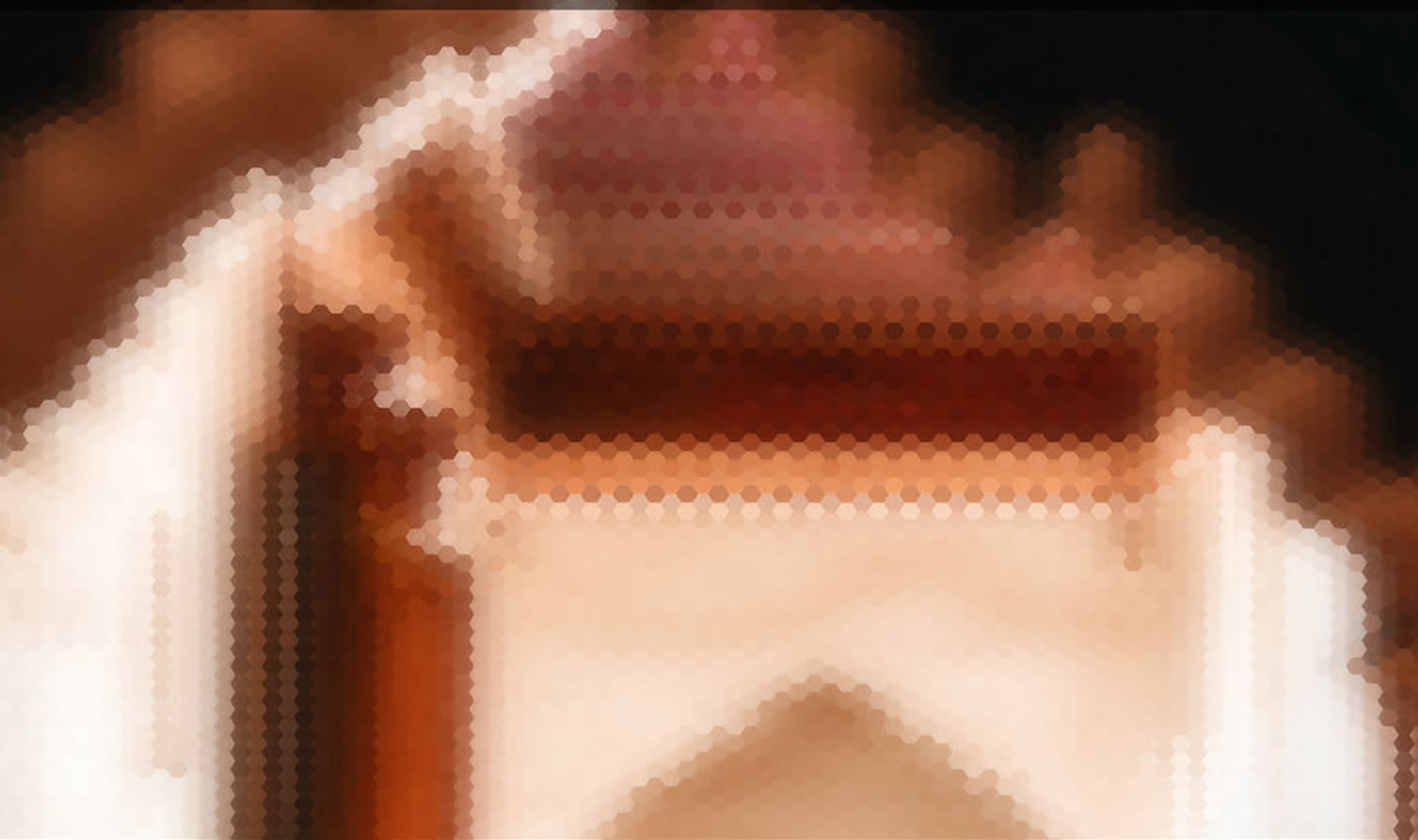
MISS PARDOE

# THE CITY OF THE SULTAN



VOL. 1 & 2

**Miss Pardoe**

# The City of the Sultan
(Vol.1&2)

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EAN 4064066382933

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# PREFACE.

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In publishing the present work I feel that I should be deficient in self-justice, did I not state a few facts relatively to the numerous difficulties with which I have had to contend during its compilation.

The language of Turkey, in itself a serious impediment from its total dissimilarity to every European tongue, naturally raises a barrier between the native and the stranger, which is to the last only partially removed by the intervention of a third person; who, acting as an Interpreter, too frequently fritters away the soul of the conversation, even where he does not wilfully pervert its sense. But this drawback to a full and free intercourse with the natives, irritating and annoying as it is, sinks into insignificance, when compared with the myriad snares laid for the stranger, (and, above all, for the literary stranger) by party-spirit and political prejudice. The liberal-minded and high-hearted politician of Europe, even while he is straining every nerve, and exerting every energy, to support and strengthen the interests of his country, disdains to carry with him into private life the hatreds, the jealousies, and the suspicions, which, like rust on metal, mar the brightness of the spirit that harbours them. He does not reject a friend because his political tenets may be at variance with his own; nor overlook the amiable traits of his character, to dwell only upon his opposing prejudices and interests.

The height to which party-spirit is carried in Constantinople; or I should rather say, in the Frank quarter of Constantinople, would be laughable were it not mischievous. Even females are not free from the *malaria* which hovers like an atmosphere about the streets and “palaces” of Pera; and a traveller has not been domesticated a week among its inhabitants, ere he almost begins to believe that the destinies of the whole Eastern Empire hang upon the breath of a dozen individuals. With one party, Russia is the common sewer into which are poured all the reproach and the vituperation of indignant patriotism—with the other, England is the landmark towards which is pointed the finger of suspicion and defiance. All this may be very necessary, and very praiseworthy, as a matter of diplomacy; I suppose that it is both the one and the other. I have no opinion to offer on the subject. I merely venture to question the propriety of suffering such anti-social feelings to intrude into the bosom of private life; and to question the soundness of the judgment which would universally create a bad man out of a rival politician; and make the opening of one door the signal for the closing of another. It is said that the three plagues of Constantinople are Fire, Pestilence, and Dragomen; judging from what I saw and heard while there, I should be inclined to add a fourth, and to designate it, Politics. Certain it is that the faubourg of Pera always reminded me of an ant-hill; with its jostling, bustling, and racing for straws and trifles; and its ceaseless, restless struggling and striving to secure most inconsequent results.

That the great question of Eastern policy is a weighty and an important one, every thinking person must concede at

once; but whether its final settlement will be advantageously accelerated by individual jealousies and individual hatreds is assuredly more problematical. “He who is not for me is against me,” is the motto of every European resident in Turkey; for each, however incompetent he may be to judge of so intricate and comprehensive a subject, is nevertheless a loud and uncompromising politician. And, if the temporary sojourner in the East be resolved to belong to no *clique*, to pledge himself to no party, and to pursue a straight and independent path, as he would do in Europe, without lending himself to the views of either, he is certain to be suspected by both.

These are the briars which beset the wayside of the stranger in Turkey. He has not only to contend with the unaccustomed language and manners of the natives—to fling from him his European prejudices—and to learn to look candidly and dispassionately on a state of society, differing so widely from that which he has left—but when the wearied spirit would fain fall back, and repose itself for a while among more familiar and congenial habits, it has previously to undergo an ordeal as unexpected as it is irritating; and from which it requires no inconsiderable portion of moral courage to escape unshackled.

Such are the adventitious and unnecessary difficulties that have been gratuitously prepared for the Eastern traveller, and superadded to the natural impediments of the locality; and of these he has infinitely more reason to complain, than of the unavoidable obstacles which meet him at every step in his commerce with the natives. That the Turks as a people, and particularly the Turkish females,

are shy of making the acquaintance of strangers, is most true; their habits and feelings do not lend themselves readily to a familiar intercourse with Europeans; nor are they induced to make any extraordinary effort to overcome the prejudice with which they ever look upon a Frank, when they remember how absurdly and even cruelly they have been misrepresented by many a passing traveller, possessed neither of the time nor the opportunity to form a more efficient judgment.

When my father and myself left Europe, it was with the intention of visiting, not only Turkey, but also Greece, and Egypt; and we accordingly carried with us letters to influential individuals, resident in each of those interesting countries, whose assistance and friendship would have been most valuable to us. And, for the two or three first months of our sojourn in Constantinople, while yet unwilling to draw deductions, and to trust myself with inferences, which might, and probably would, ultimately prove erroneous, I suffered myself to be misled by the assertions and opinions of prejudiced and party-spirited persons, and still maintained the same purpose. But, when awakened to a suspicion of the spirit-thrall in which I had been kept, I resolved to hazard no assertion or opinion which did not emanate from personal conviction, and I found that I could not prove an honest chronicler if I merely contented myself with a hurried and superficial survey of a country constituted like Turkey.

To this conviction must consequently be attributed the fact that the whole period of my sojourn in the East was passed in Constantinople, and a part of Asia Minor. But my

personal disappointment will be over-paid, should it be conceded that I have not failed in the attempt of affording to my readers a more just and complete insight into Turkish domestic life, than they have hitherto been enabled to obtain.

Bradenham Lodge, Bucks,
May 1837.

# CHAPTER I.

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The Golden Horn—Stamboul in Snow—The Seraï Bournou—Scutari—Galata—First View of Constantinople—St. Sophia and Solimaniè—Pera—Domestication of Aquatic Birds—Sounds at Sea—Caïques—Oriental Grouping—Armenian Costume—Reforms of Sultan Mahmoud—Dervishes—Eastern Jews—Evening—Illuminated Minarets—Romance *versus* Reason—Pain at Parting—Custom House of Galata—The East *versus* the West—Reminiscences of Marseillois Functionaries—The British Consul at Marseilles—The Light-house at Syra—The Frank Quarter—Diplomatic Atmosphere—Straw Huts—Care of the Turks for Animals—A Scene from Shakspeare.

It was on the 30th of December, 1835, that we anchored in the Golden Horn; my long-indulged hopes were at length realized, and the Queen of Cities was before me, throned on her peopled hills, with the silver Bosphorus, garlanded with palaces, flowing at her feet!

It was with difficulty that I could drag myself upon deck after the night of intense suffering which I had passed in the sea of Marmora, and, when I did succeed in doing so, the vessel was already under the walls of the Seraglio garden, and advancing rapidly towards her anchorage. The atmosphere was laden with snow, and I beheld Stamboul for the first time clad in the ermine mantle of the sternest of seasons. Yet, even thus, the most powerful feeling that

unravelled itself from the chaos of sensations which thronged upon me was one of unalloyed delight. How could it be otherwise? I seemed to look on fairy-land—to behold the embodiment of my wildest visions—to be the denizen of a new world.

Queenly Stamboul! the myriad sounds of her streets came to us mellowed by the distance; and, as we swept along, the whole glory of her princely port burst upon our view! The gilded palace of Mahmoud, with its glittering gate and overtopping cypresses, among which may be distinguished the buildings of the Seraï, were soon passed; behind us, in the distance, was Scutari, looking down in beauty on the channel, whose waves reflected the graceful outline of its tapering minarets, and shrouded themselves for an instant in the dark shadows of its funereal grove. Galata was beside us, with its mouldering walls and warlike memories; and the vessel trembled as the chain fell heavily into the water, and we anchored in the midst of the crowd of shipping that already thronged the harbour. On the opposite shore clustered the painted dwellings of Constantinople, the party-coloured garment of the “seven hills”—the tall cypresses that overshadowed her houses, and the stately plane trees, which more than rivalled them in beauty, bent their haughty heads beneath the weight of accumulated snows. Here and there, a cluster of graceful minarets cut sharply against the sky; while the ample dome of the mosque to which they belonged, and the roofs of the dwellings that nestled at their base, lay steeped in the same chill livery. Eagerly did I seek to distinguish those of St. Sophia, and the smaller but far more elegant Solimaniè,

the shrine of the Prophet’s Beard, with its four minarets, and its cloistered courts; and it was not without reluctance that I turned away, to mark where the thronging houses of Pera climb with magnificent profusion the amphitheatre of hills which dominate the treasure-laden port.

As my gaze wandered along the shore, and, passing by the extensive grove of cypresses that wave above the burying-ground, once more followed the course of the Bosphorus, I watched the waves as they washed the very foundation of the dwellings that skirt it, until I saw them chafing and struggling at the base of the barrack of Topphannè, and at intervals flinging themselves high into the air above its very roof.

To an European eye, the scene, independently of its surpassing beauty and utter novelty, possessed two features peculiarly striking; the extreme vicinity of the houses to the sea, which in many instances they positively overhang; and the vast number of aquatic fowl that throng the harbour. Seagulls were flying past us in clouds, and sporting like domestic birds about the vessel, while many of the adjoining roofs were clustered with them; the wild-duck and the water-hen were diving under our very stern in search of food; and shoals of porpoises were every moment rolling by, turning up their white bellies to the light, and revelling in safety amid the sounds and sights of a mighty city, as though unconscious of the vicinity of danger. How long, I involuntarily asked myself, would this extraordinary confidence in man be repaid by impunity in an English port? and the answer was by no means pleasing to my national pride.

As I looked round upon the shipping, the language of many lands came on the wind. Here the deep “Brig a-hoy!” of the British seaman boomed along the ripple; there, the shrill cry of the Greek mariner rang through the air: at intervals, the full rich strain of the dark-eyed Italian relieved the wild monotonous chant of the Turk; while the cry of the sea-boy from the rigging was answered by the stern brief tones of the weather-beaten sailor on the deck.

Every instant a graceful caïque, with its long sharp prow and gilded ornaments, shot past the ship: now freighted with a bearded and turbaned Turk, squatted upon his carpet at the bottom of the boat, pipe in hand, and muffled closely in his furred pelisse, the very personification of luxurious idleness; and attended by his red-capped and blue-coated domestic, who was sometimes a thick-lipped negro, but more frequently a keen-eyed and mustachioed musselmaun —now tenanted by a group of women, huddled closely together, and wearing the *yashmac*, or veil of white muslin, which covers all the face except the eyes and nose, and gives to the wearer the appearance of an animated corpse; some of them, as they passed, languidly breathing out their harmonious Turkish, which in a female mouth is almost music.

Then came a third, gliding along like a nautilus, with its small white sail; and bearing a bevy of Greeks, whose large flashing eyes gleamed out beneath the unbecoming *fèz*, or cap of red cloth, with its purple silk tassel, and ornament of cut paper, bound round the head among the lower classes, by a thick black shawl, tightly twisted. This was followed by a fourth, impelled by two lusty rowers, wherein the round

hats and angular costume of a party of Franks forced your thoughts back upon the country that you had left, only to be recalled the next instant by a freight of Armenian merchants returning from the Charshees of Constantinople to their dwellings at Galata and Pera. As I looked on the fine countenances, the noble figures, and the animated expression of the party, how did I deprecate their shaven heads, and the use of the frightful *calpac*, which I cannot more appropriately describe than by comparing it to the iron pots used in English kitchens, inverted! The graceful pelisse, however, almost makes amends for the monstrous head-gear, as its costly garniture of sable or marten-skin falls back, and reveals the robe of rich silk, and the cachemire shawl folded about the waist. Altogether, I was more struck with the Armenian than the Turkish costume; and there is a refinement and *tenue* about the wearers singularly attractive. Their well-trimmed mustachioes, their stained and carefully-shaped eyebrows, their exceeding cleanliness, in short, their whole appearance, interests the eye at once; nor must I pass over without remark their jewelled rings, and their pipes of almost countless cost, grasped by fingers so white and slender that they would grace a woman.

While I am on the subject of costume, I cannot forbear to record my regret as I beheld in every direction the hideous and unmeaning *fèz*, which has almost superseded the gorgeous turban of muslin and cachemire: indeed, I was nearly tempted in my woman wrath to consider all the admirable reforms, wrought by Sultan Mahmoud in his capital, overbalanced by the frightful changes that he has made in the national costume, by introducing a mere

caricature of that worst of all originals—the stiff, starch, angular European dress. The costly turban, that bound the brow like a diadem, and relieved by the richness of its tints the dark hue of the other garments, has now almost entirely disappeared from the streets; and a group of Turks look in the distance like a bed of poppies; the flowing robe of silk or of woollen has been flung aside for the ill-made and awkward surtout of blue cloth; and the waist, which was once girdled with a shawl of cachemire, is now compressed by two brass buttons!

The Dervish, or domestic priest, for such he may truly be called, whose holy profession, instead of rendering him a distinct individual, suffers him to mingle like his fellow-men in all the avocations, and to participate in all the socialities of life; which permits him to read his offices behind the counter of his shop, and to bring up his family to the cares and customs of every-day life; and who is bound only by his own voluntary act to a steady continuance in the self-imposed duties that he is at liberty to cast aside when they become irksome to him; the holy Dervish frequently passed us in his turn, seated at the bottom of the caïque, with an open volume on his knees, and distinguished from the lay-Turk by his *geulaf*, or high hat of grey felt. Then came a group of Jews, chattering and gesticulating; with their ample cloaks, and small dingy-coloured caps, surrounded by a projecting band of brown and white cotton, whose singular pattern has misled a modern traveller so far as to induce him to state that it is “a white handkerchief, inscribed with some Hebrew sentences from their law.”

Thus far, I could compare the port of Constantinople to nothing less delightful than poetry put into action. The novel character of the scenery—the ever-shifting, picturesque, and graceful groups—the constant flitting past of the fairy-like caïques—the strange tongues—the dark, wild eyes—all conspired to rivet me to the deck, despite the bitterness of the weather.

Evening came—and the spell deepened. We had arrived during the Turkish Ramazan, or Lent, and, as the twilight gathered about us, the minarets of all the mosques were brilliantly illuminated. Nothing could exceed the magical effect of the scene; the darkness of the hour concealed the outline of the graceful shafts of these etherial columns, while the circles of light which girdled them almost at their extreme height formed a triple crown of living diamonds. Below these depended (filling the intermediate space) shifting figures of fire, succeeding each other with wonderful rapidity and precision: now it was a house, now a group of cypresses, then a vessel, or an anchor, or a spray of flowers; and these changes were effected, as I afterwards discovered, in the most simple and inartificial manner. Cords are slung from minaret to minaret, from whence depend others, to which the lamps are attached; and the raising or lowering of these cords, according to a previous design, produces the apparently magic transitions which render the illuminations of Stamboul unlike those of any European capital.

But I can scarcely forgive myself for thus accounting in so matter-of-fact a manner for the beautiful illusions that wrought so powerfully on my own fancy. I detest the spirit

which reduces every thing to plain reason, and pleases itself by tracing effects to causes, where the only result of the research must be the utter annihilation of all romance, and the extinction of all wonder. The flowers that blossom by the wayside of life are less beautiful when we have torn them leaf by leaf asunder, to analyze their properties, and to determine their classes, than when we first inhale their perfume, and delight in their lovely tints, heedless of all save the enjoyment which they impart. The man of science may decry, and the philosopher may condemn, such a mode of reasoning; but really, in these days of utilitarianism, when all things are reduced to rule, and laid bare by wisdom, it is desirable to reserve a niche or two unprofaned by “the schoolmaster,” where fancy may plume herself unchidden, despite the never-ending analysis of a theorising world!

My continued indisposition compelled my father and myself to remain another day on board; but I scarcely felt the necessity irksome. All was so novel and so full of interest around me, and my protracted voyage had so thoroughly inured me to privation and inconvenience, that I was enabled to enjoy the scene without one regret for land. The same shifting panorama, the same endless varieties of sight and sound, occupied the day; and the same magic illusions lent a brilliancy and a poetry to the night.

Smile, ye whose exclusiveness has girdled you with a fictitious and imaginary circle, beyond which ye have neither sympathies nor sensibilities—smile if ye will, as I declare that when the moment came in which I was to quit the good brig, that had borne us so bravely through storm and peril—the last tangible link between ourselves and the

far land that we had loved and left—I almost regretted that I trod her snow-heaped and luggage-cumbered deck for the last time; and that, as the crew clustered round us, to secure a parting look and a parting word, a tear sprang to my eye. How impossible does it appear to me to forget, at such a time as this, those who have shared with you the perils and the protection of a long and arduous voyage! From the sturdy seaman who had stood at the helm, and contended with the drear and drenching midnight sea, to the venturous boy who had climbed the bending mast to secure the remnants of the shivered sail, every face had long been familiar to me. I could call each by name; nor was there one among them to whom I had not, on some occasion, been indebted for those rude but ready courtesies which, however insignificant in themselves, are valuable to the uninitiated and helpless at sea.

On the 1st of January, 1836, we landed at the Custom House stairs at Galata, amid a perfect storm of snow and wind; nor must I omit the fact that we did so without “let or hindrance” from the officers of the establishment. The only inquiry made was, whether we had brought out any merchandize, and, our reply being in the negative, coupled with the assurance that we were merely travellers, and that our packages consisted simply of personal necessaries, we were civilly desired to pass on.

I could not avoid contrasting this mode of action in the “barbarous” East, with that of “civilized” Europe, where even your very person is not sacred from the investigation of low-bred and low-minded individuals, from whose officious and frequently impertinent contact you can secure

yourself only by a bribe. Perhaps the contrast struck me the more forcibly that we had embarked from Marseilles, where all which concerns either the Douane or the Bureau de Santé is *à la rigueur*—where you are obliged to pay a duty on what you take out of the city as well as what you bring into it—pay for a certificate of health to persons who do not know that you have half a dozen hours to live—and—hear this, ye travel-stricken English, who leave your country to breathe freely for a while in lands wherein ye may dwell without the extortion of taxes—pay *your own* Consul for permission to embark!

This last demand rankles more than all with a British subject, who may quit his birth-place unquestioned, and who hugs himself with the belief that nothing pitiful or paltry can be connected with the idea of an Englishman by the foreigners among whom he is about to sojourn. He has to learn his error, and the opportunity is afforded to him at Marseilles, where the natives of every other country under Heaven are free to leave the port as they list, when they have satisfied the demands of the local functionaries; while the English alone have a special claimant in their own Consul, the individual appointed by the British government to “assist” and “protect” his fellow-subjects—by whom they are only let loose upon the world at the rate of six francs and a half a head! And for this “consideration” they become the happy possessors of a “Permission to Embark” from a man whom they have probably never seen, and who has not furthered for them a single view, nor removed a single difficulty. To this it may be answered that, had they required his assistance, they might have demanded it, which must be

conceded at once, but, nevertheless, the success of their demand is more than problematical—and the arrangement is perfectly on a par with that of the Greeks in the island of Syra, who, when we cast anchor in their port, claimed, among other dues, a dollar and a half for the signal-light; and, on being reminded that there had been no light at the station for several previous nights, with the additional information that we had narrowly escaped wreck in consequence, coolly replied, that all we said was very true, but that there would shortly be a fire kindled there regularly —that they wanted money—and that, in short, the dollar and a half must be paid; but herefrom we at least took our departure without asking leave of our own Consul.

From the Custom House of Galata, we proceeded up a steep ascent to Pera, the quarter of the Franks—the focus of diplomacy—where every lip murmurs “His Excellency,” and secretaries, interpreters, and *attachés* are

> “Thick as the leaves on Valombrosa.”

But, alas! on the 1st day of January, Pera, Galata, and their environs, were one huge snowball. As it was Friday, the Turkish Sabbath, and, moreover, a Friday of the Ramazan, every shop was shut; and the few foot passengers who passed us by hurried on as though impatient of exposure to so inclement an atmosphere. As most of the streets are impassable for carriages, and as the sedan-chairs which supply, however imperfectly, the place of these convenient (and almost, as I had hitherto considered, indispensable) articles, are all private property, we were e’en obliged to “thread our weary way” as patiently as we could—now

buried up to our knees in snow, and anon immersed above our ancles in water, when we chanced to plunge into one of those huge holes which give so interesting an inequality to the surface of Turkish paving.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties that obstructed our progress, I could not avoid remarking the little straw huts built at intervals along the streets, for the accommodation and comfort of the otherwise homeless dogs that throng every avenue of the town. There they lay, crouched down snugly, too much chilled to welcome us with the chorus of barking that they usually bestow on travellers: a species of loud and inconvenient greeting with which we were by no means sorry to dispense. In addition to this shelter, food is every day dispensed by the inhabitants to the vagrant animals who, having no specific owners, are, to use the approved phraseology of genteel alms-asking, “wholly dependent on the charitable for support.” And it is a singular fact that these self-constituted scavengers exercise a kind of internal economy which almost appears to exceed the boundaries of mere instinct; they have their defined “walks,” or haunts, and woe betide the strange cur who intrudes on the privileges of his neighbours; he is hunted, upbraided with growls and barks, beset on all sides, even bitten in cases of obstinate contumacy, and universally obliged to retreat within his own limits. Their numbers have, as I was informed, greatly decreased of late years, but they are still very considerable.

As we passed along, a door opened, and forth stepped the most magnificent-looking individual whom I ever saw: he had a costly cachemire twined about his waist, his flowing

robes were richly furred, and he turned the key in the lock with an air of such blended anxiety and dignity, that I involuntarily thought of the Jew of Shakspeare; and I expected at the moment to hear him exclaim, “Shut the door, Jessica, shut the door, I say!” But, alas! he moved away, and no sweet Jessica flung back the casement to reply.

# CHAPTER II.

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Difficulty of Ingress to Turkish Houses—Steep Streets—The Harem—The Tandour—The Mangal—The Family—Female Costume—Luxurious Habits—The Ramazan—The Dining-room—The Widow—The Dinner—The Turks not Gastronomers—Oriental Hospitality—Ceremony of Ablution—The Massaldjhe—Alarm in the Harem—The Prayer—Evening Offering—Puerile Questions—Opium—Primitive Painting—Splendid Beds—Avocations of a Turkish Lady—Oriental Coquetry—Shopping—Commercial Flirtations—The Sultana Heybétoullah—A Turkish Carriage—The Charshees—Armenian Merchants—Greek Speculators—Perfumes and Embroidery.

I HAVE already mentioned that we arrived at Constantinople during the Ramazan or Lent; and my first anxiety was to pass a day of Fast in the interior of a Turkish family.

This difficult, and in most cases impossible, achievement for an European was rendered easy to me by the fact that, shortly after our landing, I procured an introduction to a respectable Turkish merchant; and I had no sooner written to propose a visit to his harem than I received the most frank and cordial assurances of welcome.

A Greek lady of my acquaintance having offered to accompany me, and to act as my interpreter, we crossed over to Stamboul, and, after threading several steep and narrow streets, perfectly impassable for carriages, entered

the spacious court of the house at which we were expected, and ascended a wide flight of stairs leading to the harem, or women’s apartments. The stairs terminated in a large landing-place, of about thirty feet square, into which several rooms opened on each side, screened with curtains of dark cloth embroidered with coloured worsted. An immense mirror filled up a space between two of the doors, and a long passage led from this point to the principal apartment of the harem, to which we were conducted by a black slave.

When I say “we,” I of course allude to Mrs. ---- and myself, as no men, save those of the family and the physician, are ever admitted within the walls of a Turkish harem.

The apartment into which we were ushered was large and warm, richly carpeted, and surrounded on three sides by a sofa, raised about a foot from the ground, and covered with crimson shag; while the cushions, that rested against the wall or were scattered at intervals along the couch, were gaily embroidered with gold thread and coloured silks. In one angle of the sofa stood the *tandour*: a piece of furniture so unlike any thing in Europe, that I cannot forbear giving a description of it.

The tandour is a wooden frame, covered with a couple of wadded coverlets, for such they literally are, that are in their turn overlaid by a third and considerably smaller one of rich silk: within the frame, which is of the height and dimensions of a moderately sized breakfast table, stands a copper vessel, filled with the embers of charcoal; and, on the two sides that do not touch against the sofa, piles of cushions are heaped upon the floor to nearly the same

height, for the convenience of those whose rank in the family does not authorize them to take places on the couch.

The double windows, which were all at the upper end of the apartment, were closely latticed; and, at the lower extremity of the room, in an arched recess, stood a classically-shaped clay jar full of water, and a covered goblet in a glass saucer. Along a silken cord, on either side of this niche, were hung a number of napkins, richly worked and fringed with gold; and a large copy of the Koran was deposited beneath a handkerchief of gold gauze, on a carved rosewood bracket.

In the middle of the floor was placed the *mangal*, a large copper vessel of about a foot in height, resting upon a stand of the same material raised on castors, and filled, like that within the tandour, with charcoal.

The family consisted of the father and mother, the son and the son’s wife, the daughter and her husband, and a younger and adopted son. The ladies were lying upon cushions, buried up to their necks under the coverings of the tandour; and, as they flung them off to receive us, I was struck with the beauty of the daughter, whose deep blue eyes, and hair of a golden brown, were totally different from what I had expected to find in a Turkish harem. Two glances sufficed to satisfy me that the mother was a shrew, and I had no reason subsequently to revoke my judgment. The son’s wife had fine, large, brilliant, black eyes, but her other features were by no means pleasing, although she possessed, in common with all her countrywomen, that soft, white, velvety skin, for which they are indebted to the constant use of the bath. To this luxury, in which many of

them daily indulge, must be, however, attributed the fact that their hair, in becoming bright and glossy, loses its strength, and compels them to the adoption of artificial tresses; and these they wear in profusion, wound amid the folds of the embroidered handkerchiefs that they twine about their heads in a most unbecoming manner, and secure by bodkins of diamonds or emeralds, of which ornaments they are inordinately fond.

They all wore chemisettes or under garments of silk gauze, trimmed with fringes of narrow ribbon, and wide trowsers of printed cotton falling to the ancle: their feet were bare, save that occasionally they thrust them into little yellow slippers, that scarcely covered their toes, and in which they moved over the floor with the greatest ease, dragging after them their anterys, or sweeping robes; but more frequently they dispensed with even these, and walked barefoot about the harem. Their upper dresses were of printed cotton of the brightest colours—that of the daughter had a blue ground, with a yellow pattern, and was trimmed with a fringe of pink and green. These robes, which are made in one piece, are divided at the hip on either side to their extreme length, and are girt about the waist with a cachemire shawl. The costume is completed in winter by a tight vest lined with fur, which is generally of light green or pink.

Their habits are, generally speaking, most luxurious and indolent, if I except their custom of early rising, which, did they occupy themselves in any useful manner, would be undoubtedly very commendable; but, as they only add, by these means, two or three hours of *ennui* to each day, I am

at a loss how to classify it. Their time is spent in dressing themselves, and varying the position of their ornaments—in the bath—and in sleep, which they appear to have as entirely at their back as a draught of water; in winter, they have but to nestle under the coverings of the tandour, or in summer to bury themselves among their cushions, and in five minutes they are in the land of dreams. Indeed, so extraordinarily are they gifted in this respect, that they not unfrequently engage their guests to take a nap, with the same *sang-froid* with which a European lady would invite her friends to take a walk. Habits of industry have, however, made their way, in many instances, even into the harem; the changes without have influenced the pursuits and feelings of the women; and utter idleness has already ceased to be a necessary attribute to the high-bred Turkish female.

As it was the time of the Ramazan, neither coffee nor sweetmeats were handed to us, though the offer of refreshments was made, which we, however, declined, being resolved to keep Lent with them according to their own fashion. We fasted, therefore, until about half past six o’clock, when the cry of the muezzin from the minarets proclaimed that one of the outwatchers, of whom many are employed for the purpose, had caught a glimpse of the moon. Instantly all were in motion; their preliminary arrangements had been so zealously and carefully made that not another second was lost; and, as a slave announced dinner, we all followed her to a smaller apartment, where the table, if such I may call it, was already laid.

The room was a perfect square, totally unfurnished, save that in the centre of the floor was spread a carpet, on which stood a wooden frame, about two feet in height, supporting an immense round plated tray, with the edge slightly raised. In the centre of the tray was placed a capacious white basin, filled with a kind of cold bread soup; and around it were ranged a circle of small porcelain saucers, filled with sliced cheese, anchovies, caviare, and sweetmeats of every description: among these were scattered spoons of box-wood, and goblets of pink and white sherbet, whose rose-scented contents perfumed the apartment. The outer range of the tray was covered with fragments of unleavened bread, torn asunder; and portions of the Ramazan cake, a dry, close, sickly kind of paste, glazed with the whites of eggs, and strewed over with aniseeds.

Our party was a numerous one—the aged nurse, who had reared the children of the family—the orphan boy of a dead son, who, with his wife, had perished by plague during the previous twelve months—several neighbours who had chosen the hour of dinner to make their visits—a very pretty friend from Scutari—and a very plain acquaintance from the house of death—the widow of a day—whose husband had expired the previous morning, been buried the same evening, and, as it appeared, forgotten on the morrow; for the “disconsolate widow” had come forth in a pink vest, and sky blue trowsers, with rings on her fingers, and jewels in her turban, to seek the advice and assistance of the master of the house, in securing some valuable shawls, and sundry diamonds and baubles which she had possessed before her marriage, from the grasp of the deceased’s relatives.