

The BURSING ALIVE of ABDUL HAMID

Turkey's Former Sultan is Rigorously Confined in the Villa Allatini, Salonica—The Mystery That Enshrouded Him in Yildiz Kiosk Still Surrounds Him—Abandoned by Many of His Wives and Household, He Fears Death by Poison and His Mind Has Failed



Abdul Hamid II. From a Photograph Taken in 1872. When the Sultan was 30 years Old. (From Le Monde Illustré.)

Abdul Hamid II. From a Portrait Taken in 1887, When the Sultan was 45 Years Old. (From L'Illustration.)

ABDUL HAMID is alive! The former sultan is in Salonica and has not been secretly conveyed to Constantinople.

These are the replies to two recently circulated reports which have told of the former sultan's demise, and of his having been spirited away during the night to the capital. The latter report was merely founded upon the passage of a train full of munitions, concerning which quite special precautions were taken.

If you want to set yourself a difficult task it is in coming to Salonica and trying to find out some details concerning the physical condition and mode of life of the deposed sultan, who for so many years was the political chess player who kept the diplomats of Europe busy, and who was so skilled in the game that he usually saw 20 moves ahead, while the ambassadors at Constantinople saw but two or three.

Abdul Hamid here in his confinement as the prisoner of his people is enveloped in much the same mystery as he was in Yildiz kiosk at Constantinople, and rumors and reports unlimited circulate concerning him—most of them inventions, a very few approaching the truth.

The former sultan, as most people know, lives in the villa Allatini, where he has now resided some two and a half years. His dwelling and prison consist of a large square built red tiled house, in modern French style, which springs out as a note of color from a grove of very dark green pine trees which surround it on all sides. They are up to the second story now, and in a few years, at their present rate of growth, the trees will entirely hide the building.

The Sultan's Prison

The Allatini house was built by an Italian flour merchant who had settled here, and when he died it was sold to a company, which in turn disposed of it to the state for the purpose of using it as a place of confinement for Abdul Hamid upon his deposition in 1909, after the second revolution.

Abdul Hamid upon his downfall tried in every way possible to be allowed to inhabit a palace on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, the one, a beautiful building, which had been built to shelter a well known empress upon her visit to the Turkish capital.

But the Young Turks were obdurate. Fearful of a reactionary movement in favor of the Padishah, who was intensely beloved of the old Turks, and not at all sure of their own positions, they insisted that Abdul Hamid leave the capital.

So, silently and secretly, in the middle of the night, with a minimum of baggage, accompanied by 17 wives, who made themselves conspicuous by their lamentations, he was with scant ceremony dispatched to Salonica. That city was selected because of its being the seat of the Young Turk party, and its members wished to have their arch enemy under their own eyes, guarded by themselves, and, above all, away from the capital, where they thought he might possibly have escaped.

Today I walked around the villa on three sides. The main road runs along one side, the northern. There is nothing but a bare wall to be seen, at the center of which is a walled up gateway of large size. Lynx eyed sentries watch the passers. Any one lingering is promptly requested to move on. On the three other sides no one is allowed to go anywhere near the walls, and

sentries about 50 yards apart jealously mount guard and any one approaching is likely to be shot at without parley. An enterprising, innocent Englishman recently tried to take a photograph. The whizz of a bullet set him running. So there are not many photographs of the Allatini house—none of the interior, at all events, since the sultan has been there.

Sentinels Will Fire

To get a view of the two sides, east and south, a big detour had to be made through fields filled with a rank growth of a prickly dead weed. The sentinels all round the walls meanwhile were keeping a vigilant eye upon the movements of my party.

The wall used to be one meter high; it is now thrice that height. Inside and out it is heavily picketed. A military guardhouse of considerable dimensions is on the north side across the road. At the south soldiers used to camp out. Now the tents have been replaced with a neat white guardhouse with red tiled roofs. But no one is allowed to approach. Any one so doing takes his life in his hands. The orders to the soldiers on duty regarding the approach of strangers are of the most stringent nature, and they are "Fire at once!"

There is a road running down the west side of the Allatini property. That is absolutely forbidden to all except those known to be directly connected with the household, and they consist almost solely of a contractor, a doctor and a barber, all three of whom are warned that any indiscretion will be severely punished.

Razim Bey, a colonel and warm supporter of the Young Turk party, is personally charged with the responsibility of the keeping of the erstwhile sultan. He is a man of severe aspect and few words. His duty is to see Abdul Hamid once a day, and he goes through the formality of asking if there is anything the prisoner wants.

Of late the former ruler makes no reply. About a year ago he used to ask that his household be increased. In other words, he wanted more wives. If you ask Razim Bey how the former sultan is he will invariably reply: "Quite happy. He does not worry about anything, and indeed he has increased in weight of late."

But behind those words of the guardian of the imperial prisoner

there is a cryptic meaning. It is true that the former sultan is not unhappy, but if he is happy it is in the negative form of a man who has ceased to know what is going on. The truth is, that for a year past softening of the brain has set in, and the great intelligence which used to match itself against all the combinations of the diplomats of Europe, and so often beat them, is today no more, and Abdul Hamid is a mental nullity. He does nothing. He used to while away his time in carpentering, at which he proved himself quite skillful. But that he has long given up. He does not read. Newspapers have been offered him. He does not look at them. He knows nothing of what goes on in the other world. He talks to a brother in law who lives with him, but he does not remember the most important events of his reign. His mental state is, I am assured, owing to the abuses of the harem. He has one wife, a Circassian, aged 28, with whom he is enamored. With few exceptions his wives have been Circassian beauties. As a race the Circassian women are rare types of refined and artistic loveliness.

A little more than a year ago, owing



Drawn from a Portrait in the Illustrated London News.

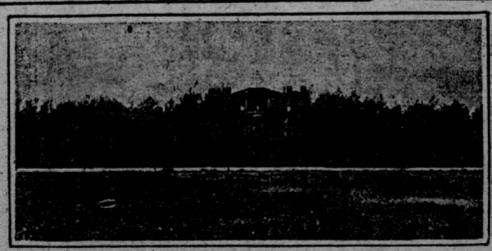


Abdul Hamid II. From a Portrait Taken in 1904.

Until some time ago, Abdul Hamid received £1,000 a month, but £200 has been given to one of his wives, so that his monthly allowance is reduced by that amount. But with that sum he has quite enough to go on with.

Abdul Hamid eats well, is an early riser, smokes cigarettes almost continually, and is a particularly good judge of tobacco. From time to time he may be seen sitting at one of the windows of the Allatini Villa, but the moment he thinks himself observed he disappears from sight.

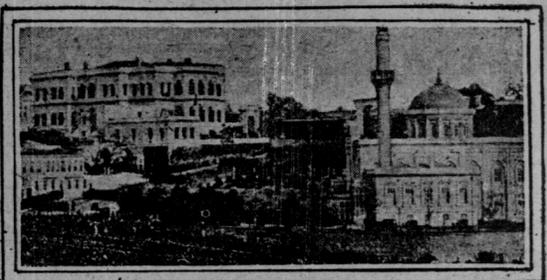
ing to the dullness of life within the walls at the Allatini residence, there was a strike or upheaval in the harem. Up to that time Abdul Hamid had had for his amusement a jester and a musician. The discontents appealed to the authorities to be released, and, as the former sultan made no objection, the jester and the musician, a son and 10 of the wives were entrained one night for Constantinople. It was given out that they had gone to the



The Allatini Villa as It Appeared Before the Wall Was Built.



Salonica, from the Water Front.



Yildiz Kiosk and the Mosque of Hamid. Where the Sultan Formerly Lived. Photo by Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

capital to attend a wedding. Anyhow, that three metre high wall around the they never returned, and ever since Abdul Hamid has deplored the meagerness of his harem.

Since that night upon which the bulk of the former sultan's people abandoned him the neighbors have observed that all life seems to have left Allatini villa. It is inferred that that was the final coup which settled upon the former monarch and left him in a state from which he has never recovered. The shutters remain closed and the house looks deserted.

As in the times of yore at Yildiz, Abdul Hamid still retains a great fearfulness for his personal safety. His cuisine is simple—that is to say, it is essentially Turkish, consisting largely of mutton, chicken, rice, vegetables and fruits.

Each dish is, as was the case in Yildiz, brought up from the kitchen bound with tape and sealed with red wax. That sealing is a primary precaution, so that the food can not be tampered with on the way from the kitchen. But that is not enough for this strange man, whose suspiciousness takes the form of mania, and that mania itself resolves itself into the fixed idea that he will, one day or another, meet death by poison. Accordingly, when the dishes are opened the cook and one other member of the household is compelled to taste thereof first. Not until this has been accomplished will Abdul Hamid eat of anything.

Even the doctor is not free from suspicion, and with him it assumes a serio-comic phase. Thus, when he has ordered Abdul Hamid a certain regime of pills, the illustrious patient invariably insists upon the doctor himself partaking of the medicine, and that there may be no trickery about it he himself picks out the pill, and that is



The Allatini Villa—The Prison of Abdul Hamid.

the one which the doctor must swallow and no other. It reminds one of an event some seven or eight years ago, when Doctor Bergmann told the reigning sultan that his daughter would have to be operated upon for appendicitis. Abdul Hamid insisted thereupon that a similar operation should first be performed upon a daughter of one of the members of the court to see what came of it.

Yet another instance of Abdul Hamid's fear lies in the existence of

that three metre high wall around the property. Formerly it was but a meter high, with rails and brick posts at intervals. But when it came to obtaining his signature for the £1,600,000 which lay in the Deutsche bank, during which a good deal of bullying and coercion had to be used, the prisoner finally gave way upon the promise that the main gate on the high road would be done away with and the space it occupied plastered up, and that a wall three meters high should be built all around the property. His reason for this was a fear lest he should be shot down by people outside.

The Sultan's Fear

While the former monarch is thus minutely careful concerning his own safety, the Young Turks are just as precisely solicitous that he should not possibly escape, and there is no manner of doubt, in spite of constant official assurances that Abdul Hamid is quite happy, that his captivity has been carried out with a rigor which is scarcely justifiable.

The Young Turks, who are intensely shy about any reference to Abdul Hamid, assert that their captive has all liberty within the big outer walls of the property. That, from what I hear on what I am bound to consider as good authority, is untrue. What is told me is this: That the imperial prisoner occupies the first floor, and that he is confined to that. He is neither allowed to descend to the ground floor nor ascend to the second story. Above all, that he is not allowed to go out into the garden and that he has never been out since his arrival here. This last is an incontrovertible fact. The Young Turks, when I tackled them with this as not right, assured me that he does not care to come out for exercise and that he seldom went out at Yildiz.

The precautions taken to prevent any one reaching the prisoner are extreme. I asked to have an interview with him and was met with sarcastic laughter and a very emphatic negative. "Impossible!" said a Young Turk leader. "Abdul Hamid is dead to the world and no one will ever see him alive again!"

It has been told me, and it is quite within the possibilities of the situation and is backed by the above words quoted, that should any revolution break out and the Young Turk party find itself in peril one of the first orders given would be the extermination of the prisoner of the Allatini villa.

"Lunching at a villa within a stone's throw of the Allatini house, I was rather surprised to find an ordinary net wire fence all around the garden where a wall would have naturally suggested itself as more ornamental and useful.

"Oh, yes," said the owner. "No walls here." We are not allowed to build them. And it was quite true.

No one having a villa within rifle range of the Allatini villa is allowed to have a wall. For behind such walls friends of the former sultan might take shelter when attempting a rescue of Abdul Hamid. Thus, even Ramî Bey, the Young Turk member of parliament, who has a villa between the Allatini villa and the sea, may not build the wall he desired and began around his garden. Ships also might contain rescuing parties, so all vessels are strictly forbidden anchoring anywhere in the bay near the Allatini villa.

THE IMAGINATION OF A FISHERMAN

IPASSED by a group of friends, once, who, being entertained by a supremely jolly and good natured and fun loving Creole lady from New Orleans with a story about an innumerable flock of wild canaries she had seen in the chaparral, I remarked, en passant, "Sapristi! 'Imagination!" It broke up the story and I fled to the protection of my tent.

So, a few days ago, a friend sent me a picture of a bass, a leaping, small mouth warrior with jaw fly impaled, and I hung him upon my tent wall. And why now should I long to go fishing? I, in my imagination, step into the boat with, say, my old partner of years gone by, and as the guide, seeing all made snug and everything in, pushes off, we light up our pipes and gaze and breathe and gaze again, no one speaking a word as the rhythm of the oars and the lapping of the water immersed bow tells us we are speeding on to the lair of, ounce for ounce, perhaps the gamest and finest old fighter that swims in either salt or

fresh waters—the small mouthed bass. Silence is only a temporary condition with the old man, and the talkative guide (a strange freak in a good-man) begins to instill into him some of his ideas on the proper way to fish.

Well, here we are, and, trying the rocky ledge, we are both of us soon fast to good, heavy fish. And the bantering and wagging and the repartee as the fight goes on!

How natural does it all come back to me! I can not only see the good old rod of 20 summers' use bend and recover, like one side of Hogarth's line of beauty, but hear the reel! Ah! the music of that reel, singing the same old love song of which no true fisherman tires! Some go so far as to put silver clicks into their reel to get more music, a case simply of piling Pelion on Ossa. The music of the reel! And then the tug, tug, tug at the wrist as you give him the butt and keep him away from that old sunken and partly submerged tree top! And was not gentle Isak right when asked to describe, on his deathbed, the most pleasant sensation in his long life, he immediately answered, "The tug of a 23 pound salmon!" And I guess the Gentle Angler had it almost pat, eh? Don't all speak at once.

And then the noon hour on the rocky boulders on one side with huge encased on the other by a crescent, sandy beach, wave kissed and glistening in the sun.

The gathering of a few sticks of wood and the putting over of the coffee pot. The trying out of the bacon, as the guide slips three or four fine fellows from the string and deftly skinning and dissecting them, lays upon the tin platter great slabs of big, pink fish steaks, boneless and as nearly your outstretched hand. And you watch him dust each piece with cornmeal, golden flakes that in the pan enrust the fish and turn to russet brown. And you now and then get a whiff of the maple smoke from the burning twigs and combined with it the aroma of the boiling coffee and the frying bass in the spluttering bacon fat. Do you follow me? Ah! And you begin to gather together the tin plates and the forks and knives, the cups and the bread and butter and cream and sugar, and set them upon a nearby table rock put there by nature for your special benefit.

And you jealously watch the guide tenderly impale, just as tenderly as did Izaak impale his wriggling worm upon the hook, so much so that you know and feel that the worm Walton used remember that ye "all on and only by the fly" trout fishermen) wriggled through excess of joy and not of pain—each fillet of bass, breaking through the tender crust and showing just a glimpse of the flaky, white flesh underneath now cooked to a turn. And you are helped straight from the pan, and along to a bit of bacon, and with your coffee cup filled and coated with rich golden cream, aromatic of the cowslips and daisies of the pastures, you eat and enjoy the breeze and listen to the lapping of the water upon the sand, that plays an accompaniment to the leafy aeolian harps whispering sweet music overhead.



Some of Abdul Hamid II's Younger Sons.