

whole city; to describe even those we saw would require a special edition of the *Magazine*; those that have been mentioned are especially characteristic of this city; many of the others, though equally interesting, are common to Cairo and Constantinople.

Accident had already favoured us with a peep at village life and houses amongst the poor; in Damascus we had an opportunity of seeing the opposite extreme. Certain wealthy residents, who own very handsome houses, allow them to be shown to travellers desiring to see examples of the best native styles. We gladly availed ourselves of the privilege, our first visit being paid to a Jewish mansion, which presented the usual blank wall to the street. Inside, a corridor with an abrupt turn led to a sunny central court, where rose trees in full bloom grew as high as the second storey. Opening out of this court was a very handsome reception room, half of it being a dais raised two feet above the rest. The lower portion was paved with marble mosaic, a richly sculptured marble fountain occupying the centre. The raised portion was carpeted with rugs and contained a few easy chairs and a low cedar-wood table. All the decorative treatment was expended on the walls, which were divided by marble columns into panels containing, alternately, windows and mirrors. Below these ran a marble dado, and above them a frieze of carved medallions, surmounted by a series of small stained-glass windows, the whole being finished by a curved cornice painted with landscapes. This elaborate decoration had an extremely rich effect, in direct contrast to the plainness of a smaller room across the court, which was called the winter parlour. Its only furniture was a divan around three sides and a rug on the floor; no doubt it was the family sitting-room, and the absence of unnecessary furniture in Syrian houses is due to the prevalence of correct taste, and not to poverty, as I had thought might be the case.

The second house (also Jewish) which we saw, differed little in arrangement from the first, except that it had a summer parlour an arched recess raised some steps above the court, toward which it was entirely open. A couple of pretty young girls, with dark eyes and creamy complexion, dressed in soft and sheeny silk and walking on high pattens, did the honours of the establishment. They spoke French with a piquant accent, and combined gazelle-like shyness with a genial hospitality.

The third, belonging to a wealthy Greek, was very much larger, and it would be difficult to find a more charming example of its style; a style only possible in lands that have little cold, and no snow. It was built with two courts, the first, devoted to the servants, was airy and clean, but without ornament, if we except a magnificent Agrippina rose near the entrance. The second