

CHAPTER LXV.

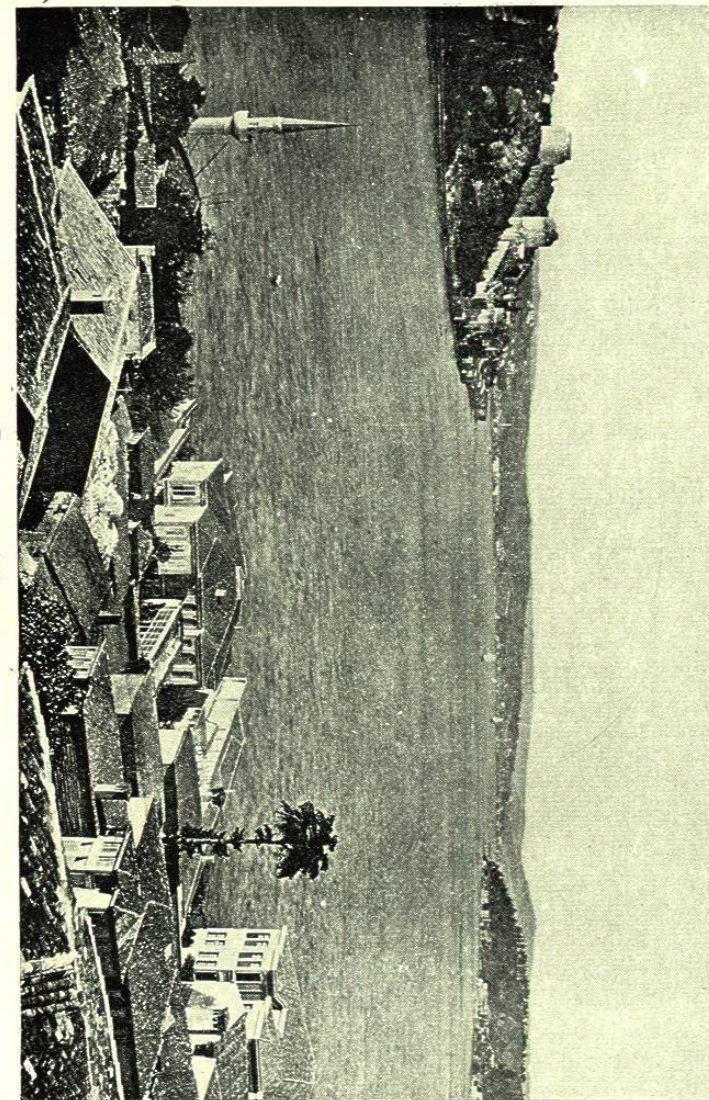
Constantinople.—(Continued.)

The Sultan's Forty-seventh Birthday—The Floating Bridge—Along the Shore of the Bosphorus to the Black Sea—Ships and Boats—The Armenians—Head of the Greek Church—Support of Mosques—Muezzin—Philanthropies of the Mosque of Suliman—Spinning Dervishes—Robert College.

WE arrived in Constantinople on the forty-seventh anniversary of the Sultan's birth, and at night the city was gorgeously illuminated. My enthusiastic traveling companion declared that he had never seen anything comparable to the brilliancy and variety of the pyrotechnic displays of that occasion. Despots while in power are certain to be honored. Practically they praise themselves; the people pay the bills *volens volens*, but as they enjoy the spectacle, such exhibitions of sovereign power and glory may be among the most potent means of sustaining the institutions. The late Czar of Russia was received with eclat on his visit to Warsaw, but, a day or two before, I had seen hundreds of those who would not do him honor dragged to the citadel, and in the streets through which he would pass the windows were ordered closed, and sentinels stationed everywhere lest the bullet of the assassin, sent from his lurking place, find its way to the brain or heart of the subject of such seemingly unanimous praises. The history of modern Turkey shows that soon after such celebrations the Sultan may drink a cup of coffee that disagrees with him!

A floating bridge, a quarter of a mile long, connects Galata with the opposite shore of the Golden Horn. It would be worth a journey of a week each year of one's life to stand for three hours at the end of that structure.

"The exhaustless currents of human beings that meet and mingle forever from the rising of the sun until his setting presents a spectacle before which the market places of India, the fair of Nijni Novgorod, and the festivals of Peking pale."



Bosphorus and Castle of Asia.

The fair of Nijni Novgorod surpasses for the same period of time this pageant; but it lasts only a few days, while these scenes continue winter and summer, from generation to generation. Turks on donkeys, long lines of camels; Negresses, Armenians, Greek women with skullcaps and streaming hair, Mohammedan women on foot, veiled women, Tartars clad in sheepskins; Catholic priests and sisters of charity, Persians, Jews, English travelers, Frenchmen, Germans, easily identified; friars of different orders, some bald and others wearing cowls; military officers; men wearing the uniforms of the navies of the different nations; peasants, dervishes, Circassians, "who go in groups of three and five together with slow steps; big bearded men, of terrible countenance, wearing bearskin caps like the old Napoleonic Guard, long black caftans, daggers at their girdles, and silver cartridge boxes on their breasts; real figures of banditti, who look as if they had come to Constantinople to sell a daughter or a sister, their hands imbrued in Russian blood." We went to this bridge half a dozen times, and learned to distinguish the Bulgarians, Georgians, Cossacks, Egyptians, and other races.

The contrasts in costume and colors were astonishing. So many languages, intensified by the characteristic voices of different peoples, some a terrible guttural bass, others a metallic baritone, and still others rising into shrill cries and piercing shrieks, made a startling jargon.

The people of Constantinople are continually embarking and disembarking. The configuration of the city makes it possible to go from business to residence by steamers, much after the manner of the population of London along the Thames, or of Paris along the Seine. Many steamers on the Bosphorus pass alternately along the Asiatic and European shores, and excursions can be made at will. The beauty of the scenery is enhanced by unusual formations; for the Bosphorus is really a chain of lakes formed by several promontories on the European shore. "Seven currents in seven different directions follow windings of the shore. Each has a counter current, whereby the water driven by violence into the several bays thus flows upward in an opposite direction into the other

half of the channel." Besides, there are seven bays on the European side, corresponding to the promontories on the Asiatic, and only the unimaginative spirit could fail to discern what changes of scenery must result from shores thus broken. The Turkish names of the villages are wonderfully suggestive. A few on the European side are historically significant, others pastorally. Galata, the abode of the god; Tophane, artillery manufacture; others signify the dried fountain; the farm village; European poplar; the babe; the hazel nut village. On the Asiatic side are the point of quails, the fig village, the heavenly water. One has a tragic significance, the bloody; another a restful sound, the weary man's village.

Dr. Long accompanied us to the Black Sea, pointing out the palaces, villas, and historical points. From the remotest point of time of which records have been preserved, the dangers of navigation at the entrance of the Bosphorus to the Black Sea have been great.

The Symplegades, otherwise the Cyanean rocks, are those through which Jason sailed to capture the golden fleece. Beacons have been recently erected, light-ships placed at the entrance, and a service according to the practice of more western nations has been established for the saving of lives.

The Giant's Mountain is the highest hill on the shores of the Bosphorus, and the view from it is thus described by Byron:

"The wind swept down the Euxine, and the wave
Broke foaming o'er the blue Symplegades.
'Tis a grand sight from off the 'Giant's Grave'
To watch the progress of these rolling seas
Between the Bosphorus, as they lash and lave
Europe and Asia, you being quite at ease."

We reached sufficient elevations in some of our tours to realize the correctness of Byron's description. He subsequently describes, in language not quite in harmony with the standard of this age, the tendency of the dangerous breakers on the Euxine to produce seasickness.

The Mohammedans say that Joshua is buried on the summit of the Giant's Mountain, and Dr. Long informed us that the Turks make pilgrimages to the summit in order to be cured of

diseases. They pray at the tomb and drink, in a cup of water, some of the sand. They also leave pieces of their clothes hanging there, on the theory that as the fragments are aired the disease will disappear.

A delightful excursion was taken on the Golden Horn. On these boats the fares are so low, the crowds so great, the steamers so peculiar, and the divisions upon them so arbitrary, as to give a stranger a feeling of insecurity. But the inhabitants, accustomed to things, have no fear, and accidents are infrequent.

Ironclads, war vessels, passenger steamers from every country in Europe, ships laden with corn from Russia or from the countries along the Danube, Greek and Turkish coasters, surround one, and among them "hundreds of kaiks go, and swift as dragon-flies flit here and there with loads of gold-bedizened beys or veiled women."

The spectacle which entrances the traveler has no effect upon the individuals who afford it. They never look at each other, have marvelous agility in keeping out of each other's way, and most of them, except where two or three are traveling together, are as silent and grave in their appearance as if on their way to a funeral, though hurrying as if belated.

The Armenians in Constantinople are an important part of the population. Their country, an elevated plain, the height of the central divide between the Atlantic and Pacific, culminating in Mount Ararat, was for ages the frontier of Christianity. The Armenians, wherever found, are men of influence and ability, surpassing both Greeks and Jews in commercial enterprise, especially in the Turkish empire. Having visited their churches in Russia, Jerusalem, Greece, and Smyrna, I was curious to see them in Constantinople, and found their ritual, while resembling that of the Greek Church, to be less paganish. The American Board has been very successful in Constantinople among Armenians.

The head of the universal Greek Church is the Patriarch of Constantinople, and is greatly venerated. The Russians and several other peoples, however, will not submit to his jurisdiction. The one requisite among the Armenians is ability to read the prayers and lessons, and the unusual spectacle is pre-

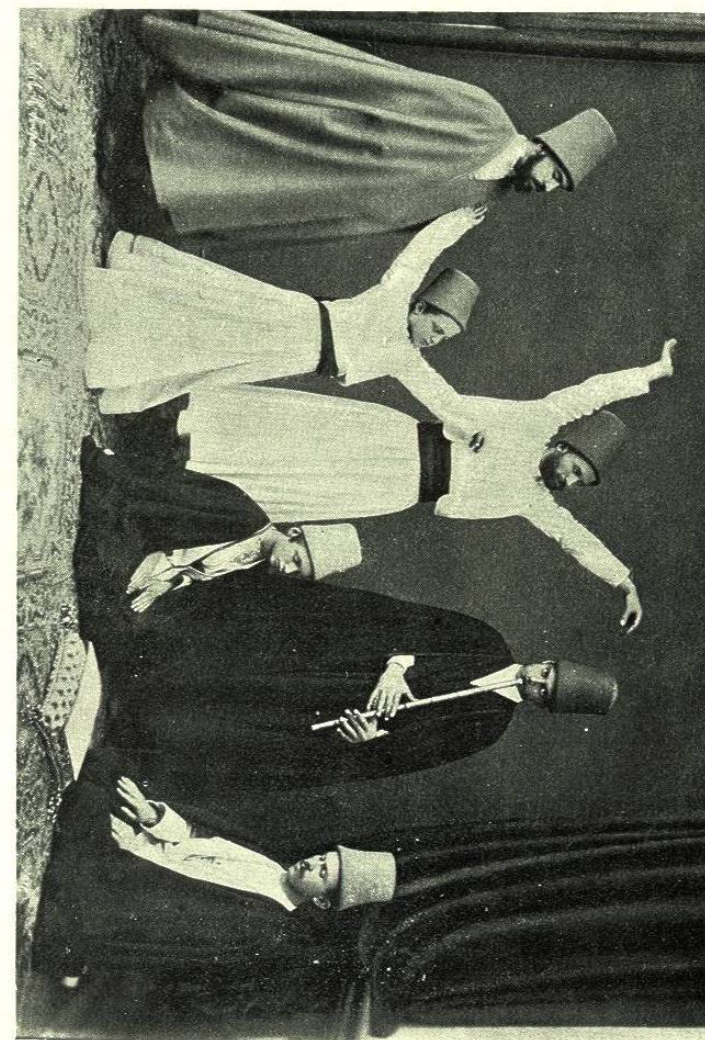
sented of a large religious organization whose priests are inferior in point of education and culture to the majority of their people. The Greek priests are often still more ignorant.

Struck by the number of mosques, I inquired how they are supported. They are heavily endowed, holding a species of mortgage on tracts of land in the city, which are sold subject to ground rent, or mosque tax. If one proposes to purchase real estate in Constantinople the first question to be asked is whether it is thus subject, and, if so, to what extent; for whoever purchases must pay tribute to the mosque.

I frequently listened to the call to prayer known as the muezzin. At the appointed time the proper officer ascends the minaret, and walks around, uttering words which cause every faithful Mohammedan to perform his devotions. The call signifies: "God is good! Bear witness that there is no god but God. Bear witness that Mohammed is the prophet of God. Come to prayer! Come to felicity! God is great! There is no god but God."

The Mosque of Suliman the Magnificent, though built on the general pattern of Santa Sophia, was intended to surpass it. The result was the most beautiful extant specimen of architecture originally intended for a mosque. Here are the largest monoliths in Constantinople. The windows are ornamented with flowers; the two finest, of stained glass, were captured from the Persians by the founder. Besides being a place of worship, it is a philanthropic institution, supporting three schools, four academies for the four different sects of the faithful, a school of medicine, a hospital, a kitchen for the poor, a resting place for tourists, a library, a fountain, and a house of refuge for strangers.

The Sultan's weekly journey to the mosque for religious worship is an event in Constantinople. Having obtained through Mr. Straus, the minister of the United States, a permit to enter a house owned by the Sultan, we were present at the appointed time, immediately in front of the mosque. Usually the Sultan starts about twelve o'clock, and the name of the particular mosque he intends to visit is made known a little before that hour. The way was lined with troops, the body-guard of the Sultan in splendid uniform leading the proces-



Dervishes.

sion. Until recently he went on horseback, but on this occasion sat in a carriage, which passed near us. He was a grave, solemn-looking man, appearing much older than he really is; his beard iron gray, complexion sallow, and his eyes were heavy.

On this occasion there were several thousand troops, and the display was fine. When the Sultan had passed, coffee and sherbet were served to us, after which we withdrew.

Accompanied by Professor Long, who explained the various steps of the performance, we visited the spinning dervishes. They are named Mevlevi, and performed in a convent known as Tekke. As they enter the circular mosque, monotonous music is heard, which is performed upon a kind of flute. The chief seats himself, and the dervishes bow before him; having removed their outer garments, they extend their arms, raise their heads, and begin to spin.

They were grave and serious, keeping perfect time, and their motions were, though rapid, so regular and easy that their garments appeared to be a part of themselves. It is suspected that their skirts are weighted, as it seems impossible that they should so perfectly follow the movements of the body unless they received an impulse which could not be communicated to light fabrics. Dr. Long represented them as a worthy class of Turkish citizens. Viewed as dancers, they are entitled to praise for the perfection of their movements; but they exhibited systematic fanaticism rather than genuine ecstasy. There was no indication of loss of consciousness as there was with the howling dervishes.

More than seventy orders of dervishes exist in the Mohammedan world, some composed of intelligent men. I was introduced to a Sheik, and visited him at his residence, being received with oriental courtesy, and by the aid of an interpreter had a memorable religious conversation. The secrets of the worship of that order I could not penetrate, as no one is allowed to be present; but the room and its contents were shown to us. The views expressed of the Deity by that divine do not differ as to the divine attributes from those prevailing among Christians. He gave a definite rank to Jesus Christ, like most Mohammedans, regarding him as one of three

prophets, Moses, Christ, and Mohammed, of whom the last is the greatest.

Robert College, to which so many Americans have contributed, is situated on the heights of Roumeli Hissar, which rise on the shore of the Bosphorus, not far from the village of Bebek. The professors are gentlemen of high character and culture; the spirit of the institution all that could be desired. It encounters a difficulty not met in anything like the same degree at Beirut, in the number of languages and dialects spoken by the students.

The history of this now celebrated college blends the philosophical and the romantic. The American missionaries in Turkey found, after a short time, that without the means of a higher education their work would come to a standstill. This situation became known to Christopher R. Robert, a New York merchant, who in 1860 proposed to Dr. Hamlin to sunder his connection with the American Board and come to America to raise money for the object. Mr. Robert agreed to pay his expenses and give him ten thousand dollars to start the subscription. At that time he had no idea of founding a college and no thought of giving it his name, but he went on until, including what he bequeathed, he had given over four hundred thousand dollars to the college.

In 1863 Dr. Hamlin opened the college with four students. On July 4, 1869, the corner stone was laid. The new building was finished in May, 1871, and when the new year began in September, one hundred and seventy students were enrolled. For a number of years the Turks refused to grant an imperial charter. Since they granted the charter the rights of the college have been respected, and additional favors have been granted when asked. While they have sought to counteract the influence of the college, they have done it "in a legitimate way by the founding of schools and colleges of their own, and trying to make them more attractive than Robert College."

During its history the institution has had one thousand five hundred and fifty-one students; and the average time spent by the nongraduates is three, and by the graduates six years.

The majority have been Americans, Bulgarians, and Greeks;

and they have had, besides these, Austrians, Circassians, Albanians, Jews, Persians, Russians, Armenians, Assyrians, Serbians, and Turks, and a few Danes, Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, and English. Of the alumni, forty-six have become government officials, many of high rank; twelve judges, seventy-one teachers, including professors and principals; ten editors, twenty-two lawyers, twenty-four physicians; the majority of the students have become merchants and bankers, now scattered all over the world.

As the higher schools in Constantinople are openly atheistic, while there is great jealousy among the Greek and Armenian Churches of the advance of Protestantism, their most distinguished ecclesiastical authorities are disposed to support Robert College as a bulwark against atheism.

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