a group of huge maple trees, from whose branches fish-nets are suspended above the groups of Greek women who pass back and forth carrying amphora upon their heads. Opposite Stenia, on the bay in the Asiatic coast, is the Turkish village of Chibûkli, where the famous Monastery of the Sleepless once stood, whence prayer and praise ascended to Heaven without interruption day and night. Both shores of the Bosphorus from one sea to the other teem with associations connected with those fanatical monks and anchorites of the fifth century, who wandered over the hills and valleys laden with crosses and chains, wore hair-cloth and iron collars, and remained immovable for weeks and months at a time in the branches of a tree or upon the summit of a column, while princes, magistrates, soldiers, and churchmen prostrated themselves at their feet, fasting, praying, beating their breasts, imploring advice or a blessing as though seeking a favor from God. 284

The Bosphorus has, however, one striking characteristic, that of drawing away the thoughts of the traveller who passes through it for the first time, from the past to the present. All the associations, dreams, fancies, memories awakened by familiarity with its history or legends are put to flight, driven back by the extraordinary richness of the vegetation, the pomp of color, exuberance of life, and magnificent abandonment of nature, in which everything appears as though it were wreathed in smiles and decked for a fête. It is even difficult to realize that these same waters, these enchanting scenes, were the witnesses of those furious sea-battles when Bulgarians and Goths, Byzantines, Russians, and Turks fell upon one another, fought, bled, and were vanquished or overcame in turn; the very fortresses which frown from the heights fail to awaken a spark of that romantic horror which such ruins always inspire when seen at other places; they seem more like artificial 285

adjuncts to the landscape than the stern and actual records of a past which has seen them vomit fire and death. Over all there hangs a veil of languor and quiescence which suggests no thoughts other than dreams of idleness and an immense longing for peace.

Beyond Stenia the Bosphorus becomes still wider, and in a few moments we are greeted with the finest of any of the views we have had up to this time. Looking toward Europe, we see directly before us the little Greek and Armenian city of Yeni, built upon the side of a hill covered with vineyards and groves of pine trees, and extending around in the shape of a bow above a rocky shore against which the current sweeps with great violence; a little beyond is the beautiful bay of Kalender, crowded with boats, surrounded by small houses with gardens; and garlanded with luxuriant vegetation, while overhanging it are the aerial terraces of an imperial kiosk. Turning to the other shore, we find it curving in a large semicircle, above which rises a hill, and in the natural amphitheatre thus formed are a number of villages and harbors: Injir Keui—the Fig village—set in a circle of gardens; Sultanieh, half hidden in a forest; and the large village of Beikos, surrounded by kitchen-gardens and vineyards and shaded by tall walnut trees, whose buildings are reflected in the waters of the most beautiful gulf in the whole Bosphorus, the very spot on which the king of Bebryces was defeated by Pollux, and where the enchanted laurel tree stood whose branches caused all who touched them to become insane. Some distance beyond Beikos may be seen Yali, the ancient village of Amea, looking like a bunch of red and yellow flowers thrown down on a great green carpet. All of this, however, is but the merest sketch of that wonderful picture; to which must be added the indescribably soft lines of those lovely hills, looking as though made to stroke with the hand; the innumerable little nameless villages, which seem to have been thrown in here and there as the artist had need of them; that vegetation belonging to every climate; that architecture representing every land; those terraced gardens and cascades of water; the dark shadows, shining mosques, deep blue sea dotted with white sails, and over all that sky flushed by the setting sun.

At this point, however, I was seized with that sensation of weariness and satiety which at some part or other of the Bosphorus is pretty sure to attack the traveller. The endless succession of soft lines and brilliant colors becomes tiresome, the very monotony of its beauty dulling one's sense of enjoyment. You feel at last that it would be a relief to come upon some huge, rugged, misshapen mass of rock sticking out from the land, or even a long desert strip of coast, wild, desolate, strewn with the fragments of a wreck. There is nothing to do, then, but turn your attention to the water. The Bosphorus is like an enormous port: we pass close beneath the shining guns of the Ottoman men-of-war, through fleets of merchantmen from every country in the world, with sails of all colors, queerly-shaped bows, and crowds of foreign-looking men upon their decks; we meet and pass outlandish craft from the Asiatic ports of the Black Sea; beautiful little sloops belonging to the various embassies; gentlemen's yachts shoot by like arrows from the bow, taking part in races which are witnessed from the shore by crowds of spectators; rowboats of every pattern, filled with persons of all colors, push off from the shore or draw up at the thousand landing-stairs of the two continents; kâiks dart in and out among long lines of barges, heavily laden with merchandise, towing slowly up the stream; navy-launches flying flags from their sterns; fishermen's rafts; gilded kâiks belonging to wealthy pashas; and steamboats from Constantinople filled with turbans, fezzes, and veils, which zigzag back and forth from one continent to the other in order to touch at every landing. All these sights seem to revolve around us as the steamer pursues its winding course; the promontories shift their positions; the hills unexpectedly change their outlines; villages glide out of sight, to suddenly reappear with an entirely new aspect; and both in front and back of us the Bosphorus keeps altering its character: now it is shut in like a big lake; now it opens out into a long chain of smaller lakes, with hills in the distance; then suddenly the hills close in again before and behind, and we are encircled by a green basin from which there is no apparent outlet, but before there is time to exchange more than half a dozen words with a neighbor the basin has disappeared in its turn, and once again we find ourselves surrounded by new heights, new towns, new harbors.

We are now between the two bays of Therapia—formerly Pharmakia, from Medea's poisons—and Hunkiar Iskelesi, or Landing-place of the Sultan, where the famous treaty of 1833 was signed which closed the Dardanelles to foreign fleets. At this spot the spectacle of the Bosphorus reaches the penultimate stage of its beauty. Therapia is the finest of the towns which grace its banks, after Buyukdereh, while the valley which extends behind Hunkiar Iskelesi is the greenest, most charming and romantic valley to be found from the Sea of Marmora to the Black Sea. Therapia is built partly upon a level strip of shore at the foot of a large hill, and partly around a deep bay, which forms its harbor and is filled with small boats and shipping. Back of it opens the narrow valley of Krio-nero, where more of the town is squeezed in between the green sides of the hills. The shore is dotted with picturesque-looking cafés extending out over the water, handsome hotels, gay little houses, and groups of lofty trees which shade open squares and marble fountains; back of these are the summer residences of the French, Italian, and English ambassadors, and beyond these, again, stands an imperial kiosk. All up the hillsides are terrace upon terrace, garden upon garden, villa upon villa, grove upon grove; people dressed in vivid colors crowd in and out of the cafés, stream over the harbor and shore and up the paths leading to the tops of the hills, just as though some great fête were in progress. The Asiatic shore, on the contrary, is tranquillity itself. The little village of Hunkiar Iskelesi, a favorite place of residence among the wealthy Armenians of Constantinople, sleeps quietly among its plane and cypress trees and about its diminutive harbor, on the bosom of whose waters a few boats may be seen gliding peacefully along. High above the village, upon the summit of a vast incline of terraced gardens, towers the solitary and magnificent kiosk of Abdul-Aziz, beyond which, again, extends the favorite valley of the pâdishahs half hidden under dense masses of tropical vegetation and surrounded by a dreamy mystery.

All of this marvellous beauty, however, fades into nothing a mile farther on, when, the steamer having arrived off the Bay of Buyukdereh, we are confronted by the crowning, the supreme glory of the Bosphorus. Here he who has become weary of its beauty, and possibly allowed himself to give utterance to some irreverent criticism, is forced to bow his head and humbly beg for pardon. We are in the centre of a large lake, so surrounded and hemmed in by marvels of every description that there seems nothing for it but to begin spinning around in the bow, like dervishes, so as to see all the shore and all the hills at once.

On the European side, extending around a deep bay where the swift current dies away in gentle little waves,

and below a large hill whose sides are dotted with innumerable villas, lies the town of Buyukdereh, large, colored like a huge bed of flowers, and entirely composed of small palaces, kiosks, and villas planted in the midst of a mass of vegetation of the most vivid green imaginable, which seems to pour out over the roofs and walls and overflow into the streets and squares. To the right the town extends as far as an inlet like a smaller bay in the large one, surrounded by the village of Kefeli; behind this a wide valley opens, green with meadows and sprinkled with white houses, following which one can reach the aqueduct of Mahmûd and the forest of Belgrâd. Tradition says that the armies of the first Crusaders encamped in this valley in 1096, and one of the seven gigantic plane trees for which the spot is famous is called the plane tree of Godfrey de Bouillon. Beyond Kefeli Keni is still another small bay, colored with white and green reflections from the neighboring houses and trees, and beyond this, again, Therapia is visible scattered along the base of her dark-green hills. 291

Having allowed our gaze to wander thus far, we turn once more toward Asia, and find with astonishment that we are opposite the loftiest hill on the Bosphorus, the Giant's Mountain, shaped like a huge green pyramid, on whose summit is the celebrated grave to which three separate legends have given the names, respectively, of "The Couch of Hercules," "The Grave of Amycus," and "The Tomb of Joshua." It is now guarded by a couple of dervishes and visited by sick Mussulmans, who carry thither the rags of their clothing according to a practice in vogue among them. The forest-clad and vine-decked sides of the mountain extend to the very water's edge, where, between two bright green promontories, lies the pretty bay of Umur Yeri, all streaked with the hundred different colored reflections of a Mussulman village on its shore, from which strings of villas and houses extend like wings across the adjoining fields or like masses of flowers thrown about at random. But the entire view is not confined to this body of water: directly ahead of us glimmers the Black Sea, and looking back toward Constantinople, we behold on the other side of Therapia, in the dim purple distance, the bay of Kalender, Yeni Keui, Injir Keui, and Sultanieh, looking far more like imaginary scenes from some dream-world than actual towns and villages. 292

The sun is setting: a delicate veil of pale blue and gray begins to fall over the European shore, but Asia is still bathed in golden light; across the sparkling water numbers of boats filled with married couples and lovers, excursionists from Constantinople, press toward the European shore, meet and stop one another, and overtake others filled with parents and children from the neighboring villas. Bursts of music and song come from the cafés of Buyukdereh; eagles circle above the summit of Giant's Mountain, the white lights on the shore fly by, kingfishers gleam through the water, dolphins swim about the ship, the fresh wind of the Black Sea blows in our faces. Where are we? whither are we bound? It is a moment of rapture, of intoxication, in which the sights of the past two hours, both shores of the Bosphorus, all that we have felt and seen, melt and blend together in one glowing, rapturous vision of a single vast city ten times the size of Constantinople, peopled by all the nations of the earth, visited by every blessing from the Almighty, and given over to an endless series of feastings and merrymakings, the contemplation of which fills one with despairing envy. 293



Entrance to the Black Sea.

This is our last vision. The steamer issuing rapidly from the bay of Buyukdereh, we see on our right a small inlet formed by the ancient promontory of Simas, upon which rose the temple of Venus Meretricia, for whom Greek sailors had an especial veneration; then comes the village of Yeni Mahalleh; then the fort of Deli Tabia, facing another small fort which is stationed on the opposite shore at the foot of Giant's Mountain; next is the castle of Rumili Kavak, whose rugged outlines are clearly defined against the rosy sky tinged by the setting sun. Opposite Rumili Kavak stands another fort, crowning the point upon which rose the temple of the Twelve Gods erected by the Argive Phrygos near to one dedicated to Jupiter, the "distributor of favorable winds," by the Chalcedons, and converted by Justinian into the church of Michael the Archangel. Here the Bosphorus narrows in for the last time between the outer spur of the Bithynian mountains and the extreme point of the Hemus chain. This was always considered the first place of importance in the strait to be defended from the north, and consequently has been the scene of many hard-fought battles between Byzantine and barbarian, Venetian, and Genoese fleets. Two ruined towers can be made out indistinctly marking the sites of the Genoese castles, which 294

faced each other here, and between which an iron chain was stretched to stop the passage of unfriendly fleets. From this point the Bosphorus widens out to the sea, the banks grow high and steep like two huge ramparts, bare apparently, save for occasional groups of poor-looking houses, a solitary tower or two, the ruins of a monastery, or remains of some ancient mole. After proceeding for some distance we again see the gleaming lights of a village, Beuyük Limân, and opposite it others shine from the fort which stands upon the promontory of the Elephant. On our left is the great mass of rock called by the ancients Gypopolis, upon which rose the palace of Phineas infested by the Harpies, and on the right Poiras Point shows dim and indistinct against the gray sky. The two shores are now far apart, and the strait seems more like a wide gulf. Night is falling, and the sea-breeze whistles through the rigging, while the broad surface of the melancholy *Mare Cimmerium* stretches away before us gray and restless; and still we are unable to detach our minds from those wonderful scenes through which we have just passed, so crowded with romantic and historical associations, especially now, when our senses are no longer overpowered by the sight of their natural beauties. In fancy we explore that left shore as far as the foot of the Little Balkans, search for Ovid's tower of exile and the marvellous Anastasian Wall; then, crossing to Asia, wander over a vast volcanic tract of land, through forests infested by wild boars and jackals, amid the huts of a savage and cruel people, whose sinister shadows we seem to see as they congregate upon the precipitous bank invoking disaster for us on the *fera litora Ponti*. The darkness is broken for the last time by two flaming points looking like the fiery eyes of two Cyclops set to guard the approach to that enchanted strait; they are Anadoli Fanar, the lighthouse on the Asiatic side, and Rumili Fanar, at whose feet the rugged profile of the Symplegades can be dimly discerned in the shadow of the banks. Then the coasts of Asia and Europe are merely two black lines, and then, *Quocumque adspicias nihil est nisi Pontus et aer*, as poor Ovid sang. 295

But I see her still, my beloved Constantinople, beyond those two fading shores. I see her larger and more radiant than she ever appeared when I gazed upon her from the Validéh Sultan bridge or from the heights of Skutari, and I talk with and salute and adore her as the last and fondest dream of a youth which is passing away. But a dash of salt water, striking me full in the face and knocking off my hat, rouses me abruptly from my dreams. I look around: the bow is deserted, the sky obscured, a raw autumnal wind chills me to the bone; poor Yunk, attacked by sea-sickness, has withdrawn; nothing is heard but the rattle of the ship's lanterns and creaking of the vessel as she flies along, rocked and beaten by the waves, into the darkness of the night. My beautiful Oriental dream is ended. 296

END OF VOLUME II.

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THE END.

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