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Great Cities of the World

CONSTANTINOPLE, THE CAPITAL OF TURKEY

For purposes of observation a number of "fire towers" have been erected in Constantinople, where watchers stand on the lookout for signs of conflagrations. From the utilitarian standpoint they are far from being efficient, but from the top of the highest one, the Genoese Tower, one may get a magnificent view of the City of the Golden Horn. To the north is the bold sweep of the inlet—more like a river than a bay—where many vessels are coming and going, though the Golden Horn, being capable of accommodating 1,200 large ships, is seldom crowded. To the east, the waters of the deep blue Bosphorus separate Europe from Asia. The snowy minarets and marble domes of the mosque, which number about eight hundred, gleam among the vivid foliage of gigantic plane trees and lofty palms, to all of which the purple of the far-off mountains forms a harmonious background.

Constantinople is built on a point of land jutting out into the Sea of Marmora, and at the West, from side to side of the little peninsula, is an ancient, lofty, double wall, containing six gates, to admit to the city those who approach it from landward. At one time this was a very fine example of mural architecture, but it has to a great extent fallen into ruin. There are cemeteries extending from this western wall. So many trees have sprung up in these that they have become regular forests, and are looked upon not only as being ornamental, but as forming pleasure grounds for the people. It is a very ordinary sight to see picnic parties outside the ruined wall, in the shadow of the tall, dark cypresses. Here may be a Kurd, sitting on a tombstone, rolling a cigarette after having eased his back of the huge burden he was carrying, or a curious tourist using a similar seat as a point of observation.

But though the Turkish capital presents many beauties to the eye of the beholder who takes a general view from the harbor or from the summit of a lofty tower, he finds on more intimate acquaintance that its charms are fully counterbalanced by things that are sordid, repellant and inconvenient. The streets are narrow and zigzag, hardly any two of them running parallel for a distance worth mentioning. They are roughly paved with cobblestones, between which is dust or mud, according to the weather. They have no system of street cleaning but for hundreds of years the swarms of dogs, which are seen everywhere out of doors, have been the city scavengers. The canine population seems to be almost equal to the number of human inhabitants, so, there being so many of them, they perform their task very well. The houses are, for the most part, low and poorly built, with windows high up in the wall, invariably covered with a lattice-work of cane, or even heavier bars.

That the water supply is poor, that the lighting is poor, that the streets are poor, that the city is allowed to fall in disrepair, may be attributed to a large extent to the fatalistic belief of the Turk. Serenity is the keynote of his character. Is his coffee cold? Is his tobacco wet? Is his brother thrown in jail? Well, what is to be will be. He smokes a cigarette and leisurely proceeds to attend to his affairs with a clear brow. Why should he attempt to change things? Kismet—it is fate! If he wishes to take a train, he probably goes to the station when he gets ready, regardless of any printed schedule, and there he waits until the train goes. "Allah permitting, he will ultimately arrive."

This may lead to the inference that the Turk is not a good business man. He decidedly is not. Trade and commerce and the various business enterprises of the whole country are mostly in the hands of Jews and Christians, while the native usually pursues a career, in the army or civil

service. The role of merchant in a bazaar, where he may sit calmly with his legs crossed, drinking coffee with would-be customers, or smoking a bubbling water pipe or cigarette, is also eminently suited to his taste. In this capacity he will probably try to make easy money by ridiculous overcharges, but the initiated invariably haggle over prices.

There are hosts of bazaars in Constantinople the most important being called the Great Bazaar. It is like a city within a city. Passing under one of many brick archways, you enter an avenue, with stalls on each side of the wide passage. Going farther in, you pass through arch after arch, finding yourself in a regular maze of streets, tortuous lanes and mysterious alleys. Light penetrates dimly through windows high up in the wall or through apertures in the red-tiled roofs. At night all the outside entrances are closed, being furnished with heavy iron-bound gates, so that the merchant may vend his way homeward knowing that his goods are secure.

In one street you will pass rows of stalls that seem exactly alike. They are alcoves about two feet above the level of the pavement, lined with unpainted shelves, on which are heaped untidy piles of books, the only system of arrangement that is apparent being that the large ones are at the bottom and the small ones are on the top. Variety is afforded to the scene by the shopkeepers, garbed according to their different nationalities. Bohemian, Ethiopian, Turk, Arab and Persian sit reading and pondering. At intervals a Mohammedan will prostrate himself with his face towards Mecca; another will sit quietly counting his beads. Upon inquiry you will probably find that this latter practice is not a matter of religion, but merely an expedient to pass away the time. These grave, preoccupied men pay no more attention to possible customers than they do to the dogs which nose hungrily around the damp streets looking for a morsel to eat.

A traveller tells of becoming friendly, after several visits, with a bookseller, a Persian in a green turban and light blue broadcloth robe with his beard dyed a brilliant scarlet with henna. He displayed with pride the more ancient of his wares, which he regarded fondly. Of new books, however, he had a perfect horror. His stock-in-trade consisted of works on theology and philosophy, histories, biographies, poetry and a very few stories. Manuscripts were his most treasured possessions, for here, as it is all over Turkey, something written is regarded as being much more valuable than something printed.

The Koran has a prominent place at all the book stalls, from the pocket edition selling for about \$10, to the huge volume written by masters of calligraphy, valued at \$300. But if you would not call down upon you the wrath of the pious Mohammedan, do not ask him to sell you the sacred volume. He will be furious if you mention or ask for a price in this connection, as the sale of the book would be a sin against God. You must approach the matter tactfully, asking the man if he will present it to you. This question he will welcome, replying that he will gladly do so if you will in turn make him a gift of \$25 or \$125, as the case may be, and thus, his mental attitude being properly adjusted, the deal is consummated.

Threading your way among the crowds who throng to the bazaars to handle their various needs supplied, you will see many other interesting wares. There are rich gold and silver embroideries, brocades and damasks that proclaim their eastern origin carpets and rugs woven in nomadic tents, village homes or town factories, footgear, pearls and precious stones, Turkish Delight and other edibles.

It is well known that the Turk is

very proficient in making sweetmeats and very eager to eat them. He particularly enjoys candy, olives and rich preserves of dates and figs. But his most famous dish is perhaps Turkish coffee, of which he drinks great quantities. Each cup is made separately over a charcoal fire, and the liquid almost as thick and sweet as syrup, is served boiling hot in small china cups. Coffee is an important part of every meal, every social function, every business transaction and every official discussion.

The mosque of St. Sophia, with its enormous dome and graceful minarets, is a striking example of oriental magnificence. The interior is particularly gorgeous, containing costly marbles, fine columns and brilliant mosaics. It was originally a Christian edifice, being dedicated on Christmas Day, 535 A. D. Later, when the crescent superseded the cross upon its lofty dome, many of the mosaics were plastered over, so that the building might be rendered suitable for Moslem worship, but during this century it has been restored.

Five times a day, as was ordered by the Prophet Mohammed, the muezzins ascend the spiral stairs of the minarets and go out on the high balcony. Then from minaret to minaret is repeated the call to prayer, commencing with "Allahu Akbar," which is reiterated four times. Five times a day also, precluding their devotions, the people perform their ablutions, washing their hands, forearms, face and feet in running water.

The Moslem day lasts from sunset, to sunset, which is confusing and disconcerting to people who have any regard for the value of time. However, most of the Turks have not, though some of them carry watches, one side telling what is, to them orthodox time, and the other showing the hours by the ordinary European system. One great difficulty with the former, is that it needs regulating every day, and an odd question that you sometimes hear is, "What time is noon today?"

The Galata Bridge is a bridge of boats reaching from the city proper to Galata, one of its suburbs. It is crossed by 150,000 people daily, and upon it one gets an excellent opportunity to study the motley crowd. Here you may hear the voice of a beggar reciting the Koran or asking for "hacksheesh" in a long-drawn-out wail. A negro woman in a bright green mantle passes by; the saka, or water-carrier, goes of his way to deliver water from house to house or furnish a drink to the thirsty passer-by; itinerant hawkers abound; coffee can be bought on almost every hand; hamals, or porters, stagger by, bent almost double by the huge burdens they carry. Turbaned Arabs, Armenian priests in cassocks and tall black hats, strings of horses and donkeys, all heavily laden, natives wearing the inevitable red fez, form part of the procession. Though the throng seems great upon the bridge, it is easy to make one's way across compared with the fierce struggle a walk becomes if you go into one of the narrow streets that is much frequented.

There is no rule of the road, and everyone fights his way through as best he can, progress being also delayed by the dogs, which lie or stand around almost too lazy to get out of the way to escape being trampled upon.

In different parts of Constantinople are to be found khans which are lodging houses for transients. There is no furniture to speak of, for the oriental traveller carries his own bedding, rugs and utensils. For anything further he seeks out a coffee-stall or cook shop. Those most frequently found in the shelter of the khans are pilgrims and traders with their merchandise, donkeys, mules, horses or camels. They are, therefore, quite important as trade centres, and a great exchange of news and ideas is carried on as well as of goods.

The chief gate to the Sultan's Palace is the "Sublime Porte," and this term has come to signify the Turkish Government. When we read in the newspapers that the Porte has been asked for an explanation of some of its actions, it means that the Government of Turkey, which has its headquarters at Constantinople, has probably been called to account for some atrocity committed by the "unspeakable Turk."

Where the Money Goes.

To the Editor:—
In my last letter I drew attention, to the statement of the finance minister of Russia, that financing the great war had been made comparatively easy, owing to the savings of the people, since the liquor traffic was prohibited. We have had many examples on a smaller scale, that the liquor traffic brings poverty and that prohibition brings prosperity and ability to pay taxes. But here we have a demonstration of the effects of prohibition on such an immense scale, that no doubt can be left in the mind of any one of moderate intelligence.

No wonder prohibition brings prosperity. Last year Canadians spent over a hundred millions of dollars in drink. That is the exact sum that the Government requires to carry on our part in the war. But money spent in drink is like water spilled on the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. Money spent in drink cannot earn money to pay taxes or do anything else. Better if it had been burnt, for then it would not have made criminals and lunatics to be a burden on the taxpayer and would not poison the babes to the third and fourth generation. The Germans have been styled baby killers, but the great baby killer is alcohol in any form. Science has shown that a much larger portion of the babies of drinking, not to speak of drunken, parents die before their second birthday, than the children of abstaining parents.

It has been shown that every dollar spent in drink, does on an average a dollar's worth of harm. So that Canada is probably two hundred million dollars worse off every year, than if she had prohibition of the liquor traffic. At that rate it is easy to see that Russia can finance this immense war, when prohibiting the use of intoxicants of any kind. If drink had been allowed as before, there would have been great suffering, and want in Russia, and the conduct of the war would have been very much hindered for lack of money.

H. ARNOTT, M. B., M.C.P.S.

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A Billion Wheat Deficit

According to reliable statistics there are tied up at the present time about two billion bushels of wheat, the production of the countries at war. This is in the vicinity of half the world's total production of wheat. A recognized authority argues that granting that the warring nations produce a one-half crop in the coming year, a deficit of one billion bushels will still be shown. The three countries upon which the filling of this deficit of one billion bushels will rest are Canada, the United States and Argentina. The combined output of these three countries is only 1,245,000,000; their exportable surplus would, of course, be much less, so it can easily be seen that the question is not one to be easily solved, and it behooves Canada to increase her productions as much as she possibly can, for when the war is over, and trade begins to re-establish itself and the nations undergo a process of rehabilitation, the demand for all breadstuffs must be enormous.

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