

a small, open window into the adjoining room. There, curled up on the divan, was a lovely woman in native dress, smoking a cigarette. It was the lady of the house, and she had evidently posed for our benefit.

The same afternoon we were very unexpectedly introduced to another Damascus interior in a rather extraordinary manner. Returning from a visit to the house of Ananias, we saw a very large and apparently excited crowd in the street ahead. They were making a tremendous noise, aided by a drum or two and some musical instruments. The Doctor's desire for useful knowledge led us to move nearer in order to see what it meant. We got a little too near, for we were suddenly surrounded by a very demonstrative crowd, which carried us along in spite of our efforts to escape. We were swept up a narrow lane, then into a low, dark passage of such unsavoury odour, that someone mercifully sprinkled us with rose-water. Breathless, and somewhat alarmed, we came to light again in a very small court, which instantly filled with people; those who failed to get in swarmed on the walls and roofs overlooking it. Without knowing why we went, we found ourselves in a tiny house on one side of the court; it was full of people in the same state of excitement, but they seemed peaceably inclined. They motioned us to the windows, piled cushions on the floor; cigarettes, coffee, and a bottle of *arrack* were produced, as if by magic; and we realized at last that we were invited to assist at some festivity.

Meanwhile, the noise in the court was deafening; they were dancing, brandishing swords, singing and shouting as if they had gone mad with glee; and the people in the house regarded the whole scene with great complacency. Abdallah managed to get near enough to explain that the oldest son of the owner had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and his friends had gone out to meet him on his return, and rejoice over his safe arrival.

Having the key to the puzzle, we soon picked out the "pilgrim."* He was a dark-eyed youth, with a gentle, pleasant face, and he seemed well pleased with the hubbub around him. It was impossible to doubt, from the constant glances up at the windows, that the actors considered that the *éclat* of the occasion was greatly heightened by the presence of the strangers. We had some difficulty in getting out through the crowd, and, being by this time somewhat ruffled, we resolved to grace no more triumphal processions.

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* Many groups of these pilgrims we met throughout the country, on their way to or from the holy places of Jerusalem. See the little group on page 108.