

ribly weak and nerveless from a bad attack of the *mal du pays*. Fortunately for us both, by a rare good chance, or more fittingly, good Providence, we had made the journey, not as we had expected in the close *coupe* of the lumbering diligence, but in the pleasant-covered waggon of some one of the road officials, which was being forwarded to Damascus.

Arrived at the terminus, we were not long in transferring ourselves and our belongings to a carriage, and in a few minutes were rattling through the crowded and crooked thoroughfares of the city toward our host's hospitable home. Across the open square, down the dusk-arched passages of the Derb-el-Muskatim, and by many a sharp turn and devious lane, we arrived at length at our friend's house. House, did I say? How little that brings home to English minds the blank windowless wall, with its narrow door, at which the carriage finally halted. I had better, perhaps, describe the place *en detail*, for one Damascus house described, will, in its generalities at least, accurately describe every other.¹

The door in the blank wall which faces the street opens into a narrow passage leading into a square enclosure, around which the house is built. This square, in the centre of which is a large fountain, its basin constantly full of water, is bright with sunlight, and fresh with the vivid green of pot-plants around the fountain, and of trees growing here and there in the angles of the square. This open square is the breathing apparatus—the lungs of the house. On it the doors and windows open, and the arched *lewan*, or alcove, which is always formed at one side, makes a delightfully cool and shady retreat. These features, the dull, inhospitable outer wall, the narrow passage-way, the central open court, the fountain, and the *lewan* are common to every Damascene house of the better class; and nothing can be more marked than the abrupt transition from the forbidding barrenness of the outside, to the cheery brightness of the court, and the comfort and elegance, and in some instances, splendour of the interior appointments. I remember one house which we visited, in the Jewish quarter, shabby and ugly *en* on the outside, where we were ushered into a room adorned with elaborate decorations in white marble, marble paved, and with a fountain in its centre held up by marble lions, bizarre, perhaps to western taste in some of its details, but evincing a most lavish outlay of art and wealth. It was said to have cost £10,000 sterling, that one room!

What a real English welcome greeted M. and I as we entered the court of our friend's house that evening. How thoroughly English and home-like, the tea-table with its delicate china and