

An Oriental Journey

BY CHARLES L. ROOD.

(Continued From Last Sunday.)
Asia Minor.

There had been some discussion whether we would see Alexandria to Joppa and visit the Holy Land. The advice of friends and others finally prevailed against our natural inclinations to go. I will give their reasons for what they are worth. In the first place, the landing at Joppa is said to be the most hazardous of any at Oriental ports, comprising all the difficulties heretofore described of landing in small boats, which in this case have to traverse a boisterous sea. Then, the railroad runs through a desolate and arid country, Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine are squallid and dirty. The places of Biblical interest are uncertain as to location, and, therefore, unsatisfactory, possessing no intrinsic merits scientifically. A devout Christian, one who is never incredulous, may approach the sacred precincts with veneration, his heart rejoicing with great gladness. But to others not possessed of religious zeal and imagination, the hill are bleak, the plains dusty, the people unattractive and the possibility of historical identification long since vanished.

I express no opinion as to the justice of the above, since it much depends upon the digestion as well as the mental attitude of the traveler. In any event, we were destined to get a glimpse of Asia Minor.

Stop at Smyrna.

The habitual route of our steamer provides for a stop at Smyrna. This port is of considerable importance, containing about 200,000 population, occupies a commanding site, and along its docks are some modern, two-story buildings. Yet, as we were hurried through the vile little streets, finding to and among the shops and numerous markets, I could not help thinking the larger the city, the greater the abomination. A hunchback Levantine had imposed himself upon us as a guide, contrary to our protest, but we could not prevent his riding with the driver, who did not object. Under his direction the horses, whipped and harried, whirled us up the rising ground of the foothills seen from the bay. This was agreeable in the matter of purer air; otherwise, to what end? After a half-hour drive along the canyon road, beside a purling stream, with no objective in sight, we were informed that the fact that the guide was taking us to a mirabile dictu—the new dam and reservoir for Smyrna's water supply. Well, this incident expressed Smyrna, and some other things. No fine patios, no iridescent fountains, no supreme works of either God or man; just a mediocre reservoir, with which a poor Oriental, in his self-satisfied conceit, was about to astonish the unbelievers from the west. There are innumerable bazars, but the goods are inferior; the shopkeepers, whether Jew, Mohammedan or Gentile, only unclean and repellent. There was a man, whose anchor was weighed, only one recompense that it had been dropped—we had, at least, set foot on Asiatic soil and thus had reached four of the five great continents of the world.

Visit to Constantinople.

Our arrival in Turkey was ill-timed. Coming so recently from the hot, humid air of Upper Egypt into the March storms of the continent, we found a degree of moist cold that "congealed the blood," "froze the marrow in our bones," and performed all the other trappings known to romance, but it could not chill the grim determination with which we set about seeing Constantinople in the briefest possible time. This unfavorable weather at this season had been rather anticipated. It is no Turkish secret and we had been well advised, but our plans could not take heed. The passage through the Dardanelles had been made in early morning, and it required all a stormy day to cross the Sea of Marmora. Just an occasional flicker of sunshine lighted up the long row of official buildings and palaces along Seraglio Point, but our passports were scanned, our baggage lubricated on its difficult way through the custom house, we were rapidly driven across the far-famed Galata bridge to the only steam-heated hotel in Pera, where a good dinner dissolved some chunks of gloom, but could not conceal the noise of rain beating against the window pane. Notwithstanding the darkness as we climbed Pera's hills, the evening, the dim gas lights enabled us to see through the carriage windows those celebrated "pariah dogs," shivering in the doorways, wet and bedraggled on the walks, and looking at us with pitiful eyes. They live and increase because the Koran forbids the destruction of life uselessly. First seen objects of every savior, it exhausts the vocabulary of fitting adjectives to portray their abject misery. If you ever felt the affection of a real dog that revelled in the sunshine of your approbation, you need to know no more than that these yellow beasts are homeless vagabonds, with seldom a kind word or a loving hand to caress, or even chastise.

An Ambitious Guide.

Pera and Galata, the modern, being separated by the Golden Horn from Stamboul, the ancient, the Galata bridge the next morning, for our dreary round of monotonous mosques. We passed Turkish troops, making their weekly review inside the palace garden walls, near the dainty Yildiz Kiosk, where the sultan now exclusively attends worship. These soldiers are handsome, if surly, fellows—strong, tall and straight. They marched well with shoulders well thrown back, their uniforms resplendent, their military bands on foot and horseback, playing good music. We stopped long enough for the guide to inform us that the present sultan is literally a "sick man," and that when he dies, there is a chance for a row over his successor, who, under the Ottoman law, should be his brother. The latter is a reformer, and the reactionaries want the sultan's son, who might be depended upon to pursue his father's policy of non-action and repression. The guide complained that it is almost impossible to get any reliable information about the sultan or his household in Constantinople. We, also, were in some doubt about the credibility of statements made by the guide. He certainly is an intelligent chap, and his discourse was often entertaining, but he is likewise a bumptious Greek, who claimed to speak fluently eleven languages. (We did not test him.) His chief ambition is to accumulate \$5,000 with which to go to New York, where he is positive he could soon make a million. I don't know about the million. As to his acquisition of the original stake—well, I anticipate his speedy migration.

Mosque of St. Sophia.

Inevitably, our first mosque proved to be St. Sophia. It has been written

that "no pen or pencil can give an adequate conception of the massive arches, gigantic columns and superb dome, including eighteen smaller domes, of this harmonious and majestic structure." While this is true, nevertheless the effect is sadly marred by the near surrounding buildings for tombs, schools, baths, shops, etc. Originally built by Constantine the Great, twice burned and then injured in an earthquake, it was reconstructed, more splendid than ever before, by Justinian. There is a slight pinkish tinge to the whiteness of its walls. Its size may be better understood from the fact that it can accommodate 25,000 people. The interior is disappointing in the one defect that pertains to all the mosques. When seen by visitors who are not allowed inside during services, there is a coldness (literal as well as figurative) about the big, bare floors, dark courts and cheerless corridors which no mere magnificence of material can dissipate. The larger the mosque, the more dispiriting. In St. Sophia, you may admire the green marble from the temple of Diana at Ephesus, the granite from Egypt's temples to Isis and Osiris, or the Pentelic marble from the Acropolis of Athens; and your appreciation comes more from this detailed inspection than from the grand ensemble. So much of world-stirring history centers around this superb edifice, no details are negligible. Before Mahomet II, it had been the theatre of pageants and ceremonies connected with the religious, political and military life of centuries. And when he entered it in 1453, riding through one of the prodigious bronze doors, before which we stood, it again became a shrine, but this time of a fatal belief and influence that changed the face of the Oriental map; against whose growing strength and power, which was the cause of our race, have yet to contend. Much of its old magnificence has vanished, and, as usual, the Turks have defaced, as far as they were able, all the beautiful images of the Christian faith. But scraping the walls and the use of whitewash have not obliterated the outlines of a large figure of Christ over the high altar, nor the forms of archangels and madonnas in the dome and over the arches. Our guide wanted us to believe that the Turk himself has now become superstitious because, in spite of his best endeavors, he has been impotent to destroy by this symbolism of a hated religion.

Memorial to Suleiman.

The mosque of Suleiman the Great is considered by Turks a wonder of architecture. Its square and white, with a higher dome than St. Sophia. It has colored glass windows and the tiled walls were brought as spoils from Persia. Its founder is described (paraphrasing the grandest Turk of them all, "Literature and poet, musician and architect, law-giver and military genius, he was called "The Perfecter of the Perfect Number." Yet his mortal accomplishments did not elevate his soul above the cruelty and barbarity of his ancestral race. Suspicious of his sister's husband, Ibrahim, this noted flute player, although his own favorite, was put to death. His eldest son, while fighting his father's battles in Persia, was summoned to meet the mutes and the bowstring, with Suleiman inside the tent. Still more murder was essential to the purpose in view. The death of Bajazet another son, cleared the path for the succession of Selim, who was a son by the notorious Roxalana, herself an Italian with Titian hair and a voice treacherous and soft.

The mosque of Ahmed III, in respect to the ceremonials of Muslim faith, is the chief one of the Ottoman empire. It has been favored with six main minarets, more than owned by any other, and occupies the site (in part) of the ancient Hippodrome. The mosque of Mohammed II is built on the site of the burial place of Greek emperors. Here the body of Justinian was reburied after lying undisturbed for 700 years. The mosque of the Pigeons is not worth a visit except for the myriads of birds that have conferred their name. They are quite tame and are fed from the gratuities of wealthy people. The Mosaic mosque was once a Byzantine church, before the time of Constantine. It is especially noteworthy, because of the mosaic representation of scenes described in the New Testament, mostly concerning Christ and his disciples. Why the Turks have allowed these to remain is a conundrum, after having observed their desecrations in other mosques. It was here that one of our party "balked," declaring that he would not enter another mosque. The same general features are tedious, when you have seen one, you have seen all. Perhaps every one was glad there is one mosque no Christian can enter on pain of death. This is the mosque of Eyoub (Job), where each reigning sultan must first be installed by girding on the "Sacred Sword of Othman."

By remaining in his carriage at the mosque of the Mosales, our friend missed one extraordinary experience. At the portals we met a Mohammedan who actually smiled! Urbanely he plied us around, explaining things in good English, and shook hands cordially as we took our departure. This talk alone was worth the price of admission. The fact appears to be that visitors are allowed for revenue only. We can confirm the impression of other travelers that the Christians are miserably despised. The priests looked at us sullenly with a piercing eye that flashed haughty and malignant glances. They followed us around with apparent suspicion, and were alert to detect any sign of disrespect. In St. Sophia, where the sun never banishes microbes or chill, I kept on my hat for protection against the cold, thinking it was no worse for the Muslim to retain his fez. It was soon evident I had another thought coming. The hat was removed. Moreover, the guide said the priest was very angry, and his countenance was good cooperation.

One of the interesting exhibits in Constantinople is the Museum of Ancient Costumes. Upon wax figures that could have done credit to Madame Jarley, are displayed the regalia of court personages from the earliest periods. That these were fantastic to an unusual degree must suffice in the way of description. Nothing less than a painstaking inventory by an artist would convey a fair idea. Among them all, comprising the dreadful mutes with their horrible bowstrings, the turbans, catkins and tunics of grand viziers, Mith, Dervishes, Afghan dwarfs, soldiers and buffoons, none were more fascinating than the notorious Janizaries, with their kettles and other paraphernalia. They originated in a single of paradoxical way. Amurath, in 1260, being entitled to one-fifth of the spoils of war, devoted the Christian white-faced captives to Muslim education and to military service, mainly de-

signed for Christian subjugation. In time these captives—called Janizaries—became the flower of the army, and were recruited from Christian youths whose parents had been slain in the arrogance of their power they were guilty of incredible licentiousness and cruelty. Sultans were deposed or assassinated at their pleasure. But their kettles were cast into the sea often, when Mahomet II exterminated them in 1826. An open rebellion—the sacred standard of the prophet unfurled—a regular and bloody campaign, the belching of artillery—a conflagration at their place of refuge—annihilation. So perished a despotism whose rise and fall inevitably reminded us of that tragedy of Cairo's citizens.

Our brief sojourn fortunately included the day when the order, popularly known to tourists as the "Howling Dervishes," holds its religious services. Once more the Galata bridge, then an overcrowded, dirty ferry boat, with passengers standing unprotected in a grizzling rain, and we land on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. Carriages hurry us to an insignificant chapel, which we enter in haste, to occupy wooden benches, of which there are a few for visitors. In the rectangle in the center of the building the monks have begun their eccentric devotions. On three sides of the open space they sit in Turkish fashion, all regarding the chief priest, likewise seated in front of a shrine on the remaining side. The light in the room is dim. The monks are robed and turbaned in somber gray and black. They bend from side to side in slow undulatory movements, as they were all pulled by one string. Chanting in low voice, their weird monotonous might be incantations of witches. With wild features and fanatical looks, they weave and sing, weave and sing, until the rhythm of the motion and the cadence of the voice take possession of our consciousness. Occasionally a dervish breaks forth in a recitative with intervals so dissonant, and strains so mournful, the fascination is interrupted, but not broken. And again the chant in unison begins, rising in pitch and intensity; wider and wider extends the sweep of their bodies, until our eyes can see nothing but swaying forms, our ears hear only the mysticism of their refrain. This ceremony proceeds for an hour or so, when there is a diversion. The sick and maimed are brought in, of all ages, from infancy upward. Lying prone with faces on the floor, the chief priest walks upon the backs of the sufferers with a devotion that might indicate they are steps to heaven. This, however, is merely a healing rite, as all diseases are supposed to disappear under the magic touch of the priestly feet. Meanwhile the oscillations have not ceased. The chanting is renewed with increased zeal. And the service continues until it reaches a grand climax in the very apogee of intensity and sound. It is to be noted, however, that these dervishes do not "howl." Their ceremonies are never ridiculous or grotesque—always dignified. No photograph can witness the cruelty and oppression. Not so, however, as to the "Dancing Dervishes." These curious monks, who spin like a top, are faithfully presented by the camera. On the Pera side we witnessed a ceremony, which are dizzying, but only to the observers. They gradually increased their speed until (apparently) they reached the perfect frenzy of motion. In reality, when the signal was given, they stopped instantly, changed their robes, replaced their turbans and walked out serenely. With them it is an exhibition merely of the gymnastic feats a thorough training will accomplish.

Each country represented at the capital administers its own laws and collects its own mail, having its own street mail boxes. The foreign correspondence is protected and guarded, being sent in bags carefully sealed, as the Turkish officials have as much curiosity as a woman. No books or pamphlets that in any way teach reform or government are allowed to enter. Baggage is carefully searched (or is supposed to be) for all literature and tobacco. If objectionable books are found they will be confiscated. Of course, the literature is never published or sold in the empire containing adverse criticism. Reforms in government come slowly, and progress in civic improvements is steadfastly resisted. There is no public lighting system, as the sultan is opposed to any substitution for the present gas service. The fire department is crude, both in respect to the appliances and the method of civilization. Squallor is rampant in a tower and messengers seen in this twentieth century almost criminal; particularly so in a city built of so much combustible material.

City a Disappointment.

Constantinople did not make a pleasing impression. In the heart of Galata and Pera is a dismal cemetery; besides which they have their hotels and ministerial residences and disconsolate dogs. Subtract from Stamboul its mosques, royal gardens and palaces; the remainder is a hodge-podge of untidy shops, uninviting bazars, unsanitary markets and unpretentious dwellings. Our road from the Romanus gate led us through miles of cheap houses, most of which were dilapidated wrecks. From the harem windows were peeping the women, with faces often pretty, and in robes superior to their environment. Squallor was everywhere; the people looked dirty, and are fairly chargeable with animal ignorance in their disregard of the proprieties of life. Some part of our discomfort was doubtless due to the inclement weather. Those much-heralded processions over the Galata bridge of "all sorts and conditions of men" could not be expected, perhaps, to show to advantage under black umbrellas. Probably, the brilliant hues of a hundred national costumes would lose their color when bedraggled like the plumage of a wet hen. At any rate, Constantinople likely has been passed by Cairo in the cosmopolitanism of her population and the variety of their dress. It may well be that this old emporium, stubbornly yielding to modern ways, has lost only that Oriental picturesque quality which alone could wish retained. Nevertheless, I can well believe that in the summer time she is favored with a delightful climate; that glittering pageants not infrequently adorn her seven hills; that the sweet waters of Europe are surrounded by restful verdure and cypress groves where the air is filled with the music of merry birds; and that a ride on the beautiful Bosphorus, between the idyllic banks of two continents, will

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Features of Soutari. Soutari contains the chief barracks; also, the ancient burying ground, which is regarded as holy. Nearly all the good Mohammedans wish to find their last resting place here. The most plausible cause for this desire, although somewhat in doubt, is the subconscious thought that sometime all Muslims will be driven out of Europe. The cemetery, like the numerous others, shows an anomalous reverence for the dead. They are unkept, unclosed, in disorderly array, tombstones at every angle of inclination, and so thick that the bodies must have been buried over one another. From a cemetery outside the walls, tombstones have been borrowed for corners and other supports

of fences to private grounds; a right cheerful and absolutely safe economy, since those who might care are not in a position to object. Having devoted so much of our time to mosques, monks and mausoleums, it is not strange I am unable to write a compendium of Turkish politics and customs. Otherwise, I am sure that four days would have been quite sufficient, according to usual recorded experiences of travelers. There are a few things, however, that fell within our ken. The money current is a conglomerate of issues of many petty states or principalities. At each shop a handful of different coins would be given in change, half of which, in spite of the solemn guarantees of the shopkeeper, would be pronounced "no good" and refused by the next one.

The Koran teaches a religion, so it claimed, whereby the ritualistic duties, such as regular prayer, are mandatory. If the followers of the prophet ever expect to taste the delights of Paradise; but the moralities that are the essence of pure living may be violated with impunity, and yet the delinquents remain good Mohammedans. Not only in Constantinople, but in Cairo also, we saw enough to convince that this claim is well founded. Take the dogs as a partial example of the difference between the letter and the spirit of their teaching. The Koran's prohibition against the needless taking of life protects sacredly the useless dog, only because he does not become an obstacle to their desires. But let any human life so intervene and it is destroyed. The Muslims are not the only people in the world who, as Henry Ward Beecher once said, "preach cream and practice skimmed milk." The pith of the indictment is that to them the skimmed milk and cream look the same.

Petty Grafting Common.

The petty graft of officials was always obvious. For instance, we were "held up" an unconscionable time on entering the port, notwithstanding liberal bribes. Being told of this, our guide bade us watch how assiduously he would arrange our departure. And it must be admitted that, for the sum of forty piasters (part of which he doubtless kept), we ran the gauntlet in about two minutes. Passports obtained before leaving the United States for \$1 each, are required to be "vised" for another \$1, by the Turkish consul in New York, and these are carefully combined on landing. Before leaving Constantinople they must be certified by the United States consul general, who collects a third dollar. At the railroad station, these passports are again scrutinized and every item of information docketed. We expected this action spelled another dollar; but somehow this halcyon opportunity was overlooked.

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reveal nature in her loveliest mood. But no gaudy show, nor yet the harmonies of nature can entirely compensate the traveler for the absence of certain blessings of a Christian civilization. We were glad when our Oriental express rolled between the Seven Towers, leaving Constantinople behind, with its filth and degradation. Glad to part from an intolerant, suspicious people, the spirit of whose religion is broken in every precept. Glad to escape that eastern conception of commercial honor which is conspicuous only by its absence. Glad to emerge from an atmosphere of insensate bigotry, unilluminated by the light of modern thought and progress. Supremely glad to hold a passport for our own dear country that had protected us and insured us a safe exodus from this, the land of the "unspeakable Turk."

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