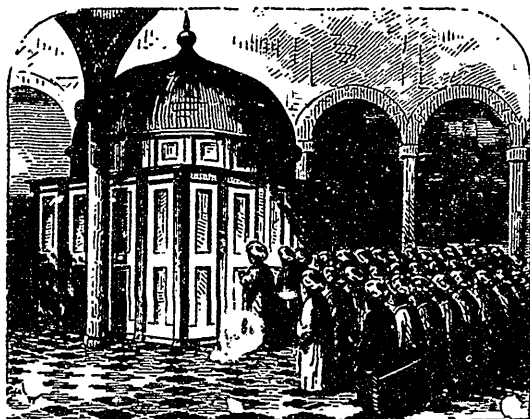


guide, by an official kowass, or functionary representing the government, and by a servant to carry our belongings. The dignity of a visitor seems to be measured by the size of his retinue, and Abdallah was determined that we should not suffer in this respect. The narrow, crowded streets were a perfect kaleidoscope of colour and motion as we threaded our way through their winding mazes. In part they are covered by a tunnel-shaped roof, through openings in which streams the strong, Rembrandt-like light athwart the deep shadows, glinting on sheeny silks, embroidered jackets, burnished arms, polished brass, flashing jewellery, rich saddle housings, and a bewildering array of Oriental wares.



MOSLEM WORSHIPPERS AT SHRINE OF
ST. JOHN, DAMASCUS.

The visit to the mosque is an expensive one, the official fee being twenty francs, to which must be added fees for the sheik of the mosque, for the kowass, for the use of slippers, etc. This great mosque is, next to those at Jerusalem, Medina and Mecca, the most sacred in the world, a prayer said in any of these

being equal in merit to many score said elsewhere.

On the site of this mosque, says Dr. Thompson, no doubt, was the "house of Rimmon" erected, probably, by one of those Ben-hadads who reigned in this city from the time of David, and which is referred to by Naaman in his interview with Elisha. Here, several hundred years later, a Greek or Roman temple stood upon this spot, with its altars and courts, its colonnades and triumphal arches. In the fourth century it was restored, probably by the Emperor Arcadius, and converted into a Christian church, dedicated to St. John. It is about 450 feet long and 125 feet wide, divided by two rows of Corinthian columns, twenty in each row, extending the whole length of the structure, with lofty clerestory above.

When Damascus was conquered by the Moslems the church was reconstructed and adorned with rarest marble and richest mosaic,