

A MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE (1833)

by

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LETTER XIV
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THE PIRAEUS—THE SACRA VIA—RUINS OF ELEUSIS—GIGANTIC MEDALLION—COSTUME OF THE ATHENIAN WOMEN—THE TOMB OF THEMISTOCLES—THE TEMPLE OF MINERVA.

Sept. 1833.

PIRAEUS. With a basket of ham and claret in the stern sheets, a cool awning over our heads, and twelve men at the oars, such as the coxswain of Themistocles' galley might have sighed for, we pulled away from the ship at an early hour, for Eleusis. The conqueror of Salamis delayed the battle for the ten o'clock breeze; and as Nature (which should be called *he* instead of *she*, for her constancy) still ruffles the Aegean at the same hour, we had a calm sea through the strait where once lay the "ships by thousands." We soon rounded the point, and shot along under the

"Rocky brow
 Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis."

It is a bare, bold precipice, a little back from the sea, and commands an entire view of the strait. Here sat Xerxes,¹ "on his throne of gold,² with many secretaries about him to write down the particulars of the action." The Athenians owed their victory to the wisdom of Themistocles, who managed to draw the Persians into the strait, (scarce a cannon-shot across just here) where only a small part of their immense fleet could act at one time. The wind, as the wily Greek had foreseen, rose at the same time, and rendered the lofty-built Persian ships unmanageable; while the Athenian galleys, cut low to the water, were easily brought into action in the most advantageous position. It is impossible to look upon this beautiful and lovely spot, and imagine the stirring picture it presented. The wild sea-bird knows no lonelier place. Yet on that rock

¹ Xerxes — King of the Persian Empire

² Footnote in original — «So says Phanodemus, quoted by Plutarch. The commentators upon the tragedy of Aeschylus on this subject say it was a "silver chair," and that it "was afterwards placed in the temple of Minerva at Athens, with the golden-hilted scimitar of Mardonius."»

once sat the son of Darius, with his royal purple floating to the wind, and, below him, within these rocky limits, lay "one thousand two hundred ships of war, and two thousand transports," while behind him, on the shores of the Piraeus, were encamped "seven hundred thousand foot and four hundred thousand horse"—"amounting," says Potter³ in his notes, "with the retinue of women and servants that attended the Asiatic princes in their military expeditions, to more than five millions." How like a king must the royal Persian have felt, when

"He counted them at break of day!"

With an hour or two of fast pulling, we opened into the broad bay of Eleusis. The first Sabbath after the Creation could not have been more absolutely silent. Megara was away on the left, Eleusis before us at the distance of four or five miles, and the broad plains where agriculture was first taught by Triptolemus, the poetical home of Ceres, lay an utter desert in the sunshine. Behind us, between the mountains, descended the Sacra Via,⁴ by which the procession came from Athens to celebrate the Eleusinian Mysteries—a road of five or six miles, lined, in the time of Pericles, with temples and tombs. I could half fancy the scene as it was presented to the eyes of the invading Macedonians—when the procession of priests and virgins, accompanied by the whole population of Athens, wound down into the plain, guarded by the shining spears of the army of Alcibiades. It is still doubtful, I believe, whether these imposing ceremonies were the pure observances of a lofty and sincere superstition, or the orgies of a licentious Saturnalia.

We landed at Eleusis, and were immediately surrounded by a crowd of people, as simple and curious in their manners, and resembling somewhat, in their dress and complexion, the Indians of our country. The ruins of a great city lay about us, and their huts were built promiscuously among them. Magnificent fragments of columns and blocks of marble interrupted the path through the village, and between two of the houses lay, half buried, a gigantic medallion of Pentelic marble, representing, in *alto rilievo*,⁵ the body and head of a warrior in full armor. A hundred men would move it with difficulty. Commodore

³ Robert Potter (1721-1804) — Translator of the ancient Greek tragedy "*The Persians*", by Aeschylus, describing the Battle of Salamis in 472 BC

⁴ Sacra Via — (Latin) Sacred Road

⁵ Alto rilievo — (Italian) high relief

Patterson⁶ attempted it six years ago in the '*Constitution*,' but his launch was found unequal to its weight.

The people here gathered more closely around the ladies of our party, examining their dress with childish curiosity. They were doubtless the first females ever seen at Eleusis in European costume. One of the ladies happening to pull off her glove, there was a general cry of astonishment. The brown kid had clearly been taken as the color of the hand. Some curiosity was then shown to see their faces, which were covered with thick green veils, as a protection against the sun. The sight of their complexions (in any country remarkable for a dazzling whiteness) completed the astonishment of these children of Ceres.

We, on our part, were scarcely less amused with their costumes in turn. Over the petticoat was worn a loose jacket of white cloth reaching to the knee, and open in front—its edges and sleeves wrought very tastefully with red cord. The head-dress was composed entirely of money. A fillet of gold sequins was first put *a la feronière*,⁷ around the forehead, and a close cap, with a throat-piece like the gorget of a helmet, fitted the skull exactly, stitched with coins of all values, folded over each other according to their sizes, like scales. The hair was then braided, and fell down the back, loaded also with money. Of the fifty or sixty women we saw, I should think one half had money on her head to the amount of from one to two hundred dollars. They suffered us to examine them with perfect good-humor. The greater proportion of pieces were *paras*, a small and thin Turkish coin of very small value. Among the larger pieces were dollars of all nations, five-franc pieces, Sicilian piastres, Tuscan colonati, Venetian swansicas, &c. &c. I doubted much whether they were not the collections of some piratical *caïque*.⁸ There is no possibility of either spending or getting money within many miles of Eleusis, and it seemed to be looked upon as an ornament which they had come too lightly by to know its use.

We walked over the foundations of several large temples, with the remains of their splendor lying unvalued about them, and at half a mile from the village came to the "well of Proserpine," whence, say the poets, the ravished daughter

⁶ Daniel Todd Patterson (1786-1839) — Commodore Patterson of the US Mediterranean Squadron purchased another sculpture while visiting this district in 1827.

⁷ *a la feronière* — meaning uncertain

⁸ *caïque* — small wooden trading vessel

of Ceres emerged from the infernal regions on her visits to her mother. The modern Eleusinians know it only as a well of the purest water.

On our return we stopped at the southern point of the Piraeus, to see the tomb of Themistocles. We were directed to it by thirteen or fourteen *frustra*⁹ of enormous columns, which once formed the monument to his memory. They buried him close to the edge of the sea, opposite Salamis. The continual beat of the waves for so many hundred years has worn away the promontory, and his sarcophagus, which was laid in a grave cut in the solid rock, is now filled by every swell from the Aegean. The old hero was brought back from his exile to be gloriously buried. He could not lie better for the repose of his spirit, (if it returned with his bones from Argos.) The sea on which he beat the haughty Persians with his handful of galleys sends every wave to his feet. The hollows in the rock around his grave are full of snowy salt left by the evaporation. You might scrape up a bushel within six feet of him. It seems a natural tribute to his memory.¹⁰

On a high and lonely rock, stretching out into the midst of the sea, stands a solitary temple. As far as the eye can reach, along the coast of Attica and to the distant isles, there is no sign of human habitation. There it stands, lifted into the blue sky of Greece, like the unreal "fabric of a vision."

Cape Colonna and its "temple of Minerva" were familiar to my memory, but my imagination had pictured nothing half so beautiful. As we approached it from the sea, it seemed so strangely out of place, even for a ruin, so far removed from what had ever been the haunt of man, that I scarce credited my eyes. We could soon count them—thirteen columns of sparkling marble, glittering in the sun. The sea-air keeps them spotlessly white, and, until you approach them nearly, they have the appearance of a structure, from its freshness, still in the sculptor's hands.

⁹ *frustrum* (pl. *frustra*) — perhaps a single stone drum forming the base of a classical column

¹⁰ Footnote in original — «Langhorne say in his notes on Plutarch, "There is the genuine *Attic salt* in most of the retorts and observations of Themistocles. His wit seems to have been equal to his military and political capacity."»

The boat was lowered, and the ship lay off-and-on while we landed near the rocks where Falconer was shipwrecked, and mounted to the temple. The summit of the promontory is strewn with the remains of the fallen columns, and their smooth surfaces are thickly inscribed with the names of travelers. Among others, I noticed Byron's and Hobhouse's.¹¹ Byron, by the way, mentions having narrowly escaped robbery here, by a band of Mainote pirates. He was surprised, swimming off the point, by an English vessel containing some ladies of his acquaintance. He concludes the 'Isles of Greece' beautifully with an allusion to it by its ancient name:

"Place me on Sunium's marbled steep," &c.

The view from the summit is one of the finest in all Greece. The isle where Plato was sold as a slave, and where Aristides and Demosthenes passed their days in exile, stretches along the west; the wide Aegean, sprinkled with here and there a solitary rock, herbless but beautiful in its veil of mist, spreads away from its feet to the southern line of the horizon, and crossing each other almost imperceptibly on the light winds of this summer sea, the red-sailed *caïque* of Greece, the merchantmen from the Dardanelles, and the heavy men-of-war of England and France, cruising wherever the wind blows fairest, are seen like broad-winged and solitary birds, lying low with spread pinions upon the waters. The place touched me. I shall remember it with an affection.

There is a small island close to Sunium, which was fortified by one of the heroes of the Iliad on his return from Troy—why, Heaven only knows. It was here, too, that Phrontes, the pilot of Menelaus, died and was buried.

We returned on board after an absence of two hours from the ship, and are steering now straight for the Dardanelles. The plains of Marathon are but a few hours north of our course, and I pass them unwillingly; but what is there one would not see? Greece lies behind, and I have realized one of my dearest dreams in rambling over its ruins. Travel is an appetite that "grows by what it feeds on."

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¹¹ John Cam Hobhouse (1786-1869) — Byron's college friend; accompanied him on his 1809 European tour

LETTER XV.

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MITYLENE—THE TOMB OF ACHILLES—TURKISH BURYING-GROUND —LOST REPUTATION OF THE SCAMANDER—ASIATIC SUNSETS —VISIT TO A TURKISH BEY—THE CASTLES OF THE DARDANELLES—TURKISH BATH, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Sept. 1833.

Lesbos to windward. A *caique*, crowded with people, is running across our bow, all hands singing a wild chorus (perhaps the *Lesboum carmen*)¹² most merrily. The island is now called Mitylene, said to be the greenest and most fertile of the Mediterranean. The Lesbian wine is still good, but they have had no poetesses since Sappho. Cause and effect have quarreled, one would think. Tenedos on the lee. The tomb of Achilles is distinguishable with the glass on the coast of Asia. The column which Alexander "crowned and anointed, and danced around naked," in honor of the hero's ghost, stands above it no longer. The Macedonian wept over Achilles, says the school-book, and envied him the blind bard who had sung his deeds. He would have dried his tears if he had known that his *pas seul*¹³ would be remembered as long.

Tenedos seems a pretty island as we near it. It was here that the Greeks hid, to persuade the Trojans that they had abandoned the siege, while the wooden horse was wheeled into Troy. The site of the city of Priam is visible as we get nearer the coast of Asia. Mount Ida and the marshy valley of the Scamander, are appearing beyond Cape Sigaeum, and we shall anchor in an hour between Europe and Asia, in the mouth of the rapid Dardanelles. The wind is not strong enough to stem the current that sets down like a mill-race from the sea of Marmora.

Went ashore on the Asian side for a ramble. We landed at the strong Turkish castle that, with another on the European side, defends the strait, and, passing under their bristling batteries, entered the small Turkish town in the rear. Our appearance excited a great deal of curiosity. The Turks, who were sitting cross-

¹² *carmen* — (Latin) song

¹³ *pas seul* — solo dance

legged on the broad benches, extending like a tailor's board, in front of the *cafés*, stopped smoking as we passed, and the women, wrapping up their own faces more closely, approached the ladies of our party and lifted their veils to look at them with the freedom of our friends at Eleusis. We came unaware upon two squalid wretches of women in turning a corner, who pulled their ragged shawls over their heads with looks of the greatest resentment at having exposed their faces to us.

A few minutes' walk brought us outside of the town. An extensive Turkish graveyard lay on the left. Between fig trees and blackberry bushes it was a green spot, and the low tombstones of the men, crowned each with a turban carved in marble of the shape befitting the sleeper's rank, peered above the grass like a congregation sitting in a uniform head-dress at a field preaching. Had it not been for the female graves, which were marked with a slab like ours, and here and there the tombstone of a Greek, carved after the antique, in the shape of a beautiful shell, the effect of an assemblage *sur l'herb*¹⁴ would have been ludicrously perfect.

We walked on to the Scamander. A rickety bridge gave us a passage, toll free, to the other side, where we sat round the rim of a marble well, and ate delicious grapes stolen for us by a Turkish boy from a near vineyard. Six or seven camels were feeding on the unenclosed plain, picking a mouthful and then lifting their long, snaky necks into the air to swallow; a stray horseman, with the head of his bridle decked with red tassels, and his knees up to his chin, scoured the bridle path to the mountains; and three devilish-looking buffaloes scratched their hides and rolled up their fiendish green eyes under a bramble hedge near the river.

The poets lie, or the Scamander is as treacherous as Macassar. Venus bathed in its waters before contending for the prize of beauty, adjudged to her on this very Mount Ida that I see covered with brown grass in the distance. Her hair became "flowing gold" in the lavation. My friends compliment me upon no change after a similar experiment. My long locks (run riot with a four months' cruise) are as dingy and intractable as ever, and, except in the increased brownness of a Mediterranean complexion, the cracked glass in the state-room

¹⁴ *sur l'herb* — (literally) on the grass

of my friend the lieutenant gives me no encouragement of a change. It is soft water, and runs over fine white sand; but the fountain of Callirhoë, at Athens, (she was the daughter of the Scamander, and, like most daughters, is much more attractive than her papa) is softer and clearer. Perhaps the loss of the Scamander's *virtues* is attributable to the cessation of the tribute paid to the god in Helen's time.

The twilights in this part of the world are unparalleled—but I have described twilights and sunsets in Greece and Italy till I am ashamed to write the words. Each one comes as if there never had been and never were to be another; and the adventures of the day, however stirring, are half forgotten in its glory, and seem, in comparison, unworthy of description; but one look at the terms that might describe it, written on paper, uncharms even the remembrance. You must come to Asia and *feel* sunsets. You cannot get them by paying postage.

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At anchor, waiting for a wind. Called to-day on the Bey Effendi, commander of the two castles "Europe" and "Asia," between which we lie. A pokerish-looking dwarf, with ragged beard and high turban, and a tall Turk, who I am sure never smiled since he was born, kicked off their slippers at the threshold, and ushered us into a chamber on the second story. It was a luxurious little room lined completely with cushions, the muslin-covered pillows of down leaving only a place for the door. The divan was as broad as a bed, and, save the difficulty of rising from it, it was perfect as a lounge. A ceiling of inlaid woods, embrowned with smoke, windows of small panes fantastically set, and a place lower than the floor for the attendants to stand and leave their slippers, were all that was peculiar else.

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The bey¹⁵ entered in a few minutes with a pipe-bearer, an interpreter, and three or four attendants. He was a young man, about twenty, and excessively handsome. A clear, olive complexion; a moustache of silky black; a thin, aquiline nose, with almost transparent nostrils; cheeks and chin rounded into a perfect oval, and mouth and eyes expressive of the most resolute firmness, and, at the

¹⁵ bey —Turkish title for chieftain

same time, girlishly beautiful, completed the picture of the finest looking fellow I have seen within my recollection. His person was very slight, and his feet and hands small, and particularly well-shaped. Like most of his countrymen of latter years, his dress was half European, and much less becoming, of course, than the turban and trouser. Pantaloon, rather loose; a light fawn-colored short jacket; a red cap, with a blue tassel; and stockings, without shoes were enough to give him the appearance of a dandy half through his toilet. He entered with an indolent step, bowed, without smiling, and throwing one of his feet under him, sunk down upon the divan, and beckoned for his pipe. The Turk in attendance kicked off his slippers, and gave him the long tube with its amber mouthpiece, setting the bowl into a basin in the center of the room. The bey put it to his handsome lips, and drew till the smoke mounted to the ceiling, and then handed it, with a graceful gesture, to the commodore.

The conversation went on through two interpretations. The bey's interpreter spoke Greek and Turkish, and the ship's pilot who accompanied us, spoke Greek and English, and the usual expressions of good feeling and offers of mutual service were thus passed between the puffs of the pipe with sufficient facility. The dwarf soon after entered with coffee. The small gilded cups had about the capacity of a goodwife's thimble, and were covered with gold tops to retain the aroma. The fragrance of the rich berry filled the room. We acknowledged, at once, the superiority of the Turkish manner of preparing it. It is excessively strong, and drunk without milk. I looked into every corner while the attendants were removing the cups, but could see no trace of a *book*. Ten or twelve guns, with stocks inlaid with pearl and silver, two or three pair of gold-handled pistols, and a superb Turkish scimitar and belt, hung upon the walls, but there was no other furniture. We rose, after a half hour's visit, and were bowed out by the handsome Effendi,¹⁶ coldly and politely. As we passed under the walls of the castle, on the way to the boat, we saw six or seven women, probably a part of his harem, peeping from the embrasures of one of the bastions. Their heads were wrapped in white; one eye only left visible. It was easy to imagine them Zuleikas¹⁷ after having seen their master.

¹⁶ Effendi — Turkish title of respect or courtesy

¹⁷ Zuleika — ref. *Genesis* 39:5; Biblical character, attempted to seduce her master's slave

Went ashore at Castle Europe, with one or two of the officers, to take a bath. An old Turk, sitting upon his hams, at the entrance, pointed to the low door at his side, without looking at us, and we descended, by a step or two, into a vaulted hall, with a large, circular ottoman in the center, and a very broad divan all around. Two tall young Muslims, with only turbans and waistcloths to conceal their natural proportions, assisted us to undress, and led us into a stone room, several degrees warmer than the first. We walked about here for a few minutes, and as we began to perspire, were taken into another, filled with hot vapor, and, for the first moment or two almost intolerable. It was shaped like a dome, with twenty or thirty small windows at the top, several basins at the sides into which hot water was pouring, and a raised stone platform in the center, upon which we were all requested, by gestures, to lie upon our backs. The perspiration at this time was pouring from us like rain. I lay down with the others, and a Turk, a dark-skinned, fine-looking fellow, drew on a mitten of rough grass cloth, and, laying one hand upon my breast to hold me steady, commenced rubbing me, without water, violently. The skin peeled off under the friction, and I thought he must have rubbed into the flesh repeatedly. Nothing but curiosity to go through the regular operation of a Turkish bath prevented my crying out "Enough!" He rubbed away, turning me from side to side, till the rough glove passed smoothly all over my body and limbs, and then, handing me a pair of wooden slippers, suffered me to rise. I walked about for a few minutes, looking with surprise at the rolls of skin he had taken off, and feeling almost transparent as the hot air blew upon me.

In a few minutes my Muslim beckoned to me to follow him to a smaller room, where he seated me on a stone beside a font of hot water. He then made some thick soapsuds in a basin, and, with a handful of fine flax, soaped and rubbed me all over again, and a few dashes of the hot water, from a wooden saucer, completed the bath.

The next room, which had seemed so warm on our entrance, was now quite chilly. We remained here until we were dry, and then returned to the hall in which our clothes were left, where beds were prepared on the divans, and we were covered in warm cloths, and left to our repose. The disposition to sleep was almost irresistible. We rose in a short time, and went to the coffee-house

opposite, when a cup of strong coffee, and a hookah¹⁸ smoked through a highly ornamented glass bubbling with water, refreshed us deliciously.

I have had ever since a feeling of suppleness and lightness, which is like wings growing at my feet. It is certainly a very great luxury, though, unquestionably, most enervating as a habit.

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¹⁸ hookah — Oriental instrument for smoking tobacco

LETTER XVI.

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A TURKISH PICNIC ON THE PLAIN OF TROY—FINGERS VERSUS FORKS.

DARDANELLES. The oddest invitation I ever had in my life was from a Turkish bey to a *fête ckampêtre*¹⁹ on the ruins of Troy! We have just returned, full of wassail²⁰ and pillaw,²¹ by the light of an Asian moon.

The morning was such a one as you would expect in the country where mornings were first made. The sun was clear, but the breeze was fresh, and, as we sat on the bey's soft divans, taking coffee before starting, I turned my cheek to the open window and confessed the blessing of existence.

We were sixteen, from the ship, and our host was attended by his interpreter, the general of his troops, the governor of Bunarbashi, (the name of the Turkish town near Troy) and a host of attendants on foot and horseback. His cook had been sent forward at daylight with the provisions.

The handsome bey came to the door, and helped to mount us upon his own horses, and we rode off with the whole population of the village assembled to see our departure. We forded the Scamander, near the town, and pushed on at a hard gallop over the plain. The bey soon overtook us upon a fleet grey mare, caparisoned with red trappings, holding an umbrella over his head, which he courteously offered to the commodore on coming up. We followed a grass path, without hill or stone, for nine or ten miles, and after having passed one or two hamlets, with their open threshing-floors, and crossed the Simois, with the water to our saddle-girths, we left a slight rising ground by a sudden turn, and descended to a cluster of trees, where the Turks sprang from their horses, and made signs for us to dismount.

It was one of nature's drawing-rooms. Thickets of brush and willows enclosed a fountain, whose clear waters were confined in a tank formed of marble slabs from the neighboring ruins. A spreading tree above, and soft

¹⁹ *fête ckampêtre* — (French) garden party

²⁰ wassail — wishes of good health

²¹ pillaw — Pilaf rice

meadow grass to its very tip, left nothing to wish but friends and a quiet mind to perfect its beauty. The cook's fires were smoking in the thicket; the horses were grazing without saddle or bridle in the pasture below, and we lay down upon the soft Turkish carpets, spread beneath the trees, and reposed from our fatigues for an hour.

The interpreter came when the sun had slanted a little across the trees, and invited us to the bey's gardens hard by. A path, overshadowed with wild brush, led us round the little meadow to a gate, close to the fountain-head of the Scamander. One of the common cottages of the country stood upon the left, and in front of it a large arbor, covered with a grape vine, was underlaid with cushions and carpets. Here we reclined, and coffee was brought us with baskets of grapes, figs, quinces, and pomegranates, the bey and his officers waiting on us themselves with amusing assiduity. The people of the house, meantime, were sent to the fields for green corn, which was roasted for us, and this with nuts, wine, and conversation, and a ramble to the source of the Simois, which bursts from a cleft in the rock very beautifully, whiled away the hours till dinner.

About four o'clock we returned to the fountain. A white muslin cloth was laid upon the grass between the edge and the overshadowing tree, and all around it were spread the carpets upon which we were to recline while eating. Wine and melons were cooling in the tank, and plates of honey and grapes, and new-made butter, (a great luxury in the Archipelago,) stood on the marble rim. The dinner might have fed Priam's army. Half a lamb, turkeys and chickens, were the principal meats, but there was, besides, "a rabble rout" of made dishes, peculiar to the country, of ingredients at which I could not hazard even a conjecture.

We crooked our legs under us with some awkwardness, and, producing our knives and forks, (which we had brought with the advice of the interpreter) commenced, somewhat abated in appetite by too liberal a lunch. The bey and his officers sitting upright, with their feet under them, pinched off bits of meat dexterously with the thumb and forefinger, passing from one to the other a dish of rice, with a large spoon, which all used indiscriminately. It is odd that eating with the fingers seemed only disgusting to me in the bey. His European dress probably made the peculiarity more glaring. The fat old governor who sat beside me was greased to the elbows, and his long grey beard was studded with rice and drops of gravy to his girdle. He rose when the meats were removed,

and waddled off to the stream below, where a wash in the clean water made him once more a presentable person.

It is a Turkish custom to rise and retire while the dishes are changing, and, after a little ramble through the meadow, we returned to a lavish spread of fruits and honey, which concluded the repast.

It is doubted where Troy stood. The reputed site is a rising ground, near the fountain of Bunarbashi, to which we strolled after dinner. We found nothing but quantities of fragments of columns, believed by antiquaries to be the ruins of a city that sprung up and died long since Troy.

We mounted and rode home by a round moon, whose light filled the air like a dust of phosphoric silver. The plains were in a glow with it. Our Indian summer nights, beautiful as they are, give you no idea of an Asian moon.

The bey's rooms were lit, and we took coffee with him once more, and, fatigued with pleasure and excitement, got to our boats, and pulled up against the arrowy²² current of the Dardanelles to the frigate.

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²² arrowy — resembling an arrow

LETTER XVII.

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THE DARDANELLES—VISIT FROM THE PASHA—HIS DELIGHT AT HEARING THE PIANO—
TURKISH FOUNTAINS—CARAVAN OF MULES LADEN WITH GRAPES—TURKISH MODE OF
LIVING; HOUSES; CAFES; AND WOMEN—THE MOSQUE AND THE MUEZZIN.

COAST OF ASIA. We have lain in the mouth of the Dardanelles sixteen mortal days,
waiting for a wind. Like Don Juan, (who passed here on his way to
Constantinople,)

"Another time we might have liked to see 'em,
But now are not much pleased with Cape Sigaeum."

An occasional trip with the boats to the watering-place, a Turkish bath, and a
stroll in the bazaar of the town behind the castle, gazing with a glass at the
tombs of Ajax and Achilles, and the long, undulating shores of Asia, eating often
and sleeping much, are the only appliances to our philosophy. One cannot
always be thinking of Hero and Leander, though he lie in the Hellespont.

A merchant brig from Smyrna is anchored just astern of us, waiting like
ourselves for this eternal north-easter to blow itself out. She has forty or fifty
passengers for Constantinople, among whom are the wife of an American
merchant, (a Greek lady,) and Mr. Schaufler, a missionary, in whom I
recognized a quondam fellow-student. They were nearly starved out on board
the brig, as she was provisioned but for a few days, and the Commodore has
courteously offered them a passage in the frigate. Fifty or sixty sail lie below
Castle Europe, in the same predicament. With the "cap of King Ericus," this
cruising, pleasant as it is, would be a thought pleasanter to my fancy.

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Still wind-bound. The angel that

"Look'd o'er my almanack
And cross'd out my ill days,"

suffered a week or so to escape him here. Not that the ship is not pleasant
enough, and the climate deserving of its Sybarite fame, and the sunsets and

stars as much brighter than those of the rest of the world as Byron has described them to be, (*vide* letter to Leigh Hunt) but life has run in so deep a current with me of late, that the absence of incident seems like water without wine. The agreeable stir of travel, the incomplete adventure, the change of costumes and scenery, the busy calls upon the curiosity and the imagination, have become, in a manner, very breath to me. Hitherto upon the cruise, we have scarce ever been more than one or two days at a time out of port. Elba, Sicily, Naples, Vienna, the Ionian Isles, and the various ports of Greece, have come and gone so rapidly, and so entirely without exertion of my own, that I seem to have lived in a magic panorama. After dinner on one day I visit a city here, and, the day or two after, lounging and reading and sleeping meanwhile quietly at home. I find myself rising from table hundreds of miles farther to the north or east, and another famous city before me, having taken no care, and felt no motion, nor encountered danger or fatigue. A summer cruise in the Mediterranean is certainly the perfection of sight-seeing. With a sea as smooth as a river, and cities of interest, classical and mercantile, everywhere on the lee, I can conceive no class of persons to whom it would not be delightful. A company of pleasure, in a private vessel, would see all Greece and Italy with less trouble and expense than is common on a trip to the lakes.

"All hands up anchor!" The dogvane²³ points at last to Constantinople, the capstan is manned, the sails loosed, the quarter-master at the wheel, and the wind freshens every moment from the "sweet south." "Heave round merrily!" The anchor is dragged in by this rushing Hellespont, and holds on as if the bridge of Xerxes were tangled about the flukes. "Up she comes at last," and, yielding to her broad canvass, the gallant frigate begins to make headway against the current. There is nothing in the whole world of senseless matter, so like a breathing creature as a ship! The energy of her motion, the beauty of her shape and contrivance, and the ease with which she is managed by the one mind upon her quarter-deck, to whose voice she is as obedient as the courser²⁴ to the rein, inspire me with daily admiration. I have been four months a guest in this noble man-of-war, and to this hour I never set my foot on her deck without a feeling of fresh wonder. And then Cooper's novels read in a ward-room as

²³ dogvane — (nautical) small wind-vane

²⁴ courser — swift horse

grapes eat in Tuscany. It were missing one of the golden leaves of a life not to have thumbed them on a cruise.

The wind has headed us off again, and we have dropped anchor just below the castles of the Dardanelles. We have made but eight miles, but we have new scenery from the ports, and that is something to a weary eye. I was as tired of "the shores of Ilion " as ever was Ulysses. The hills about our present anchorage are green and boldly marked, and the frowning castles above us give that addition to the landscape which is alone wanting on the Hudson. Sestos and Abydos are six or seven miles up the stream. The Asian shore (I should have thought it a pretty circumstance, once, to be able to set foot either in Europe or Asia in five minutes,) is enlivened by numbers of small vessels, tracking up with buffaloes against wind and tide. And here we lie, says the old pilot, without hope till the moon changes. The "fickle moon" quotha!²⁵ I wish my friends were half as constant!

The pasha of the Dardanelles has honored us with a visit. He came in a long *caïque*, pulled by twenty stout rascals; his excellency of "two tails" sitting on a rich carpet on the bottom of the boat, with his boy of a year old in the same uniform as himself, and his suite of pipe and slipper-bearers, dwarf, and executioner, sitting cross-legged about him. He was received with the guard and all the honor due to his rank. His face is that of a cold, haughty, and resolute, but well-born man, and his son is like him. He looked at everything attentively, without expressing any surprise, till he came to the pianoforte, which one of the ladies played to his undisguised delight. It was the first he had ever seen. He inquired through his interpreter if she had not been all her life in learning.

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The poet says, "The seasons of the year come in like masquers."²⁶ To one who had made their acquaintance in New England, most of the months would literally pass *incog*,²⁷ in Italy. But here is honest October, the same merry old gentleman, though I meet him in Asia, and I remember him last year at the baths of Lucca, as unchanged as here. It has been a clear, bright, invigorating day, with

²⁵ quotha! — (archaic) expression of surprise

²⁶ masquer — person wearing a mask

²⁷ *incog* — (Italian, incognito), unrecognized

a vitality in the air as rousing to the spirits as a blast from the "horn of Astolpho."²⁸ I can remember just such a day ten years ago. It is odd how a little sunshine will cling to the memory when loves and hates, that in their time convulsed the very soul, are so easily forgotten.

We heard yesterday that there was a Turkish village seven or eight miles in the mountains on the Asian side, and, as a variety to the promenade on the quarter-deck, a ramble was proposed to it.

We landed, this morning, on the bold shore of the Dardanelles, and, climbing up the face of a sand-hill, struck across a broad plain, through bush and brier, for a mile. On the edge of a ravine we found a pretty road, half embowered with oak and hemlock; and a mounted Turk, whom we met soon after, with a gun across his pommel, and a goose looking from his saddle-bag, directed us to follow it till we reached the village.

It was a beautiful path, flecked with the shade of leaves of all the variety of Eastern trees, and refreshed with a fountain at every mile. About half way we stopped at a spring welling from a rock, under a large fig-tree, from which the water poured, as clear as crystal, into seven tanks, and rippling away from the last into a wild thicket, whence a stripe of brighter green marked its course down the mountain. It was a spot worthy of Tempe. We seated ourselves on the rim of the rocky basin, and, with a drink of bright water, and a half hour's repose, recommenced our ascent, blessing the nymph of the fount, like true pilgrims of the East.

A few steps beyond, we met a caravan of the pasha's²⁹ tithe-gatherers, with mules laden with grapes; the turbaned and showily-armed drivers, as they came winding down the dell, producing the picturesque effect of a theatrical ballet. They laid their hands on their breasts with grave courtesy as they approached, and we helped ourselves to the ripe, blushing clusters, as the panniers went by, with Arcadian freedom.

²⁸ ref. "*Orlando Furioso*", epic poem by Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533); Astolpho is given a magic horn

²⁹ pasha — Turkish officer of high rank

We reached the summit of the ridge a little before noon, and turned our faces back for a moment to catch the cool wind from the Hellespont. The Dardanelles came winding out from the hills just above Abydos, and, sweeping past the upper castles of Europe and Asia, rushed down by Tenedos into the Archipelago. Perhaps twenty miles of its course lay within our view. Its colors were borrowed from the divine sky above, and the rainbow is scarce more varied or brighter. The changing purple and blue of the mid-stream, specked with white crests; the chrysoprase green of the shallows, and the dyes of the various depths along the shore, gave it the appearance of a vein of transparent marble inlaid through the valley. The frigate looked like a child's boat on its bosom. To our left the tombs of Ajax and Achilles were just distinguishable in the plains of the Scamander, and Troy (if Troy ever stood) stood back from the sea, and the blue-wreathed isles of the Archipelago bounded the reach of the eye. It was a view that might "cure a month's grief in a day."

We descended now into a kind of cradle valley, yellow with rich vineyards. It was alive with people gathering in the grapes. The creaking wagons filled the road, and shouts and laughter rang over the mountainsides merrily. The scene would have been Italian, but for the turbans peering out everywhere from the leaves, and those diabolical-looking buffaloes in the wagons. The village was a mile or two before us, and we loitered on, entering here and there a vineyard, where the only thing evidently grudged us was our peep at the women. They scattered like deer as we stepped over the walls.

Near the village we found a grave Turk, of whom one of the officers made some inquiries, which were a part of our errand to the mountains. It may spoil the sentiment of my description, but, in addition to the poetry of the ramble, we were to purchase beef for the mess. His bullocks were out at grass, (feeding in pastoral security, poor things!) and he invited us to his house, while he sent his boy to drive them in. I recognized them, when they came, as two handsome steers, which had completed the beauty of an open glade, in the center of a clump of forest-trees, on our route. The pleasure they have afforded the eye will be repeated on the palate—a double destiny not accorded to all beautiful creatures.

Our host led us up a flight of rough stone steps to the second story of his house, where an old woman sat upon her heels, rolling out paste, and a younger one

nursed a little Turk at her bosom. They had, like every man, woman, or child, I have seen in this country, superb eyes and noses. No chisel could improve the meanest of them in these features. Our friend's wife seemed ashamed to be caught with her face uncovered, but she offered us cushions on the floor before she retired, and her husband followed up her courtesy with his pipe.

We went thence to the *café*, where a bubbling hookah, a cup of coffee, and a divan, refreshed us a little from our fatigues. While the rest of the party were lingering over their pipes, I took a turn through the village in search of the house of the Aga. After strolling up and down the crooked streets for half an hour, a pretty female figure, closely enveloped in her veil, and showing, as she ran across the street, a dainty pair of feet in small yellow slippers, attracted me into the open court of the best-looking house in the village. The lady had disappeared, but a curious-looking carriage, lined with rich Turkey carpeting and cushions, and covered with red curtains, made to draw close in front, stood in the center of the court. I was going up to examine it, when an old man, with a beard to his girdle, and an uncommonly rich turban, stepped from the house, and motioned me angrily away. A large wolf-dog, which he held by the collar, added emphasis to his command, and I retreated directly. A giggle, and several female voices from the closely-latticed window, rather aggravated the mortification. I had intruded on the premises of the Aga, a high offence in Turkey when a woman is in the case.

It was "deep i' the afternoon"³⁰ when we arrived at the beach, and made signal for a boat. We were on board as the sky kindled with the warm colors of an Asian sunset—a daily offset to our wearisome detention which goes far to keep me in temper. My fear is, that the commodore's patience is not "so good a continuer" as this "*vento maledetto*,"³¹ as the pilot calls it; and in such a case I lose Constantinople most provokingly.

Walked to the Upper Castle Asia, some eight miles above our anchorage. This is the main town on the Dardanelles, and contains forty or fifty thousand inhabitants. Sestos and Abydos are a mile or two farther up the strait.

³⁰ ref. comedy "*The Alchemist*" by Ben Jonson

³¹ *vento maledetto* — [(Italian) damned wind]

We kept along the beach for an hour or two, passing occasionally a Turk on horseback, till we were stopped by a small and shallow creek without a bridge, just on the skirts of the town. A woman with one eye peeping from her veil, dressed in a tunic of fine blue cloth, stood at the head of a large drove of camels on the other side, and a beggar with one eye, smoked his pipe on the sand at a little distance. The water was knee-deep, and we were hesitating on the brink, when the beggar offered to carry us across on his back—a task he accomplished (there were six of us) without taking his pipe from his mouth.

I tried in vain to get a peep at the camel-driver's daughter, but she seemed jealous of showing even her eyebrow, and I followed on to the town. The Turks live differently from every other people, I believe. You walk through their town, and see every individual in it, except perhaps the women of the pasha. Their houses are square boxes, the front side of which lifts on a hinge in the day-time, exposing the whole interior, with its occupants squatted in the corners or on the broad platform where their trades are followed. They are scarce larger than boxes in the theatre, and the roof projects into the middle of the street, meeting that of the opposite neighbor, so that the pavement between is always dark and cool. The three or four Turkish towns I have seen have the appearance of cabins thrown up hastily after a fire. You would not suppose they were intended to last more than a month at the farthest.

We roved through the narrow streets an hour or more, admiring the fine bearded old Turks smoking cross-legged in the *cafés*, the slipper-makers, with their gay Morocco wares in goodly rows around them, the wily Jews with their high caps and caftans, (looking, crouched among their merchandise, like the "venders of old bottles and abominable lies," as they are drawn in the plays of Queen Elizabeth's time,) the muffled and gliding specters of the Muslim women, and the livelier-footed Greek girls in their velvet jackets and braided hair,—and by this time we were kindly disposed to our dinners.

On our way to the consul's, where we were to dine, we passed a mosque. The minaret (a tall peaked tower, about of the shape and proportions of a pencil-case) commanded a view down the principal streets; and a stout fellow, with a sharp clear voice, leaned over the balustrade at the top, crying out the invitation to prayer in a long drawling singsong, that must have been audible on the other side of the Hellespont. Open porches, supported by a paling, extended all

around the church; and the floors were filled with kneeling Turks, with their pistols and ataghans³² lying beside them. I had never seen so picturesque a congregation. The slippers were left in hundreds at the threshold, and the bare and muscular feet and legs, half concealed by the full trousers, supported as earnest a troop of worshippers as ever bent forehead to the ground. I left them rising from a flat prostration, and hurried after my companions to dinner.

Our Consul of the Dardanelles is an Armenian. He is absent just now, in search of a runaway female slave of the sultan's, and his wife, a gracious Italian, full of movement and hospitality, does the honors of his house in his absence. He is a physician as well as consul and slave-catcher; and the presents of a hand-organ, a French clock, and a bronze standish,³³ rather prove him to be a favorite with the "brother of the sun."

We were smoking the hookah after dinner, when an intelligent-looking man, of fifty or so, came in to pay us a visit. He is at present an exile from Constantinople, by order of the Grand Seignor, because a brother physician, his friend, failed in an attempt to cure one of the favorites of the imperial harem! This is what might be called "sympathy upon compulsion." It is unnecessary, one would think, to make friendship more dangerous than common human treachery renders it already.

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³² ataghan — (yatagan) type of Turkish saber

³³ standish — (historical) stand for holding writing implements

LETTER XVIII.

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TURKISH MILITARY LIFE—A VISIT TO THE CAMP—TURKISH MUSIC —SUNSETS—THE SEA OF MARMORA.

Oct. 1833.

A half hour's walk brought us within sight of the pasha's camp. The green and white tents of five thousand Turkish troops were pitched on the edge of a stream, partly sheltered by a grove of noble oaks, and defended by wicker batteries at distances of thirty or forty feet. We were stopped by the sentinel on guard, while a messenger was sent in to the pasha for permission to wait upon him. Meantime a number of young officers came out from their tents, and commenced examining our dresses with the curiosity of boys. One put on my gloves, another examined the cloth of my coat, a third took from me a curious stick I had purchased at Vienna, and a more familiar gentleman took up my hand, and, after comparing it with his own black fingers, stroked it with an approving smile, that was meant probably as a compliment. My companions underwent the same review, and their curiosity was still unsated when a good-looking officer, with his scimitar under his arm, came to conduct us to the commander-in-chief.

The long lines of tents were bent to the direction of the stream, and, at short distances, the silken banner stuck in the ground under the charge of a sentinel, and a divan covered with rich carpets under the shade of the nearest tree, marked the tent of an officer. The interior of those of the soldiers exhibited merely a stand of muskets and a raised platform for bed and table, covered with coarse mats, and decked with the European accoutrements now common in Turkey. It was the middle of the afternoon, and most of the officers lay asleep on low ottomans, with their tent-curtains undrawn, and their long *chibouques*³⁴ beside them, or still at their lips. Hundreds of soldiers loitered about, engaged in various occupations, sweeping, driving their tent-stakes more firmly into the ground, cleaning arms, cooking, or, with their heels under them, playing silently at dominos. Half the camp lay on the opposite side of the stream, and there was

³⁴ *chibouque* — long-stemmed Turkish tobacco pipe

repeated the same warlike picture, the white uniform and the loose red cap, with its gold bullion and blue tassel, appearing and disappearing between the rows of tents, and the bright red banners clinging to the staff in the breathless sunshine.

We soon approached the splendid pavilion of the pasha, unlike the rest in shape, and surrounded by a quantity of servants, some cooking at the root of a tree, and all pursuing their vocation with singular earnestness. A superb banner of bright crimson silk, wrought with long lines of Turkish characters, probably passages from the Koran, stood in a raised socket, guarded by two sentinels. Near the tent, and not far from the edge of the stream, stood a gaily-painted kiosk, not unlike the fantastic summer-houses sometimes seen in a European garden; and here our conductor stopped, and, kicking off his slippers, motioned for us to enter.

We mounted the steps, and, passing a small entrance-room filled with guards, stood in the presence of the commander-in-chief. He sat on a divan, cross-legged, in a military frock-coat, wrought with gold on the collar and cuffs, a sparkling diamond crescent on his breast, and a scimitar at his side, with a belt richly wrought, and held by a buckle of dazzling brilliants. His Aide sat beside him, in a dress somewhat similar, and both appeared to be men of about forty. The pasha is a stern, dark, soldier-like man, with a thick straight beard as black as jet, and features which look incapable of a smile. He bowed without rising when we entered, and motioned for us to be seated. A little conversation passed between him and the consul's son, who acted as our interpreter, and coffee came in almost immediately. There was an aroma about it which might revive a mummy. The small china cups, with thin gold filigree sockets, were soon emptied and taken away, and the officer in waiting introduced a soldier to go through the manual exercise, by way of amusing us.

He was a powerful fellow, and threw his musket about with so much violence, that I feared every moment the stock, lock, and barrel, would part company. He had taken off his shoes before venturing into the presence of his commander, and looked oddly enough playing the soldier in his stockings. I was relieved of considerable apprehension when he ordered arms, and backed out to his slippers.

The next exhibition was that of a military band. A drum-major, with a proper-gold-headed stick, wheeled some sixty fellows, with all kinds of instruments, under the windows of the kiosk, and with a whirl of his baton the harmony commenced. I could just detect some resemblance to a march. The drums rolled, the "ear-piercing fifes" fulfilled their destiny, and trombone, serpent, and horn showed of what they were capable. The pasha got upon his knees to lean out of the window; and, as I rose from my low seat at the same time, he pulled me down beside him, and gave me half his carpet, patting me on the back, and pressing me to the window with his arm over my neck. I have observed frequently among the Turks this singular familiarity of manners both to strangers and one another. It is an odd contrast to their habitual gravity.

The sultan (I think unwisely) has introduced the European uniform into his army. With the exception of the Tunisian cap, which is substituted for the thick and handsome turban, the dress is such as is worn by the soldiers of the French army. Their tailors are of course bad, and their figures, accustomed only to the loose and graceful costume of the East, are awkward and constrained. I never saw so uncouth a set of fellows as the five thousand Muslims in this army of the Dardanelles; and yet, in their Turkish trousers and turban, with the belt stuck full of arms, and their long moustache, they would be as martial-looking troops as ever followed a banner.

We embarked at sunset to return to the ship. The shell-shaped *caïque*, with her tall sharp extremities and fantastic sail, yielded to the rapid current of the Hellespont; and our two boatmen, as handsome a brace of Turks as ever were drawn in a picture, pulled their legs under them more closely, and commenced singing the alternate stanzas of a villainous duet. The helmsman's part was rather humorous, and his merry black eyes redeemed it somewhat; but his fellow was as grave as a dervish, and howled as if he were ferrying over Xerxes after his defeat at the Dardanelles.

If I were to live in the East as long as the wandering Jew, I think these heavenly sunsets, evening after evening, scarce varying by a shade, would never become familiar to my eye. They surprise me day after day, like some new and brilliant phenomenon, though the thoughts which they bring, as it were by a habit contracted of the hour, are almost always the same. The day, in these countries, where life flows so thickly, is engrossed, and pretty busily, too, by the *present*.

The *past* comes up with the twilight; and wherever I may be, and in whatever scene mingling, my heart breaks away, and goes down into the west with the sun. I am *at home* as duly as the bird settles to her nest.

It was natural in paying the boatman, after such a musing passage, to remember the poetical justice of Uhland, in crossing the ferry:

"Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee!
Take! I give it willingly!
For, invisibly to thee,
Spirits twain have cross'd with me."³⁵

I should have paid for one other seat, at least, by this fanciful tariff. Our unmusical Muslims were content, however; and we left them to pull back against the tide, by a star that cast a shadow like a meteor.

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The moon changed this morning, and the wind, that in this clime of fable is as constant to her as Endymion, changed too. The white caps vanished from the hurrying waves of the Dardanelles, and, after an hour or two of calm, the long-expected breeze came tripping out of Asia with Oriental softness, and is now leading us gently up the Hellespont.

As we passed between the two castles of the Dardanelles, the commodore saluted the pasha, with nineteen guns, and in half an hour we were off Abydos, where our friend from the south has deserted us, and we are compelled to anchor. It would be unclassical to complain of delay on so poetical a spot. It is beautiful, too. The shores on both the Asian and European sides are charmingly varied, and the sun lies on them, and on the calm strait that links them, with a beauty worthy of the fair spirit of Hero. A small Turkish castle occupies the site of the "torch-lit tower" of Abydos, and there is a corresponding one at Sestos. The distance between looks little more than a mile—not a surprising feat for any swimmer, I should think. The current of the Hellespont remains the same,

³⁵ Lines from *The Passage* by Johann Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862); the reference is to Charon, the boatman who ferries souls across the River Styx to Hades.

and so does the moral of Leander's story. The Hellespont of matrimony may be crossed with the tide. The deuce is to get back.

Lampsacus on the starboard-bow—and a fairer spot lies on no river's brink. Its trees, vineyards, and cottages, slant up almost imperceptibly from the water's edge, and the hills around have the look "of a clean and quiet privacy," with a rural elegance that might tempt Shakespeare's Jaques to come and moralize. By the way, there have been philosophers here. Did not Alexander forgive the city its obstinate defense for the sake of Anaximenes? There was a sad dog of a deity worshipped here about that time.

I take a fresh look at it from the port, as I write. Pastures, every one with a bordering of tall trees, cattle as beautiful as the daughter of Inachus, lanes of wild shrubbery, a greener stripe through the fields, like the track of a stream, and smoke curling from every cluster of trees, telling, as plainly as the fancy can read, that there is both poetry and *pillaw* at Lampsacus.

Just opposite stands the modern Gallipoli, a Turkish town of some thirty thousand inhabitants, at the head of the Hellespont. The Hellespont gets broader here; and a few miles further up we open into the sea of Marmora. A French brig-of-war, that has been hanging about us for a fortnight, (watching our movements in this unusual cruise for an American frigate, perhaps,) is just ahead, and a quantity of smaller sail are stretching off on the southern tack, to make the best use of their new sea-room for beating up to Constantinople.

We hope to see Seraglio Point to-morrow. Mr. Hodgson, the secretary of our embassy to Turkey, has just come on board from the Smyrna packet, and the agreeable preparations for going ashore are already on the stir. I do not find that the edge of curiosity dulls with use. The prospect of seeing a strange city to-morrow produces the same quick-pulsed emotion that I felt in the Diligence two years ago, rattling over the last post to Paris. The entrances to Florence, Rome, Venice, Vienna, Athens, are marked each with as white a stone. He may "gather no moss" who rolls about the world; but that which the gold of the careful cannot buy—pleasure—when the soul is most athirst for it, grows under his feet. Of the many daily reasons I find to thank Providence, not the

least is that of being what Clodio calls himself in the play—"a *here-and-thereian*."³⁶

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³⁶ "here-and-thereian" — wanderer, a stranger nowhere; ref. comedy "*Love makes a Man*," by Colley Cibber, 1700

LETTER XIX.

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CONSTANTINOPLE—AN ADVENTURE WITH THE DOGS OF STAMBOUL—THE SULTAN'S KIOSK—THE BAZAARS— GEORGIANS—SWEETMEATS—HINDUSTANI FAKERS— TURKISH WOMEN AND THEIR EYES—THE JEWS— A TOKEN OF HOME—THE DRUG-BAZAAR— OPIUM-EATERS.

Oct. 1833.

The invariable "Where am I?" with which a traveler awakes at morning, was to me never more agreeably answered—*At Constantinople!* The early ship-of-war summons to "turn out" was obeyed with alacrity, and with the first boat after breakfast I was set ashore at Tophana, the landing-place of the Frank quarter of Stamboul.

A row of low-built *cafés*, with a latticed enclosure and a plentiful shade of plane trees on the right; a large square, in the center of which stood a magnificent Persian fountain, as large as a church, covered with lapis-lazuli and gold, and endless inscriptions in Turkish; a mosque buried in cypresses on the left; a hundred indolent-looking, large-trousered, mustachioed, and withal very handsome men, and twice the number of snarling, wolfish, and half-starved dogs, are some of the objects which the first glance, as I stepped on shore, left on my memory.

I had heard that the dogs of Constantinople knew and hated a Christian. By the time I had reached the middle of the square, a wretched puppy at my heels had succeeded in announcing the presence of a stranger. They were upon me in a moment from every heap of garbage and every hole and corner. I was beginning to be seriously alarmed, standing perfectly still, with at least a hundred infuriated dogs barking in a circle around me, when an old Turk, selling sherbet under the shelter of the projecting roof of the Persian fountain, came kindly to my relief. A stone or two well aimed, and a peculiar cry, which I have since tried in vain to imitate, dispersed the hungry wretches, and I took a glass of the old man's raisin-water, and pursued my way up the street. The circumstance, however, had discolored my anticipations; nothing looked agreeably to me for an hour after it.

I ascended through narrow and steep lanes, between rows of small wooden houses, miserably built and painted, to the main street of the quarter of Pera. Here live all Christians and Christian ambassadors, and here I found our secretary of legation, Mr. H-----, who kindly offered to accompany me to old Stamboul.

We descended to the water-side, and, stepping into an egg-shell *caique*, crossed the Golden Horn, and landed on a pier between the sultan's green kiosk and the *seraglio*.³⁷ I was fortunate in a companion who knew the people and spoke the language. The red-trousered and armed *kervas*,³⁸ at the door of the kiosk, took his pipe from his mouth, after a bribe and a little persuasion, and motioned to a boy to show us the interior. A circular room, with a throne of solid silver embraced in a double colonnade of marble pillars, and covered with a roof laced with lapis-lazuli and gold, formed the place from which Sultan Mahmoud formerly contemplated on certain days the busy and beautiful panorama of his matchless bay. The kiosk is on the edge of the water, and the poorest *caikjee*³⁹ might row his little bark under its threshold, and fill his monarch's eye, and look on his monarch's face with the proudest. The green canvas curtains, which envelope the whole building, have, for a long time, been unraised; and Mahmoud is oftener to be seen on horseback, in the dress of a European officer, guarded by troops in European costume and array. The change is said to be dangerously unpopular.

We walked on to the square of Sultana Valide.⁴⁰ Its large area was crowded with the buyers and sellers of a travelling fair—a sort of Jews' market held on different days in different parts of this vast capital. In Turkey, every nation is distinguished by its dress, and almost as certainly by its branch of trade. On the right of the gate, under a huge plane-tree, shedding its yellow leaves among the various wares, stood the booths of a group of Georgians, their round and rosy-dark faces (you would know their sisters must be half *houris*)⁴¹ set off with a

³⁷ *seraglio* — women's apartments (harem) in an Ottoman palace; also, the Sultan's court and government offices at Constantinople.

³⁸ *kervas* — definition needed

³⁹ *caikjee* — boatman

⁴⁰ *Valide sultan* — title held by the "legal mother" of a ruling Sultan of the Ottoman Empire

⁴¹ *houris* — beautiful young woman, such as the virgin companions of the virtuous in the Muslim afterlife

tall black cap of curling wool, their small shoulders with a tight jacket studded with silk buttons, and their waists with a voluminous silken sash, whose fringed ends fell over their heels as they sat cross-legged, patiently waiting for custom. Hardware is the staple of their shops, but the cross-pole in front is fantastically hung with silken garters and tasseled cords; and their own Georgian caps, with a gay crown of Cashmere, enrich and diversify the shelves. I bought a pair or two of blushing silk garters of a young man, whose eyes and teeth should have been a woman's, and we strolled on to the next booth. Here was a Turk, with a table covered by a broad brass tray, on which was displayed a tempting array of mucilage, white and pink, something of the consistency of *blancmange*.⁴² A dish of sugar, small gilded saucers, and long-handled, flat, brass spoons, with a vase of rose-water, completed his establishment. The grave Muslim cut, sugared, and scented the portions for which we asked, without condescending to look at us, or open his lips; and, with a glass of mild and pleasant sherbet from his next neighbor, as immovable a Turk as himself, we had lunched, extremely to my taste, for just five cents American currency.

A little farther on I was struck with the appearance of two men, who stood bargaining with a Jew. My friend knew them immediately as *fakirs*, or religious devotees, from Hindustan. He addressed them in Arabic, and, during their conversation of ten minutes, I studied them with some curiosity. They were singularly small, without any appearance of dwarfishness, their limbs and persons slight, and very equally and gracefully proportioned. Their features were absolutely regular, and, though small as a child's of ten or twelve years, were perfectly developed. They appeared like men seen through an inverted opera-glass. An exceedingly ashy, olive complexion, hair of a kind of glittering black, quite unlike in texture and color any I have ever before seen; large, brilliant, intense black eyes, and lips, (the most peculiar feature of all) of lusterless black,⁴³ completed the portraits of two as remarkable-looking men as I have anywhere met. Their costume was humble, but not unpicturesque. A well-worn sash of red silk enveloped the waist in many folds, and sustained

⁴² *blancmange* — a sweet gelatinous dessert

⁴³ Footnote in original — «I have since met many of them in the streets of Constantinople; and I find it is a distinguishing feature of their race. They look as if their lips were dead—as if the blood had dried beneath the skin.»

trousers tight to the legs, but of the Turkish ampleness over the hips. Their small feet, which seemed dried up to the bone, were bare. A blanket, with a hood marked in a kind of arabesque figure, covered their shoulders, and a high quilted cap, with a rim of curling wool, was pressed down closely over the forehead. A crescent-shaped tin vessel, suspended by a leather strap to the waist, and serving the two purposes of a charity-box, and a receptacle for bread and vegetables, seemed a kind of badge of their profession. They were lately from Hindustan, and were begging their way still farther into Europe. They received our proffered alms without any mark of surprise or even pleasure, and, laying their hands on their breasts, with countenances perfectly immovable, gave us a Hindustani blessing, and resumed their traffic. They see the world, these rovers on foot! And I think, could I see it myself in no other way, I would e'en take sandal and scrip,⁴⁴ and traverse it as dervish or beggar.

The alleys between the booths were crowded with Turkish women, who seemed the chief purchasers. The effect of their enveloped persons, and eyes peering from the muslin folds of the *yashmak*, is droll to a stranger. It seemed to me like a masquerade; and the singular sound of female voices, speaking through several thicknesses of a stuff, bound so close on the mouth as to show the shape of the lips exactly, perfected the delusion. It reminded me of the half-smothered tones beneath the masks in carnival-time. A clothes-bag with yellow slippers would have about as much form, and might be walked about with as much grace, as a Turkish woman. Their fat hands, the finger-nails dyed with henna, and their unexceptionably magnificent eyes, are all that the stranger is permitted to peruse. It is strange how universal is the beauty of the Eastern eye. I have looked in vain hitherto for a small or an unexpressive one. It is quite startling to meet the gaze of such large liquid orbs, bent upon you from their long silken fringes, with the unwinking steadiness of look common to the females of this country. Wrapped in their veils, they seem unconscious of attracting attention, and turn and look you full in the face, while you seek in vain for a pair of lips to explain by their expression the meaning of such particular notice.

The Jew is more distinguishable at Constantinople than elsewhere. He is compelled to wear the dress of his tribe, (and its "badge of sufferance," too)

⁴⁴ sandal and scrip — ref. *Luke* 10:4

and you will find him wherever there is trafficking to be done, in a small cap, not ungracefully shaped, twisted about with a peculiar handkerchief of a small black print, and set back so as to show the whole of his national high and narrow forehead. He is always good-humored and obsequious, and receives the curse with which his officious offers of service are often repelled with a smile, and a hope that he may serve you another time. One of them, as we passed his booth, called our attention to some newly-opened bales bearing the stamp, "Tremont Mill, Lowell, Mass." It was a long distance from home to meet such familiar words!

We left the square of the sultan mother, and entered a street of confectioners. The East is famous for its sweetmeats, and truly a more tempting array never visited the Christmas dream of a school-boy. Even Felix, the *patissier nonpareil*⁴⁵ of Paris, might take a lesson in jellies. And then for "candy" of all colors of the rainbow, (not shut enviously in with pitiful glass cases, but piled up to the ceiling in a shop all in the street, as it might be in Utopia, with nothing to pay,)—it is like a scene in the Arabian Nights. The last part of the parenthesis is almost true, for with a small coin of the value of two American cents, I bought of a certain kind called in Turkish "*peace to your throat*," (they call things by such poetical names in the East) the quarter of which I could not have eaten, even in my best "days of sugar-candy." The women of Constantinople, I am told, almost live on confectionary. They eat incredible quantities. The sultan's eight hundred wives and women employ five hundred cooks, and consume *two thousand five hundred pounds of sugar daily!* It is probably the most expensive item of the seraglio kitchen.

A turn or two brought us to the entrance of a long dark passage, of about the architecture of a covered bridge in our country. A place richer in the Oriental and picturesque could scarce be found between the Danube and the Nile. It is the bazaar of *drugs*. As your eye becomes accustomed to the light, you distinguish vessels of every size and shape, ranged along the receding shelves of a stall, and filled to the uncovered brim with the various productions of the Orient. The edges of the baskets and jars are turned over with rich colored papers, (a peculiar color to every drug,) and broad spoons of boxwood are crossed on the top. There is the *henna* in a powder of deep brown, with an

⁴⁵ *patissier nonpareil* — unequalled pastry-chef

envelope of deep Tyrian purple,⁴⁶ and all the precious gums in their jars, golden-leafed, and spices and dyes and medicinal roots; and above hang anatomies of curious monsters, dried and stuffed, and in the midst of all, motionless as the box of sulfur beside him, and almost as yellow, sits a venerable Turk, with his beard on his knees, and his pipe-bowl thrust away over his drugs, its ascending smoke-curls his only sign of life. This class of merchants is famous for opium-eaters, and if you pass at the right hour, you find the large eye of the silent smoker dilated and wandering, his fingers busy in tremulously counting his spice-wood beads, and the roof of his stall wreathed with clouds of smoke, the vent to every species of Eastern enthusiasm. If you address him, he smiles, and puts his hand to his forehead and breast, but condescends to answer no question till it is thrice reiterated; and then in the briefest word possible, he answers wide of your meaning, strokes the smoke out of his moustache, and, slipping the costly amber between his lips, abandons himself again to his exalted reverie.

I write this after being a week at Constantinople, during which the Egyptian bazaar has been my frequent and most fancy-stirring lounge. Of its forty merchants, there is not one whose picturesque features are not imprinted deeply in my memory. I have idled up and down in the dim light, and fingered the soft henna, and bought small parcels of incense-wood for my pastille lamp, studying the remarkable faces of the unconscious old Muslims, till my mind became somehow tintured of the East, and (what will be better understood) my clothes steeped in the mixed and agreeable odors of the thousand spices. Where are the painters that they have never found this mine of admirable studies? There is not a corner of Constantinople, nor a man in the streets, that were not a novel and a capital subject for the pencil. Pray, Mr. Cole,⁴⁷ leave things that have been painted so often, as aqueducts and Italian ruins, (though you *do* make delicious pictures, and could never waste time or pencils on *any* thing,) and come to the East for one single book of sketches! How I have wished I was a painter since I have been here.

⁴⁶ Tyrian purple — A natural dye extracted from the shell of a sea snail; in ancient Rome, purple-dyed textiles were a sign of status.

⁴⁷ Thomas Cole (1801-1848) — English-born American painter, best known for his landscapes and historical subjects

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