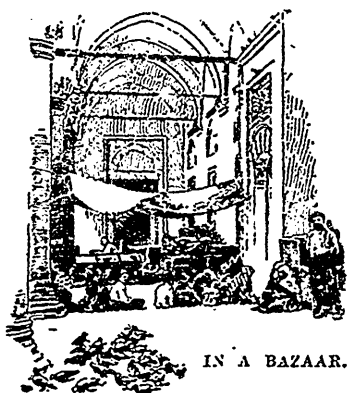


The goldsmiths' bazaar proved a quaintly interesting place, all the more striking from its utter unlikeness to one's established ideas of a jeweller's shop. There were fifty or sixty craftsmen assembled in the great vaulted chamber, which looked old enough to have sheltered the goldsmiths of Damascus from the time of Saladin. It was sadly out of repair and had no floor except the uneven, dusty earth. A rude bench supplied the place of counter to each merchant, a dingy box on the bench beside him held his stock-in-trade. They had few tools and very primitive ones at that, but the work accomplished with this slender equipment was marvellous in its dainty finish. There were filigree necklaces and bracelets of silver wire, fine as cobweb, yet strong and durable. Quaintly beautiful brooches of odd designs, ancient buckles and classic-looking girdles; these, and many other lovely things, came out of the dingy boxes, and as everything was sold by weight, and the price invariable, there was at least one place in the Orient where it was safe to pay what was asked.

This could not be said of the silk bazaar, which had a sliding scale of prices, but was a most attractive place nevertheless. We had been often told that there were no longer any native-woven silks in the East, that they were imported from France or elsewhere; so it was a surprise to see men carrying large spindles of the yellow, raw silk through the streets, and to see the looms in operation in every part of the silk bazaar. The quality and



texture of the goods furnished unmistakable proof of their origin in a place so far behind the age as to be ignorant of the arts of "dressing" and "filling" employed by manufacturers elsewhere. This absence of "varnish" gives a softness to the surface, very pleasant to the eye and touch, and contributes to the artistic effect noticeable in Oriental silks. The stalls in the silk bazaar were principally filled with articles of native dress—kefiyehs for the head, in all colours; long sashes in white or yellow twilled silk; long robes for men, of thin silk lined with cotton and closely and beautifully quilted by hand.

On leaving this bazaar it seemed to follow naturally that we should look for otto of roses, another specialty of this region. We followed our guide through a maze of winding, dimly lighted alleys to a dingy little street, where we found a dingy little shop