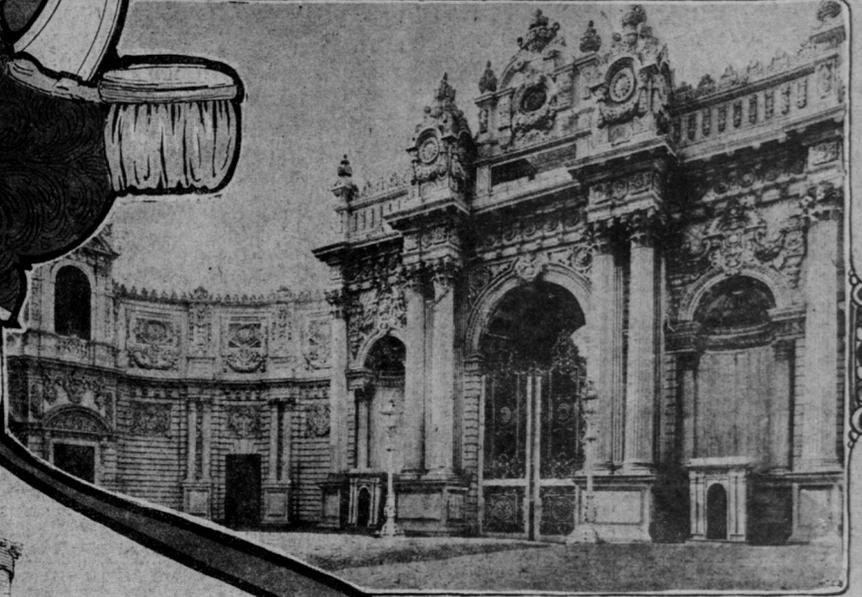


The Sour-Sick Sultan As He Is



THE WORLD-FAMED GALATA BRIDGE, 100,000 PEOPLE CROSS IT DAILY.

GATEWAY OF THE SULTAN'S PALACE OF DOLMA BABAS.

By H. C. Ostrander

SAW him at the Selamlık four years ago—a frail, worn, pale-faced old man of 60; with a scared, hunted look in his glittering, black eyes, and the sorrows of a century written upon his brow. Abdul Hamid, Prince of the House of Osman, pitiful shadow of a once mighty power (so mighty that every other throne of Europe trembled before it in years gone by); Child of the Prophet though he be; "Commander of the Faithful, Sultan of Sultans, King of Kings and Shadow of God upon the Earth" is doomed to die! The physicians have said it. The world awaits the end with wondering expectation, and two hundred millions of spiritual subjects, scattered over the four corners of the earth, bow in blind fanaticism to the inevitable beginning of the end, murmur: "Kismet! 'Tis Fate!"

The most hated, most feared and most cowardly of all the sovereigns of earth, Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, and the spiritual head of all the Mohammedans in the world, of whatever race or nation, is today slowly dying of an incurable disease, and a few months will see the end. Then is destined to come one of those crises which mark the epochs in the world's history. One of three things, upon that fateful day, will shape the future destiny of Turkey; either the dismemberment of the empire and its division among the "dogs of war"—France, Germany, England and Russia—among whom for years it has been a bone of contention; or a political revolution following the overthrow of the dynasty, which is very possible; or the peaceable accession of a new Sultan, which is hardly probable!

Although Constantinople ranks among the great capitals of the world, and is included in the Itinerary of most Oriental travelers, yet so little is actually known about this most mysterious sovereign and his strangely secluded court that a few facts regarding the intimate life of the Grand Turk, gathered from a man who for years was close to the Ottoman throne in an official capacity, may not be without interest. However, we cannot pass to the consideration of Abdul Hamid without indulging in a few side lights upon the wonderful city which is his capital, and which for over 450 years has been the chief city of the whole Mohammedan world.

The approach to Constantinople from the sea is without question one of the loveliest scenes of earth; and words are powerless to paint the picture of that first enchanted vision of the City of Constantine.

It was a glorious night in the spring of 1902 that our good ship Czarevitch steamed northward through the Straits of Dardanelles; the Hellespont of the ancients (once plowed by the galleys of Cleopatra, Pompey, Caesar and Pliny); that Hellespont which Xerxes spanned with his famous bridge of boats, and the scene of the tragic love-story of Hero and Leander.

The crescent moon, symbol of the faith of Islam, was reflected in the gently rippling surface of the Marmora, and a thousand silvery lights danced across the darkened waters.

Day was dawning under the unutterable splendor of an Oriental sky as we drew near to Constantinople—that ancient, lovely, dreadful city which has been for ages the desire, the joy and the despair of all the world!

The hills were purple, the shores were silver and the sea of sapphire blue, as on that enchanted morning I came on deck and peered through the lifting mists for my first view of the city of my dreams.

Viewed from the Bosphorus and half hidden by the morning mists, Constantinople was a picture which beggared description. Like some enchanted city of the "Arabian Nights Tales," the domes, pinnacles, towers, embattled walls and sky-piercing minarets of the Turkish capital burst from the clouds and seemed to float, phantom-like, in space.

In this view of Constantinople my fondest anticipations were more than realized. There was something more than earthly loveliness in the glittering panorama which gradually unfolded itself to my delighted vision beneath that glowing Oriental sky and along both the European and Asiatic shores stretched away to the northward as far as the eye could reach. The blue waves danced in the sunlight as the curtain of mist was gradually lifted from the lovely city, and a thousand tiny, graceful caïques darted here and there across the laughing waters. The splendid palaces of the early Sultans, on Seraglio Point; the ancient Byzantine walls; the Citadel of Seven Towers; the six beautiful minarets of the Mosque of Sultan Achmet; the Sullemanlık Mosque, with its ten domes; the white tower of the Seraskierat and, above all,

glorious Santa Sophia, transformed by the Moslem conquerors into a Mohammedan temple of worship—these were glories of the ancient city of Constantinople, whose brilliancy I felt that even the closest association could never dim; but I soon discovered that there was another side to the lovely picture, by which much of its poetry and romance were destined to be dispelled.

Constantinople, in the noontide of her glory, must have been a glittering vision of splendor; but today her glory is very largely an illusion. It is one of those cases where "distance lends enchantment to the view." No other city of the East presents so much of splendid promise to the mind of the Occidental traveler as its distant glories are first unveiled to his enraptured sight, and no other falls so sadly in the realization of its promised beauties as does this great capital of the Ottoman empire.



PORPHYRY COLUMN ERECTED BY CONSTANTINE THE GREAT—326 A.D.



FABRIS BOULI

Our ship anchored out in the Bosphorus, and we, with our luggage, were taken ashore in a caïque—a little boat which is apparently first cousin to the Venetian gondola.

As I left the Golden Horn and picked my way cautiously through the streets and alleys of this vast dog kennel into which the Turkish metropolis had suddenly resolved itself, I gradually awoke to the fact that the countless thousands of graceful, airy structures which covered the seven hills of Stamboul and gave to the distant view the impression of a phantom city were, in prosaic reality, a mighty conglomeration of Turkish hovels and tawdry shops of the filiest and most unpicturesque construction. The streets were, with but few exceptions, little better than narrow, crooked alleys, wretchedly paved, hopelessly dirty and populated by an untold multitude of mangy, snarling pariah dogs; gaunt, wolf-like creatures, starved, tailless and battle-scarred; they sleep on the pavements and live their miserable lives entirely in the streets. The dogs themselves have distracted the city and a terrible fight is sure to ensue when a dog wanders out of his allotted territory. It is said that some of these dogs are born, live their wretched lives and die without ever getting beyond the confines of their own street.

The geographical position of Constantinople is unique. The great gateway between the Occident and the Orient, and situated, like no other city in the world, upon two continents, she is perhaps the most cosmopolitan city on

terable; the highest achievements of Eastern art and culture, side by side with crime and degradation unspeakable. Here are the great khans which once sheltered the rich caravans from Arabia, Persia and India; the splendid mosques which are the glory of Constantinople; the "Sublime Porte" and the palaces of the old Seraglio where the early Sultans lived; and the grand bazaars within whose dim and shadowy passages linger the perfumes of ages and the romance of all time.

One of the great sights of Constantinople, in which I found a never ending source of delight, was the world-famed Galata bridge, the one link which binds together the Constantinople of the twentieth century and the old capital of Mahmoud the Conqueror and Suleiman the Magnificent. On this wonderful floating thoroughfare the life of the Occident mingled with that of the Orient and passed in unending procession before me, natives of five continents and a hundred foreign lands; people of every color, race and religion under the sun; costumes in dazzling array and a wonderful variety of colors; Asiatics, Africans, Europeans, the elite of Continental capitals elbowing burrowed Bedouins from Sahara's desert wastes and Turkish pashas resplendent in medals and gold braid—a hundred thousand souls, it is said, pass over Galata bridge every day of the year, and for genuine interest and picturesque interest the whole world does not hold its equal.

In aristocratic Pera, with its European palaces, its foreign embassies and its great hotels, and in bold and sinful Galata, with its gambling houses and drinking dives, I was unmistakably in Europe; but, once across the old Galata bridge, I found myself in another world, the world of the Orient, the world of the crescent, the turban and the scimitar, no less Asiatic than Scutari, smiling at me across the blue Bosphorus. The hurry and bustle of the twentieth century were left behind me as I passed under the shadows of the old Yali Mosque at the end of the old bridge and stepped foot in quaint, grim, picturesque Stamboul.

With ever increasing joy I explored its dim, old streets and wandered through the shadowy passages of the Grand Bazaar, where one may purchase anything from a goatskin of water to a drove of camels. Grave, long-bearded Turks sat before their little booths, smoking narghils and starting out into space. "Kuyfi," the favorite pastime of the Turk, the "sweet forgetfulness" which corresponds somewhat to the "dolce far niente" of the Southern Italian, with the one difference that the Turk does not find his happiness in the total oblivion of sleep, as does his Italian counterpart.

The air of the bazaar was ever heavy with the perfume of attar of roses, and the gorgeous colorings of the Oriental fabrics, draped from the walls and ceilings, were all subdued in the mellow light.

Everything was strange and picturesque and seemed to be enveloped in that dim mystery which is the indefinable charm of the East. This great labyrinth of covered, crowded streets is entered by over 100 gates, which at night are closed and locked. The greater part of the Grand Bazaars were constructed by the Sultan Bayazid, about 1500 A. D., while the famous "Bazestan," or central bazaar, dates from the Byzantine era; some hundreds of years earlier.

The exquisite Saracenic architecture of Cairo, evidenced even in the private dwellings of that fair city, is sadly lacking in Constantinople. The beautiful "Mushrabiyahs" of the Egyptian metropolis have no counterpart in Stamboul. Blank walls and stiffly latticed windows alone greet the eye, and nothing of the external appearance bespeaks the truly Oriental splendor with which many of the Turkish homes are furnished. Fanaticism, prejudices and all the Mohammedan superstitions of 1300 years bar the Turkish harem from sublimest architecture and fifth un-

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