

If the Christian religion can make so wide a difference between these two continents, lying the one on either side of the narrow Dardanelles, what words can express the obligation to share with Asia this religion and its fruits?

Constantinople, May 10, 1877.

LETTER XXXVIII.

IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

CONSTANTINOPLE has the most remarkable water-approaches of any city in the world. You cannot reach it from any direction by water save as you pass through a narrow but deep channel so fortified that without its consent no vessel dare enter it. Our approach was by the Dardanelles, or the old Hellespont, a narrow channel often less than two miles in width, which connects the Ægean Sea with the Sea of Marmora. No foreign vessel-of-war has for many years been allowed to enter the Dardanelles save by a firman of the sultan. The fortifications do not appear to be of the first class, but with the addition of new guns being put in position behind earth-works just thrown up, they could command the straits very effectually.

The other water-approach is by the famous Bosphorus, connecting the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmora. This channel is yet narrower and hardly less deep than the Dardanelles. If Xerxes bridged the Hellespont and Leander swam it in the ardor of his love, the Bosphorus is none the less historic as having been crossed by the Turks in order to their conquest of Constantinople. The place where they crossed is still pointed out near the old Phœnician towers, which give so picturesque a look to the hills which they crown. While at Constantinople we rode nearly the entire length of the Bosphorus

until within sight of the Black Sea, only four miles distant from the last stopping-place of the steamers which run almost hourly. It is a beautiful stream. Some compare it to the Hudson. But it has a beauty all its own. It is skirted by hills, none of which rise higher than five hundred feet, but they are well wooded and cultivated, while now and then a handsome private residence is seen on their slopes. Villages abound all along the water's edge, and while many of the houses are unpainted, yet the most elegant residences are often found on the Bosphorus. They are usually the summer-homes of wealthy Europeans living in Pera. The sultan's palaces are all on the Bosphorus. Several of them are buildings of great size, as well as of some pretensions to an elegant exterior. They are on both sides of the stream, but the sultan usually lives on the European side, where his larger palaces are. Not until you reach the lower end of the Bosphorus are you reminded of any thing Oriental about it. The fortifications, the villages and villas, the fine building of Roberts College, the gun-boats and shipping, are all Occidental, until as you approach the city proper, when the minarets remind you that you are still in the East.

As one approaches Constantinople from the Sea of Marmora the scene is one of rare beauty. There are really three cities which he sees. That to the left, and most imposing, is Stamboul, or Constantinople proper, one side built on the shore of the Sea of Marmora, and the other on the Golden Horn, an arm of the Bosphorus, a deep channel which extends up some five or six miles, when it makes a bend to the right and is terminated by the hills. The middle city, between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, is called Pera. It is the favorite dwelling-place as well as business center of the numerous Europeans who live here. They occupy the

crests and slopes of the hills, while the Turks, including the sultan himself, live near the water's edge. Here the hotels are located, and a traveler need hardly know that he is in Turkey. The remaining city on the Asiatic side is Scutari, where also many Europeans reside. To the south of it is Chalcedon, memorable as the seat of one of the great councils of the Church. New York is the only city that is recalled by the location of Constantinople. With the North and East rivers, and with Jersey City and Brooklyn on either side, as one sees the city from the bay, he can form some general idea of the remarkable location of Constantinople. It ought to be the finest as well as the largest city in the world. I had imagined it low, but it rises well, and on every side, from the water, as do the sister cities of Pera and Scutari, so that it can be seen from a great distance. With its lofty and massive domes and numerous minarets rising above the war-offices, the legislative hall, and the buildings of the seraglio, the view is peculiarly imposing. You wonder that this location was so long in being selected as the site of a great city, and that now, the connecting-link of two continents, and capable of ready railroad and water connection with the entire world, she does not outstrip London in population and commerce. Your wonder ceases when you see her master, the Turk, and yet you dare believe that some such great destiny must still await her.

Still the Turk impressed me more favorably than I had anticipated. As a rule, the better classes have adopted European dress, retaining only the fez. Dressed thus they are so like Europeans that you are apt to regard them as such. They seem, too, to move with some briskness, but we were informed by those who have long dwelt among them that they are greatly wanting in energy and enterprise. We had a daily proof of that in an iron

bridge across the Golden Horn which has been for years just at the point of completion, until it is beginning to look old, while the crowds have to hourly pass over a rickety wooden one. The Turkish soldiers, whom we saw in considerable numbers drilling about the city, look as if they would fight well. They are quiet, orderly, and earnest. But the masses are much better than the officials, and the soldiers than their commanders. There is but one voice about public officials—they are corrupt men, whose principal business it is to line their own pockets. The Turk cannot stand promotion. The officers are as overbearing as they are incompetent, while those who have access to the public funds in any way, knowing how short their term of office is, make provision for retiring into private life again with a competency. The Turk has been compared to some kinds of fish which do well in deep water, but on attempting to live near the surface soon show signs of corruption. This distrust of officials appears to be universal. With no respectable schools, there are few educated men, and the great mass of those who fill office are there less as the result of merit than of scheming and trickery. Custom-house officials receive bribes openly and without any sense of shame, and the people confess that money is necessary to secure any favor or carry any measure.

But the "Espero" has long since cast anchor in the Golden Horn, and it is time that we were ashore. A few francs enable the party to run the gauntlet of the custom-house. The trunks and valises are piled on the backs of human pack-horses, one carrying several of each, and we climb the hills of Pera to our hotel on the top. Be careful of the dogs! There they sleep in groups on the streets. They fear no danger, for the very horses respect them, and pick their steps among them. Lying in the

middle of the street, a Constantinople dog will barely lift his head when he knows that a horse is walking over him, and then resumes his nap. I saw one horse make a misstep, and the slumbering dog set up a howl which instantly awoke all the slumbering dogs in the vicinity, who, supposing him to be a dog off his beat, and not belonging in that part of the city, and who had as usual been attacked by one of their number, immediately set on the poor fellow, and I lost sight of him as he was being chased and bitten by the other dogs, who had failed to recognize him in their determination to keep out all interlopers. The dogs are the scavengers of the city. I have seen no less than twenty feeding on one pile of garbage. The people defend them, and will not allow them to be hurt. They abound in every part of the three cities. They are most disagreeable at night, when they are quite fierce, and keep up a perpetual howl. Many of them are loathsome-looking creatures, with a decided scrofulous tendency. Some of them have lost all their hair, and hardly fill one's ideal of a lady's lap-dog.

The best way to see the city is on horseback. Immediately after breakfast there were fourteen horses waiting in front of the hotel for as many riders. They were very spirited animals, and we soon learned to keep some distance apart, as they showed a great propensity for kicking. Our long cavalcade attracted much attention as it filed through the streets. Crossing one of the bridges over the Golden Horn, we were soon in Stamboul, or Constantinople proper. Our first halt was in front of the Sublime Porte. This is the gateway to the seraglio, where the sultan formerly lived, and where the public offices were located. It is a very tame structure compared with many in Lucknow and other parts of India, and yet it has given the name to the Turkish government—the Sublime Porte. We were not able

to enter, as visitors were before the war, but our guide stops for orders to visit the great mosques on the morrow. We then continue our ride, accompanied by our horse-boys, who manage to run as fast as the horses canter, until we reach the Seven Towers at the extreme western end of the city. We pass through the old gate, and ride several miles without the city walls. I say walls, for they are double, but much cracked and shattered by earthquakes. The sultan was on the point of removing them some years ago, but was dissuaded by the English ambassador, who assured him that he might have need for them yet, and that even in their present dilapidated condition they could give the enemy much trouble. Without the walls we saw little but cemeteries filled with turbaned grave-stones and graceful cypresses. Returning through another gate we passed the different quarters—Armenian, Greek, Turkish—hardly distinguishable from each other, but all sadly in need of paint. Like most cities of the Orient, Constantinople loses on close inspection. In this part of the city, among the miles of houses which we saw, there was not one that could be called comfortable. Some of them were large enough, but unplastered and unpainted, and with nothing to make them attractive. The Turkish quarter was as still as death, as the men were away and the women could only look through the lattice-work at the passers-by.

We knew that the oddly-dressed men that we passed occasionally were *dancing dervises*, on their way to worship. As this was their day for that service we arranged to be present immediately after lunch. Their mosque, located in Pera, is rather a neat one, but without minarets. The dervises are an order of monks, but permitted to marry. They are regarded as quite holy, and are much esteemed by the Moslems. Their dress consists of a long

gray cloak with a tall brimless hat of the same color. Promptly at the hour the muezzin's voice was heard calling to prayer, and the dervises entered and took their places within the railing beneath the dome of the mosque. All visitors stood without this railing, while the Moslems moved toward the niche in the wall in the direction of Mecca, and went through their usual forms of worship, the same that were being performed by the dervises. The leading dervis, after this preliminary service, led the way in a march around the inner circle, each stopping when opposite the prayer-niche and pointing his toes together and making a low bow. They paused to bow to each other at the opposite end, where the leading dervis usually stood during the service. This having been repeated three or four times, all save two or three quite old dervises and a couple of the leading ones, removed their outer cloak and loosened their white skirt so that it should come down to their feet. They were now all dressed entirely in white, save the gray hat which they wore. Moving slowly they began to turn in a circle, putting their bare feet one before the other with great dexterity. They moved faster and faster until they finally, at times, made as many as sixty revolutions in a minute. One hand in the meantime had the palm open toward heaven, as if to receive the blessing, while the other was turned toward the earth, as if to bestow it upon the people. This continued for some little time, until you expected to see some of them fall exhausted on the smooth floor. There were two slight intervals only, and then the dancing was resumed. Every thing seemed quite orderly, and while each man appeared to spin around the whole circle more than once there was no collision.

The number of dancing dervises was not over thirteen, but these were all in a circle twenty feet in diameter, and with their skirts so weighted as

to occupy all the room possible. There was no wild excitement. A precentor in the gallery sung some wild chants at the beginning, during which the dervises sat with closed eyes. His ceasing to sing appeared to be the signal for them to begin, which they did in a very matter-of-fact sort of way. When they were through and dripping with perspiration, the older dervises were ready with their cloaks to cover them, and so the performance ended. The general impression was greatly marred a few hours later when I saw one of their number reeling along the street in a state of intoxication. If it is a sin for a Moslem to drink, what must be the sin of a dancing dervis? I was glad to see that he was regarded with apparent pain by some of the order who saw him. The dancing dervises are much less fanatical than the howling dervises, who, by their continued shouts, work themselves up to a great frenzy, when the people believe that they can cure the sick by walking over them, and often give them an opportunity of thus using the healing art. Young children, even, are placed on the floor for them to walk upon.

The rest of the day is spent in the bazaars, which are finer and on a larger scale than any that we have seen in the East. The principal ones are located along covered streets, where the light is none of the best, and any defects in the goods are less readily seen. The tradesmen all have a word or two of English to attract your attention, but their stock soon runs out. The purchaser of Turkish carpets or rugs or embroidered cloths may find a vast supply to choose from, and at such a sliding scale of prices (if he is patient) as will both amuse and bewilder him, especially as the merchant at the outset solemnly announces his one and last price. A piano cover, which Faraway Moses & Co. could only sell at one hundred and sixty francs, they offered soon

at one hundred and ten, and it could have been purchased for one hundred.

The next day we were to see in detail that of which we had had only a bird's-eye view, and especially the great mosques whose exterior only we had seen. The old Genoese tower of Galata, as part of Pera is called, afforded us a fine general view of the three cities of Stamboul, Pera, and Scutari, with the wonderful channels which separate them. The famous mosques are all located in Stamboul, and so we crossed the Golden Horn again. The kavass from the Sublime Porte, who accompanied us, secured us ready admittance first to the Mosque of Suleiman the Magnificent, which has a lofty and immense dome, and is on a vast scale of costly magnificence. The next one was the Pigeon Mosque, or rather the court of it, where hundreds of pigeons are fed by the offerings of the faithful. The entrance of visitors or worshipers is the signal for hundreds of them to light all about you in expectation of the grain which you are supposed to buy of the custodian and throw to them. Then came Sultan Achmed's Mosque, especially noticeable for its immense columns or pillars, which are thirty-six feet in circumference.

What we most desired to see was the great Christian church of St. Sophia, which has been the model for all the great mosques of the world. It is now, of course, the Mosque of St. Sophia. It was begun in Constantine's time for a Christian church, and after being more than once accidentally destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt on a grand scale by the Emperor Justinian. He brought columns from all the great heathen temples of the world to support its dome, which rises one hundred and eighty feet above the floor. There are one hundred and seventy of these columns of marble, granite, and porphyry. The building is two hundred and seventy

feet long by two hundred and forty-three wide, being built in the form of a Greek cross. So great was Justinian's joy on completing it, in 538 A.D., that he ran with outstretched arms from the door to the altar, thanking God for its completion, and declaring, "Solomon, I have surpassed thee!" Happily few alterations have been made to transform it into a mosque. The prayer-niche, being to the right of the center of the apex where the pulpit stood, twists things a little out of their proper angles. The Moslem pulpit is on one side, and so, too, the marble screen-platform occupied by the sultan when he comes to worship. The old crosses, sculptured in the marble over each window, and the four great archangels at different corners, still remain. An inclined plane leads up to the galleries, whence one can look down on the wonderful scene below. St. Sophia may yet become a church again.

There are numerous remains of old Constantinople. Such are the one thousand and one pillars of Constantine, some thirty feet below the surface—a very forest of them. They probably supported the dome which covered a great reservoir. There was thus a vast water-supply right in the heart of the old city, and yet one could drive over it with impunity. It is perfect even now, although it has rapidly filled up. Here was the old Hippodrome, while along a line in the center rose the Tower of Constantine and the obelisk brought from Thebes. Near at hand is the Museum of the Janizaries, representing by lay figures the odd and varied costumes of different ages of these attendants in the palace. The variety of turbans is such as to challenge belief. In the old Christian church at St. Irene we found the armory. Guns freshly imported from America were arranged on the ground-floor, while all above the walls were hung with the coats-of-mail and battle-axes of past centuries. We were within

the seraglio proper, where we saw many fine sculptures, exquisite in some cases, though almost ruined.

Having seen the sultan's capital it only remained to see the sultan, Abdul Hamid. I am particular to give his name, since, as there have been three sultans within a year past, there may be yet another by the time these lines are in print. The Softas, who made and unmade rulers so rapidly, call themselves lawyers, but, as the Koran is the law, they are religious fanatics, who live about the mosques ready to lead in or swell any great movement. They first opposed themselves to the vizier, and obtaining his removal after much difficulty, they determined on another sultan who might better regard their wishes. We saw the present sultan on his way to his mosque to worship. He does not make known until near noon where he will worship on any given day, and not until the last moment how he will go. His carriage, his boat, and several fine riding-horses, await his choice. In the meantime a regiment of soldiers is waiting in the square in front of the palace to guard his way. At length the bugle-blast announced his coming, and the soldiers were instantly in line, guarding the entire way on each side from the palace-gate to the mosque, some four hundred yards distant. He was preceded and followed by distinguished officials on foot, while he rode a white horse gayly caparisoned with gold trappings. His dress was very simple, the only ornament being the diamond star of royalty that glittered on his breast. His figure is rather spare, and his pale face had an anxious, care-worn expression. There was no enthusiasm. Aside from the soldiers there were not over five hundred people present. The cheering was done wholly by the soldiers, and at given signals by the bugle. There was one spectator at least who could not have been induced to exchange places with him.

Nominally the supreme ruler over one of the largest and fairest domains of earth, he knows not at what hour the caprice of his subjects may demand that he surrender the scepter.

Constantinople is quiet in the midst of the excitement of war. Save about the war-office and with the sight of drilling soldiers, one might visit the city without seeing any signs that the war is going on. Turkey has a fine navy—in fact, some of the best iron-clads in the world—and her soldiers are equipped with the best of arms, but her one great lack is leaders, men who can plan and execute. If she fails in this contest here will probably be found the cause of failure. I venture no opinion as to the righteousness of her cause. It is high time that the Eastern question should be settled in one way or another. May the God of nations shape the issue!

It was an interesting occasion when we met at the Lord's-table the members of the West Turkey Mission of the American Board. Here they had come in from Bulgaria to meet their brethren and take counsel together before returning to wait in suspense—their very lives in their hands—the issue of the war. They were heroic men, and did not falter. They stood between the yoke and the altar ready for either. I was glad to recognize two old classmates among them. They have not labored in vain. They have one thousand four hundred and twenty-nine members, of which over two hundred were added during the last year, and of these all but two on profession of faith. Many of the preachers have been raised up from among the natives. Most of the students of Roberts College, one of the best institutions of all the East, are from Bulgaria. Whatever be the future of Turkey, these noble men, if God shall spare them, stand ready to help shape it for good. There have been silently at work in different parts of the empire influences

which will be ready for the critical hour of the nation's need. New Turkey will feel the shaping hand of Christian teaching.

A ride on the Golden Horn ended our many experiences in Constantinople. Seated in a caique, a long, narrow boat, which seemed hardly to do more than sit upon the surface of the water, our skillful boatman made it fairly shoot along at every stroke of the oars. We seemed to pass every thing in the stream except the steamers. Our objective point was the "sweet waters of Europe," or where the fresh water empties into this arm of the Bosphorus. The "sweet waters of Asia" are fresh water-courses which empty into the main channel from the Asiatic shore. We passed many boats filled with Turkish women, dressed usually in the brightest of colored silks, but with the invariable veil about their faces. They were going up near the head of the Golden Horn to spend the afternoon seated on the grass. We found many of them already arrived, and in some instances with their veils removed engaged in merry conversation. I wish that I could picture a beautiful grove and a greensward where they had gathered to spend the afternoon. But only one or two small trees afforded any shade, and most of the party were compelled to use their parasols, and were seated upon a very scanty supply of grass. Yet this is their favorite resort. What must their homes be, when this is such a paradise?

But we must return, and our boatman threads his way amid caiques and steamers, and under bridges, until he brings us to the ship's ladder, where we reëmbark upon the "Espero" for Athens. Constantinople presents the same magnificent view on leaving. The site for the greatest, finest city in the world, what generation shall see it realize its manifest destiny?

Corfu, May 29, 1877.