

## WAYFARING SKETCHES AMONG THE GREEKS AND TURKS.\*

It is not easy for us, habituated as we are to one uniform aspect of nature and society, to realize to ourselves the existence of forms of both, so utterly unlike our own as to present in many of them features the very reverse of those we are accustomed to. We are apt to regard stories that are brought us from a distance as coloured with the tints of the imagination, and rather to dwell upon them with a pleased and sentimental incredulity, than take them as facts. But even where we are open to conviction, a new difficulty arises; for so much of what seems essential in the disposition and appearance of things has to be referred to local peculiarities and expunged from the alphabet of general conceptions; and so much deemed fabulous and Utopian, admitted within the domains of certainty, that we are puzzled to understand the limits of variety; and to know what should be held essential, and what accidental, in the circumstances and constitution of things.

These obstacles, either the one or the other of them, beset every stay-at-home. The first makes us sceptics beyond the point of our nose—the last may render us liable to be imposed upon by every traveller's story. Nothing but the constant effort to extend the range of our observation, can at last accomplish the desired object, and enable us to believe—and disbelieve—as we ought.

It is peculiarly difficult for the North-western mind to travel southwards and eastwards. Many things conspire to cause this. Not only is the aspect of nature different—almost opposite—in the two quarters, but the very constitution of man, as a physical and intellectual being, is utterly dissimilar; and nothing short of the knowledge that certain high and paramount characteristics are common to the inhabitants of both, can satisfy us that we are indeed members of one great family. The races are as much apart in natural modes of thought as

they are in manners, appearance, costume, habits, and geographical position: it would seem as if a difference, resembling that recognized to exist between the analogous animal and vegetable productions of widely-separated climates, obtained in the human species, and forbid identity, while it pointed to affinity. Added to which, the imagination of western Europe has ever received its chief supply from the treasures of the Levant; the poetry of the Bible derives its matchless images from the regions that surround it—the rhapsodies of Homeric genius draw upon the same sources—all that is most ideal in sacred and classic literature, has its birth-place beneath the sun of those favoured climes. Nay, those tales of mediæval heroism, which added the last charm to chivalry, by removing its achievements from the scene of ordinary actions, have their *locale* in the same or neighbouring lands, and thus serve still further to isolate and spiritualize them in the occidental heart, and give them a place, not beside, but above, the realities of our creed.

But, if it be difficult, in north-western Europe generally, to adapt itself to such conceptions, how much more must the inability be felt in *this* country, where all those points of dissimilarity are found in the extreme, which in their less striking development dissociate man from his brother of the south and east! How much harder is it for us, beneath our cloudy skies and in our humid atmosphere, to realize a clime where the recreation of life is in shade, and in the cooling flow of waters, instead of in warmth and in sunshine! where the day is shunned as intolerable to human endurance, and the night courted as the season of occupation, amusement, and exertion!—where the earth cultivates itself, and man's few wants are supplied by the trouble of stretching forth the hand!—where the hours are passed in

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the luxurious dream of listless tranquillity, and no pleasure is associated with physical or mental effort! How doubly impossible it is for us to believe that there exist countries in which poverty is unknown, and charity is at a loss how to put into practice the requirements of its creed! Yet, in the volume before us, we have all this, and more than this, made manifest to us—and that by one who has not derived the facts she details from questionable sources, or at second-hand from others, but who grounds on the experience of seven years the authenticity of her relation; and has, during that time, herself been witness to much of the stirring incident and living romance she so graphically describes.

The book is a delightful one. This every one will see; but it derives an additional value from the long apprenticeship the authoress had served before she attempted to "sketch" for the public. She had become thoroughly conversant with the history, politics, manners, and customs of Greece, during the extended period of her residence in that country; so that when, on the point of leaving it, she began to note down what she saw, she had a store of knowledge to fall back upon, which illustrates every page, giving all throughout a peculiar meaning and propriety to her least-considered expressions and remarks.

In illustration of what we have said respecting the marvellous dissimilarity of man's life in these favoured regions from what we find it here, and of his exemption from those evils which are most constantly and prominently brought before our eyes, we may cite the following passages, which occur in describing those country villages, whither the inhabitants of Athens betake themselves during the prevalence of the Sirocco wind, after the termination of the carnival:—

"Those mountain refuges, how cool and fresh, and yet how sunny and how bright they are! Those little nests, embosomed in the green luxuriant hills, with their gardens of myrtle and pomegranate, and their sombre olive groves, which the singing birds so haunt! Where, through the unchanging glory of the long Grecian summer, we may dwell, sheltered and at rest; half forgetting, as our eyes grow accustomed

to the eternal cloudlessness of that sky, where the serene smile is fixed as on the face of the dead who have departed in peace, that there are climes less favoured, where tempests and mists disfigure the fair face of heaven, and dark clouds blot out the sunshine with tears, as though they wept for a fallen world!

"Still more we are apt to forget, as the spirit learns insensibly to share in the deep peace that hangs over those quiet spots, so utterly apart from the world and its fierce restlessness, that elsewhere there are storms raging which are not borne from the whirlwind, or cradled in the caverns of the north, but which man in his madness or his arrogance can raise, who has the power to blast this fair nature, and turn its pure waters into blood, by the excess of those passions to which he makes himself a most degraded slave, when in arms against the stern destiny that would discipline his soul.

"Even the distant echoes of that ceaseless agitation, which seems the very atmosphere in which men breathe most freely when struggling to their tombs, led on by false ambition or misguided impulses—these all die away long before they reach our lonely resting-places, where the monotony of life is as undisturbed as the cloudlessness of heaven.

"All of human nature that surrounds us is the scanty population of the village peasantry, whose profound and unaffected ignorance and honest superstition are an unspeakable relief, after having been continually brought in contact with the spirit of small and pitiful intrigue, which poisons every thing in the capital.

"It is a strange dreamy kind of life that we lead in those mountain solitudes, which, charming as it is, presents perhaps too few opportunities for advancing in intellectual improvement or benefiting others, to be altogether desirable.

"Each day is unvarying in its occupations and amusements; for each day the gorgeous sunrise bursts into life with the same sublime pageant at its birth, and we must never fail to wake while still the soft night hovers on pitying wings over the weary world it has lulled to slumber, that we may go out and look from some favourable point on a spectacle so beautiful. We must watch the first faint glow, stealing over the far-distant shadowy isle of Egina, that seems to heave upon the bosom of the waters as though quivering with rapture beneath the smile of the morning; and see in breathless admiration how the pure light of the new-born day, gliding from wave to wave, carries its bright presence over that blue slumbering ocean, and onward comes, sweeping the

plains with its golden robes, till even the waving of the dark olive groves in the breeze looks like the rising and falling of a silver sea. And then, advancing still, the infant rays illuminate that old Acropolis, so distant, though nothing on the unbroken plain can hide it from our view; and straightway the noble Parthenon starts into life, each glittering column defined against the clear blue sky, as though with a magic touch the sunbeams had but just created it! A few minutes more, and the great mountain which overshadows us, itself is clothed in sunlight, and not only the darkness is a thing that was and is not, but we can scarce believe that ever it shall be again!

"This unrivalled sight must be seen every day; and every day the indispensable siesta must beguile those hours when the world seems to hang breathless in the burning air, subdued into utter lifelessness by the tremendous noon-day sun, at the very hour when it is wont to be most busy and bustling; and when at last the day is waning, and the sea has drawn down that terrible sun to its breast, alluring it with the semblance in its depths of a heaven still fairer than the fair reality, joyfully welcoming the darkness in which there is no gloom—what better can we do than mount our horses and ride to a certain height on the trackless mountain, where first we meet the cool breath of the night as it comes sighing for the departed day.

"Nor can we vary the long vigil on the terrace, or the roof of the house, during those lovely hours of unspeakable repose, when we sit watching the mighty constellations, those hieroglyphics of the skies, as they unfold one by one their glittering scroll, or track the flight of the wandering stars, the bright voyagers from heaven, as they traverse the spheres on their mysterious errands.

"It is thus that the days flit by in the summer homes of Greece. There is so little variation that we should scarcely mark the flight of time, but for the ever-working nature that replaces the wild scarlet anemones with the pomegranate blossom which seems to inherit their bloom, and these again with the star-like myrtle flowers and bright oleander.

"The good peasants, too, remind us often that the seasons do not languish, for they never fail to bring us the first produce of their labours—the fresh almonds and green figs, the cool water-melons, and finally the grapes. Of these there is soon such a profusion, that the very dogs, who in this country

are singularly partial to the fruit of the vine, may go and riot in the vineyards, till even they are satisfied."

"Another peculiarity of the summer life in Greece is, that while we are enjoying it, we would seem, to all outward appearance, to be utterly exempt from the ordinary "ills that flesh is heir to." Everywhere else, even if we carry so light a heart in our own bosom that we are disposed to doubt if indeed a burden is too surely laid on every mortal, we are certain at least to see such bitter suffering in those around us, from the palpable evils of penury and want, disease and crime, that we shall learn to suffer from their reflected misery. But here it is not so: poverty seems actually unknown. Not that the simple Greek peasant is rich, unless it be that negative riches which they may be said to find in their security from all material wants, produced by the benign climate and the abundant nature.

"In the summer they greatly prefer, as I have said, their couch in the open air, to the most sumptuous dwelling which their fancy could picture. They gather beneath the olive trees, which shed their ready fruits upon their very head—the greater part of their simple food. The light clothing they require is an hereditary possession, descending from father to son; and thus, having food and raiment, they are therewith abundantly content.

"The result of this is, that I believe there is no country in the world where beggary is so little known. Systematic begging does actually not exist, excepting in the case of one blind old mendicant, certainly the richest man of my acquaintance, who sits all day in the portico of the Temple of Theseus at Athens, and majestically receives the alms which every one hastens to bestow on him—too happy to find a legitimate object on whom to exercise the duty of charity, so strictly enjoined by their church."

Is it possible, we are inclined to ask ourselves, after reading such passages as these, that such climes and such beings exist indeed upon earth at this day—that the *aurea atas* of poetry retains the shape and substance of reality, contemporaneously with the smoke, and the dust, and the crime, and the poverty of this "working-day world" of ours? That the region of iron is not co-extensive with the limits of man's earthly dominion; that there are favoured spots, which seem to have

escaped the general curse, and bloom for the children of Adam with the fruits and the flowers of Paradise?

But, as we proceed we arrive at last, at the inevitable truth, which gradually disenchant us, exhibiting the adjustment of the lot of humanity, by revealing the dark side of the picture, and showing horrors and sufferings from which the majority of those nations that are denied the delights here pictured, have happily been long exempt:—

“One of the most striking peculiarities of a residence in Greece at the present day, is the close proximity into which we are brought with its great Revolution, that noble struggle for independence.

“It is true that the long wild strife is over at last, and that all is quiet now. But although the great gaunt Spectre of War has been exorcised and laid to rest, which once stalked, rapacious and fierce, through the length and breadth of the land, still there is not a family, nor scarce an individual, on whom it has not left the mark of its blood-stained fingers, as it dragged on its desolating steps.

“So that now a residence in Greece, is, in some sense, like a journey over some great plain, where a battle once has been; and where, though now the wild flowers are blooming there in beauty, and the streams are rushing clear, our steps ever disturb some broken arrow-head, or shattered spear, the fragment of a tattered banner, or it may be some dead warrior's skull.”

Catastrophes have, in fact, occurred on this classic and favoured soil, in comparison with which the most sanguinary revolutions of nations nearer home are tame. Every family has its own dark and dismal history—a romance of calamity, that renders many of the unhappy survivors monuments—monuments which bear engraved on their memories and on their countenances the tale of woes which have desolated, for them, the paradise that surrounds them.

Let us take a case, by no means an extreme one—that of one of the most interesting personages in Greece, a representative of those brave old palikari, who were leaders in the liberation of their country:—

“Petrobey, the good old Bey of Maina, has lived to see the most of his com-

rades in arms depart to answer a sterner call than ever brought them to the battle-field, conquered at last by the very power they once used against their enemies. He has lived on after a stirring and eventful life to a cheerful old age, yet he must have fearful recollections too, that simple, kind-hearted noble old man; there has been *one* hour in his life whose memory must surely blot out and obscure all other happier moments in his existence. It is that in which he was brought before the narrow window of his prison by the gaolers, and forced to look down upon his brave and beautiful son, ‘the light of his eyes,’ as he called him (and yet not less, alas! the assassin of the President Cappa d'Istria), as he came forth with firm step and dauntless eye, to perish in all the strength and beauty of his manhood, by the hands of the common executioners.

“The father, uttering no word to betray his inward agony to the tormentors who could condemn him to so unnatural a torture, was doomed to follow all the details of this horrible scene, even to the last, with that fascinated gaze which could not choose but rivet itself on the very sight that was rending his heart. He saw George Mavromicali, universally acknowledged to have been as gallant and noble a young man as ever trod the earth, and remarkable for his personal beauty, come forth surrounded by the soldiers, whose muskets were already loaded to take from that beloved son the life which he had given him. As they passed under the windows of the prison, the young man looked up, and their eyes met; the distance between them was too great to admit of more than an interchange of looks, but the father stretched out his arms through the narrow bars, to show how he yearned to twine them round the form about to be delivered up to the embrace of death, and the son lifted up his beautiful countenance, glowing with ardour and enthusiasm, and answered him with a fond, sweet smile, so that there was far more eloquence in that voiceless farewell than words could ever have conveyed.

“Then Petrobey saw him pass on, and stand in the open space reserved for him: he heard him address the crowd with quiet cheerfulness, telling them how willingly he died in the cause of liberty; and finally, raising his eyes, which seemed to reflect the serenity of that blue sky, to the smiling heaven, he uttered a prayer for his country so touchingly beautiful, that not one could hear it unmoved; even from the stern breasts of the hardy soldiers deep sobs were heard to burst; but the father wept not a tear,

not even when, rending the still sunny air, the pealing volley did its work of death, and the child of his love, a moment before so full of life and spirit, sunk down a mangled corpse. Poor old man! I could not help thinking to-day, as I sat by his side, how often in the silence of night, the mournful accents of his murdered son's last prayer must seem to rise upon his ear; how often through his eyes, closed in troubled sleep, must flash that smile which, like the last ray of the sun about to set in night, beamed on the fair face that so soon was darkened in death."

Another appalling instance is related as having occurred during the last insurrection in Crete. The following observations, suggested by the first view of Scio, introduce the story:—

"I could scarce believe, as I looked on this smiling spot, that it was indeed the scene of that dreadful massacre, the horrors of which have been so repeatedly detailed. This shocking episode of modern history was sufficiently striking to have been well known, even in our own distant country, but it is strange how many of these frightful events, involving the fate of thousands, have often scarcely been heard of beyond the limit where the echo of the very cannon itself has died away."

It was some years previous that the incident recorded occurred to the authoress, on the occasion of a visit to the island of Naxos:—

"I had taken refuge from the heat with my brother in an open khan or café, as it is called, and we entered into conversation with some Greeks who were sitting there smoking. We asked if all was quiet now in Crete; they answered that it was, and were continuing to talk on the subject, when a groan was suddenly heard to proceed from another part of the room, which startled us all. We looked round, and saw a spectre-like figure slowly rising from a corner. It was a tall, wretched-looking man, broken down and emaciated, and quite lame from a gun-shot wound in the knee; he was miserably clad, and he came forward leaning on a stick, and drawing the remnant of an old capote round him. The Greeks made way for him with looks of compassion, and bid him tell us his history, since we were interested in the state of Crete. He complied at once, and sat down beside us; but I never shall forget the recital, for there

is nothing so painful as to see a strong man weep, and the large tears rolled over his sunburnt cheeks as he spoke. He said that he was a Cretan, and that he had lived quietly and happily with his mother and sister in an isolated part of the island, cultivating his vineyard, and taking no concern with what was going on without. When the insurrection broke out, he still remained in his own little house, which was at some distance from any village, feeling his presence to be necessary for the protection of his family, as the Turks, infuriated, spared neither man, woman, nor child; but one day, a party of Greek soldiers stopped to refresh themselves at his cottage, after a skirmish in which they had been engaged, and they taunted him so bitterly for thus remaining inert when his countrymen were sacrificing their lives in the cause of liberty, that, stung to the very soul, he seized his sword and left the house with them, in spite of the frantic entreaties of his mother and sister. For a few days he was engaged in continual fighting with his new companions in the neighbourhood of Suda Bay; at last the wound, from which he was still suffering when we saw him, disabled him so completely, that he was forced to relinquish his post and return home. With much difficulty, after two days' journey, he reached his house, or rather, the spot where it had once been, for a few smoking and blackened ruins were all that now remained of his pretty cottage and fertile vineyard: utterly overcome at the sight, he staggered on, scarcely knowing where he went; an agony of fear as to the fate of those most dear to him, paralysed him so completely, that he could not even call to them by name to relieve his suspense; but as he reached the heap of mouldering stones that marked the threshold of his once happy home, his feet stumbled on a sudden obstacle in his path; mechanically he stooped down, and his eye lit on the mangled body of his mother, already quite stiff and cold. His young sister he never saw more, she had been carried off by the Turks; he himself, thus completely deprived of all his former means of subsistence, infirm and broken-hearted, with difficulty made his escape from the distracted country, and came to Naxos, where he still lives on charity. And this is but one individual out of the vast numbers whose utter ruin was effected by this revolt, so casually mentioned, and so soon forgotten."

Thus we learn to be reconciled to the absence of every-day enchantments, by seeing that it also shields us from those dreadful tempests which "thun-

derstrike" the happiness of the communities wherein they occur. Life at home is without its poetry, perhaps; but it thus escapes the episode of anguish, and the tragic catastrophe. The imagination, unexcited by what it sees and hears without, turns in upon itself, and in a peaceful internal domain, creates and peoples its own romance; while the reason, having larger scope and ampler grounds for exercise, elevates our intellectual and moral being to regions far more truly sublime than even the heroic localities of Attica and Peloponessus.

Although the narrative of our author commences only a few days previous to her leaving Athens, and extends as far as to her arrival in Vienna, much the most instructive portion of the volume is occupied by Greece and its islands. This is easily accounted for; and may be understood by referring to our opening observations. Elsewhere she was like other observers—here she had been for years a resident and an explorer; and for a great part of her incidents, and almost all her views, she has drawn on previously-acquired materials. On this account we prefer taking our extracts mainly from the earlier chapters, which relate to that country.

The descriptions of the ceremony of the "Anastasin," or resurrection, on Easter Eve, and of night in Greece, are so full of eloquence, and give such interesting and beautiful pictures of life and nature that they will not bear mutilation:—

"Happily any one who resides in Greece is tempted to abandon the theory, that human hopes are liable to disappointment, at least as far as regards the weather; so certain is he, if he wishes for a fine day, to see it arrive smiling and warm; not a vacillating, deceitful fine day, such as in England sometimes tempts out an unwary pleasure hunter, seemingly for the express purpose of maliciously deluging him half an hour after with unexpected rain, but a day indisputably fine, with a sunshine so determinately strong, that it is evident no cloud could have the power to extinguish one single ray. And Easter Eve was as gloriously starry and cloudless as could have been desired.

"It is, indeed, a wonderful thing, a summer's night in Greece, or rather the space between the setting and the rising of the sun, for it cannot be called night where there is no darkness, no chilling

dews, no sleep. People sleep during the hot languid hours of the day, and they are thankful to wake, that they may revive under the delicious influence of the faint night-breezes, so mild, so soft, that they seem to be but the gentle breathing of the earth in its slumber; we cannot call it night, but yet it is not day, though the whole heavens are glowing with the intense brightness of the great stars, hanging so motionless in the unfathomable depths of dark unclouded blue, and the very air is filled with light from innumerable meteors shooting to and fro. It is not day, for there is a solemn, a profound repose, which day could never know: the very spirit of rest seems to go forth over the earth, hushing not only the winds and waves, but causing every leaf on the sombre olive-trees or green myrtle-bushes to lie still, as though spell-bound; and the starlight, radiant as it is, has a softness which tempers all on the wide-spreading landscape that might be harsh or abrupt in a more glaring light. Wherever it may be seen, a calm summer's night is assuredly one of the most beautiful things in nature; but there is something peculiar in the influence it has on the mind in Greece, which I have nowhere else experienced; there is such purity in the sky, the air, the light, such a holy tranquillity on all around, that the strife of life seems suddenly stilled, the fire of human passion quenched, and the most perturbed of spirits could not fail to partake somewhat of so intense a rest.

"Saturday gave promise of just such a night as this, and at nine o'clock we proceeded down the principal street on our way to the cathedral, where were already assembled not only the whole population of the town, but that of the neighbouring villages also, who always repair to Athens for this solemnity. A platform had been erected at a short distance from the church-door, where the king and queen, with the bishops and other priests, stand during the latter part of the ceremony. When we arrived, they were still in the church, which was filled just as it had been the night before. Outside, the crowd was dense, and we obtained places on a balcony directly opposite to the cathedral, from whence we witnessed one of the most striking spectacles I have ever beheld.

"Still continuing to follow the great events of Passion Week in their solemn rotation, the Saviour was yet supposed to be within his tomb, and the same perfect stillness was maintained, the same darkness and gloom prevailed over every thing. There was not a light, not a sound; each individual of that immense

multitude, filling even all the adjoining streets, remained still and motionless, so that even the most distant might catch the murmuring voices of the priests, who were reciting the service within the church; troops lined the streets to see that perfect quiet was maintained, but assuredly it was a needless precaution, for there was not one present who did not seem to share in a general feeling of gloom and depression, as though a heavy cloud were hanging over all things; and so complete was the realization of all that these ceremonies are intended to convey, that I am certain that the power of death, still so awfully manifest in these last tedious hours, was present with each one of them.

"As midnight approached, the archbishop, with his priests, accompanied by the king and queen, left the church and stationed themselves on the platform, which was raised considerably from the ground, so that they were distinctly seen by the people. Every one now remained in breathless expectation, holding their unlighted tapers in readiness when the glad moment should arrive, while the priests still continued murmuring their melancholy chant in a low half-whisper. Suddenly a single report of a cannon announced that twelve o'clock had struck, and that Easter Day had begun; then the old archbishop, elevating the cross, exclaimed in a loud, exulting tone, 'Christos anesti,' 'Christ is risen!' and instantly every single individual of all that host took up the cry, and the vast multitude broke through and dispelled for ever the intense and mournful silence which they had maintained so long, with one spontaneous shout of indescribable joy and triumph, 'Christ is risen!' 'Christ is risen!' At the same moment the oppressive darkness was succeeded by a blaze of light from thousands of tapers, which, communicating one from another, seemed to send streams of fire in all directions, rendering the minutest objects distinctly visible, and casting the most vivid glow on the expressive faces, full of exultation, of the rejoicing crowd; bands of music struck up their gayest strains; the roll of the drums through the town, and further on the pealing of the cannon, announced far and near these glad tidings of great joy; while from hill and plain, from the sea-shore and the far olive grove, rocket after rocket ascending to the clear sky, answered with their mute eloquence that Christ is risen indeed, and told of other tongues that were repeating those blessed words, and other hearts that leapt for joy; everywhere men clasped each other's hands, and congratulated one another,

and embraced with countenances beaming with delight, as though to each one separately some wonderful happiness had been proclaimed; and so in truth it was;—and all the while, rising above the mingling of many sounds, each one of which was a sound of gladness, the aged priests were distinctly heard chanting forth a glorious old hymn of victory, in tones so loud and clear, that they seemed to have regained their youth and strength to tell the world how 'Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death beneath his feet, and henceforth the entombed have everlasting life.'

"It is impossible to give any adequate idea of the effect of this scene."

In the month of April, 1845, the traveller and her party terminated their long residence in Athens, and embarked on board the Austrian steamer, which was to convey them to Syra. They quitted the Piræus on a fine summer's evening, and looked, it may be imagined, with some regret at the pillars of the "glorious old Parthenon," and those other objects which have an interest for every cultivated mind; but which for them were associated with the idea of the home of years. In the midst of the pathetic, however, flashes of humour occasionally break out; it is plain that the lady has somewhat of the *Dickens* quality of grouping her fellow-passengers into the grotesque, and dramatizing adventures into comedy. And, it must be owned, there was ample material for both. The young Englishman, just arrived from Jerusalem, who complained that he could not obtain so much as a *neat pair of boots in the holy city!*—the mad doctor, who insisted on half-poisoning all the passengers with his sovereign specific against sea-sickness—the French *litterateur*, who told so *very* good a story of Alexander Dumas—all these, and numberless other characters, are passed in review before us, and skilfully made to contribute to our amusement.

The following casual incident is characteristic:—

"The little cabin in which I was to pass the night was apart from the rest, but I found I was not to have it to myself, for as I went in, the curtain of one of the larger berths was gently drawn back, and displayed one of the very prettiest living pictures I had ever beheld. Two young girls, evidently Scots from their costume, were reclining



together wrapt in one large Turkish pelisse, and from amongst this mass of furs, nothing was to be seen but two beautiful heads and a profusion of marvellously long fair hair, twisted round their little red caps. They looked timidly at me with their almond-shaped blue eyes, and then, probably, thinking I could not understand them, resumed their conversation. There is a degree of unsophisticated simplicity peculiar to those islanders, which is very pleasing. These young Sciots displayed much of it as they talked together, and counted the hours which must yet elapse before they could see Scio, which seemed to be for them the fairest of spots. Presently the cabin door opened a little way, and a pleasing, venerable face, surmounted by a great turban, looked wistfully in. The intruder evidently knew he had no business there, but as I was sitting reading, his fine old head was gradually followed by the rest of his person, clothed in flowing Turkish robes, which are still worn in many of the islands. This was evidently the father, and his question, "are you asleep, my children?" received a vehement negative from the two lively girls, who poured forth a number of questions, and seemed most unwilling to allow him to leave them again. He also manifested a degree of paternal fondness, which corresponded well with what I had heard of the warmth and depth of feeling displayed by these islanders in the common relations of life. When I found that they were in a great fright at the notion of the steamer going on through the night, when the sailors could not possibly see their way, I overcame the reserve, which makes the English, when abroad, neglect many acts of kindness we would otherwise perform, and began to speak to them.

"Their father then left them quite relieved, and we became fast friends with that degree of rapidity with which friendships are made in those countries, and strange to say, are often very true and lasting. They told me their whole history, and talked merrily half the night—they had passed their lives in Scio, and never left till their mother died, a few months before, when their father took them to Syra for change of scene; now they were returning home to leave it no more, and fervently did they long for the first sight of their own dear island. When they found I had not yet seen it, they gave me a most poetic description of Scio, and of the life they led there; it was, without question, the most beautiful spot in the world, they said; to be sure they had never seen any other place, excepting Syra, yet still, nothing could be so charming as Scio; there were such vineyards and

gardens, so full of orange-trees and abundant streams of water; that it was delightful in the cool evening to go down and dance the Romaica on the sea-beach, and watch the fishermen at work by torchlight. They pitied me very much for not being a Sciote. I asked them if they had ever heard of Homer, and they said they had not; then one recollected that there was a Monsieur Homero, who had died there last year, and they did not doubt this was my friend; and so they rambled on, till the rocking of their rough cradle lulled them to rest, and then rolling themselves up in their great pelisse, they went snugly to sleep."

This set the lady ruminating, during which they arrived off Scio:—

"My reflections were interrupted by the two pretty Sciots, who came to take leave of me, with many vehement expressions of regret and regard. This would be considered extremely absurd after a twelve hours' acquaintance anywhere else; but amongst the natives of the burning East, the quick vivid feelings are soon aroused, and their glowing imagination carries them on readily to bestow their strong passionate affections, without dreaming of pausing, as we in the chilly north would do, to calculate prudently if the object be worthy of them. One may, doubtless, make many philosophical reflections on the certainty that sentiments so rapidly awakened, will be as evanescent as they are prompt; but not the less, this readiness of sympathy and warmth of expression do in truth cast a glow over life, and make this selfish world seem far less of a peopled wilderness, where all are mingling together, and yet each is most utterly alone, than it really is."

The Danube has been already ascended and descended by so many intelligent tourists, that there is little remaining to be added to our stock of knowledge respecting the external features of that great river. But the personal narrative of every traveller must be new: each individual sees from a different centre, and has things presented to the eye at a different angle. Some incidents, indeed, in the case of the book before us, *must* be novel, from the circumstance of the traveller's sex. Of these, "a visit to the harem" of the Pacha of Widdin, one of the principal and most populous towns in Bulgaria, is, perhaps, the most curious. A doctor who was on board had, it seems, some interest with this powerful Pacha, and exerted



it, on this occasion, to obtain permission for the lady to visit the sultana in her harem. Accordingly she proceeded from the palace, accompanied by the doctor, through a court in the midst of which a fountain was playing, to what seemed to be a separate building; and there the latter stopped, not even daring to cross the threshold, telling the lady at the same time that two negroes who presented themselves were to be her guides:—

“I did not half like being left alone in this strange-looking place, and would have remonstrated against his leaving me, but he looked perfectly terrified when I proposed it, and disappeared the moment the door was opened. The two slaves walked before me in silence, their eyes bent on the ground, through several passages, till we reached the foot of a stair, where they in their turn consigned me to two women who were waiting for me. One of these was the interpreter, a remarkably pretty woman, though immensely fat; and the other was, without exception, the most hideous old woman I ever beheld, whom I rightly guessed to be the duenna of the harem. They received me with the highest delight, and as though I were conferring a great honour upon them, fervently kissing my hands and the hem of my dress, in return for which I could only wish that they might live a thousand years, and never see a ‘bad hour.’ Seizing me by the hands, they dragged me in triumph up the stairs, and through several rooms to the audience-chamber of her Highness the Sultana. Like that of the pasha, it was furnished with a long divan, over which were spread two of the most splendid cashmere shawls I ever saw; several cushions were ranged on the floor, and the windows were all hermetically closed by the fatal screens of which we had heard so much. They are a sort of wooden lattice, but the open spaces are so very small that one can scarcely discern anything without.

“The women made me sit down; and when I placed myself in the usual European manner, they begged me in a deprecating tone, not to remain in that constrained position, but to put myself quite at my ease as if I were in my own house. How far I was at my ease, installed *à la Turque* on an immense pile of cushions, I leave to be imagined by any one who ever tried to remain five minutes in that posture. The interpreter now left me alone with the old woman, who crouched down on a cushion at my feet, and with the help of a few

words of Turkish, with which I was acquainted, she managed to give me quite as much information as I wished for, on the domestic life of Eiredeen Pasha’s large family.

“We were interrupted by the arrival of some fifteen or sixteen young slaves, who came running into the room, laughing and talking like a party of school girls, each one pausing at the door to make me the usual salutation, and then clustering together in groups to gaze at me with the most eager interest. They all wore the same dress, and certainly it looked on them most singularly graceful, as they stood in a sort of languishing, indolent attitude, with their arms folded, and their long almond-shaped eyes half closed. It consisted of a loose silk jacket, reaching to the waist, another underneath of a different colour falling below the knee, and finally, a pair of enormously wide trousers, either wholly red, or a mixture of gay colours, which almost covered their little yellow slippers. A silk handkerchief and various other ornaments were twisted in their hair, with quite as much genuine coquetry as is to be found in more civilized countries. Of all the number only three struck me as having any great claim to beauty; but certainly creatures more lovely than they were could nowhere have been seen. Two of them were Circassians, with long fair hair, and soft brown eyes; the other was, I think, a Georgian, very dark, with beautiful features, and the most haughty expression of countenance. It was evident that she was held in great respect, as the mother of a fine little boy whom she had in her arms. All of them had their nails dyed with that odious henna, with which they disfigure their hands and feet.

“Presently there was a strange shuffling noise heard without, a prodigious rustling of silk and satin, and the interpreter hurrying in, announced the sultana. The slaves fell back, and ranged themselves in order. I rose up, and her highness entered, preceded by two negro boys, and followed by half-a-dozen women. She was a tall, dignified-looking person, of some five-and-thirty, and far from handsome. Nothing could be more splendid than her dress, or more perfectly ungraceful. She wore a pair of light-blue silk trousers, so excessively large and wide, that it was with the greatest difficulty she could walk; over these, a narrow robe of red cashmere, covered with gold embroidery, with a border of flowers, also worked in gold, at least six inches wide. This garment was about five yards long, and open at the two sides as far as the knee, so that it swept on the ground in all directions.

Her waist was bound by a cashmere scarf, of great value; and from her shoulders hung an ample pelisse, of brown satin, lined with the most beautiful zibelline fur. Her head-dress was a silk handkerchief, embroidered with gold; and to complete her costume, she was literally covered with diamonds.

"She received me in the most amiable manner, though with great stateliness and dignity; and when I begged the interpreter to tell her highness how greatly I felt the honour she had done me in inviting me to visit her, her features relaxed into a smile, and dragging herself and her load of finery to the divan, she placed herself upon it, and desired me to sit beside her. I obeyed, and had then to recommence all the compliments and salutations I had gone through at the pasha's, with still greater energy; for I could see plainly that both herself and her slaves, who stood in a semicircle round us, were very tenacious of her dignity, and that they watched most critically every movement I made.

"I was determined, therefore, to omit nothing that should give them a high idea of my 'savoir vivre,' according to their own notions, and began by once more gravely accepting a pipe. At the pasha's, I had managed merely to hold it in my hand, occasionally touching it with my lips, without really using it; but I soon saw that, with some twenty pairs of eyes fixed jealously upon me, I must smoke here—positively and actually smoke—or be considered a violator of all the laws of good breeding. The tobacco was so mild and fragrant, that the penance was not so great as might have been expected; but I could scarcely help laughing at the ludicrous position I was placed in, seated in state on a large square cushion, smoking a long pipe, the other end of which was supported by a kneeling slave, and bowing solemnly to the sultana between almost every whiff.

"Coffee, sweetmeats, and sherbet (the most delightful of all pleasant draughts), were brought to me in constant succession by the two little negroes, and a pretty young girl, whose duty it was to present me the richly-embroidered napkin, the corner of which I was expected to make use of as it lay on her shoulder, as she knelt before me. These refreshments were offered to me in beautiful crystal vases, little gold cups, and silver trays, of which, for my misfortune, they seemed to possess a large supply, as I was obliged to go through a never-ending course of dainties, in order that they might have an opportunity of displaying them all.

"One arduous duty I felt it was quite

necessary I should perform, and this was, to bestow as much admiration on the sultana's dress as I knew she would expect me to feel; I therefore exhausted all my eloquence in praise of it, to which she listened with a pleased smile, and then, to my surprise, rose up and left the room. I was afraid I had offended her; but a few minutes after she returned, in a new costume, equally splendid and unbecoming, and I once more had to express my enthusiasm and delight, which seemed greatly to gratify her. She then returned the compliment, by minutely inspecting my own dress; and the slaves, forgetting all ceremony in their curiosity, crowded eagerly round me.

"My bonnet sadly puzzled them; and when, to please them, I took it off, they were most dreadfully scandalized to see me with my hair uncovered, and could scarcely believe that I was not ashamed to sit all day without a veil or handkerchief; they could not conceive, either, why I should wear gloves, unless it were to hide the want of henna, with which they offered to supply me.—They then proceeded to ask me the most extraordinary questions—many of which I really found it very difficult to answer. My whole existence was as incomprehensible to this poor princess, vegetating from day to day within her four walls, as that of a bird in the air must be to a mole burrowing in the earth. Her life consisted, as she told me, of sleeping, eating, dressing, and bathing. She never walked further than from one room to another; and I can answer for her not having an idea beyond the narrow limits of her prison. It is a strange and most unnatural state to which these poor women are brought, nor do I wonder that the Turks, whose own detestable egotism alone causes it, should declare that they have no souls.

"Her highness now sent for her children to show them to me, which proved that I was rapidly advancing in her good graces; and, as I luckily knew well that I must not look at them without pronouncing the wish that they might live for ever, in case I should have an evil eye, she was well disposed to receive all my praises of them, and to allow me to caress them. She had four fine little children, and the eldest of them, a boy of six years old, was so perfect a miniature of his father, that it was quite ludicrous. He was dressed exactly in the same way, wearing even a little sword; and he came in bowing with so precisely the same dignified manner, that I really should as soon have thought of offering *bons-bons* to the

pasha himself, as to this imposing little personage.

"My attention to the children quite won the heart of the sultana, and she desired the interpreter to tell me that we were henceforth to be 'sisters;' and I was obliged to receive this addition to my family connexions with becoming delight; she also wished me to be informed that she had once seen a Christian at Constantinople, and that she was not at all like me. I thought this very likely; but I was growing very anxious to terminate my visit, which had lasted, with its interminable ceremonies, nearly two hours. The sultana was very unwilling to let me go; but when I insisted, for I thought the patience of my companions must be quite exhausted, she once more rose and left the room; in a few minutes the interpreter returned, and kneeling down, kissed my hand, and then passed a most beautiful diamond ring on my finger, which she said the sultana begged me to keep, though it was quite unworthy of her 'sister.' I was much shocked at the idea of taking it, for it was a ring of very great value; and though I ought to have known that in Turkey it was an insult to refuse a present, I could not help remonstrating.

"The sultana came in herself to bid me farewell, and I endeavoured to return it to her, but she frowned in a way which really frightened me, and commanded the slave to tell me that doubtless it was not good enough for me, and that since I wished for something better, a more valuable present should be found. This settled the question, of course, and I put on the ring, and went to take leave. She had seated herself, and received my parting compliment in great state; her last speech was to beg that I would tell the people of England always to recollect that if they came to Widdin, it would suffice that they were my countrymen to ensure their having a friend in Eiredeen pasha. I then touched her hand, and passed out of the room without turning my back to her, whilst the slaves kissed my hands again and again."

To revert once more to our main topic. It is of importance for many reasons, practical and political as well as moral, that a just estimate should from time to time be afforded of the value to be attached to commonly-received notions respecting countries with which we are not in immediate contact, and which are in a state of national transition and progress. Of such countries the most remarkable on every account is Greece. And to obtain such views

we must turn, not to the hasty statements of travellers, who enter ignorantly upon a scene to them full of novelty and romance, and who are liable to have their vision distorted by every false medium; but to the testimony of those who have had the leisure and opportunity to obtain accurate information, with the ability to draw general conclusions from it, and form an opinion on just and adequate grounds. The writer of this volume laboured from the first to disabuse her own mind of vague and pre-conceived impressions, and has investigated in a liberal spirit the institutions, manners, and creed of a country wherein she was so long a resident; and as she has arrived at some conclusions in a measure subversive of popular notions, it will be well to recapitulate some of these, in order to set the public mind right on the subject.

It must be remembered that she took up her sojourn in Greece at a period when that country had but just rescued itself from the degrading thralldom that had erased the name of Hellas from the catalogue of the nations. It was some time before the emancipated captive could shake off the moral stupor in which he had so long existed; and it was with intense interest that the first faint efforts of freedom were observed—the growing consciousness of independence—the habituation of a people to think, feel, and act for itself. Prejudices gave way in the observer's mind—conviction was forced upon it—the truth became manifest; and the final impression left was, that *if Greece had fair play*, it would yet work out a noble destiny.

I. In the first place, the society of Greece has acquired in an incredibly short space of time a polish and refinement, which is universally acknowledged as one of the characteristic evidences of a growing civilization. The youthful Grecians travel, mix with the world, seek education where it is best to be had; and bring back to their country an amount of knowledge and experience which obliterates every local peculiarity except the love of country, and enthusiasm in her cause.

II. Besides all this, the circumstances of the country itself—its old and glorious associations, and the noble monuments of classic antiquity which meet the eye on every side,

serve to give a tone of dignity and elevation to general conversation, which has no small effect in moulding the national character.

It seems to the Greek to be almost impossible to think or act meanly in the presence of such a literature and such a *locale* as his. He is, as it were, in an amphitheatre, from which the glories of five-and-twenty centuries look down upon him. He represents, in his own eye, a long line of heroes, whose ancestral renown he is bound to uphold; and he is strong in the determination not to disgrace such an illustrious pedigree by one unworthy act or thought.

Nor is this honorable feeling expended in martial enthusiasm alone. The modern Greek is as earnest in his endeavour to reform social, moral, and political abuses, as he was to shed his blood in his country's cause; and the result is manifest from day to day, in the improvement everywhere perceptible in the national institutions, especially those connected with education. The university, lately established, is flourishing, and schools are opened wherever a fair prospect presents itself of obtaining scholars.

III. Connected with the preceding observations, is the improved condition of the priesthood in Greece. The sacerdotal body is now offered the means of general as well as spiritual enlightenment: and as that church has, in the midst of the grossest superstition, ever "kept the true faith as a precious gem in a rough casket," good hopes may be entertained that she may yet emerge from her comparative darkness as a pure and apostolic branch of the universal church.

IV. The domestic morality of the Greeks has ever been more pure than among the Turks. It has of late years been sensibly improving, and patterns of true fidelity and affection are to be found in most of the families throughout the country.

To all these instances of advancement, most of them not at all or very imperfectly understood in this country, may be added the almost total cessation of *brigandage* throughout Greece. An unprotected person may now travel from one extremity of the land to the other, as safely as through the best parts of England; and so rare is crime of an aggravated dye, that capital punishment is scarcely known. Indeed, the odium in which it is held renders it extremely difficult for government to procure any one to undertake the office of executioner. The difficulties of other kinds experienced some years ago in travelling through Greece, too, are now in many places altogether removed, and in the rest rapidly disappearing. The roads are good, the horses sound, and easily procured, and the way-side accommodation respectable. The saddle is still the approved mode of conveyance; and the traveller who is not inured to it must expect to suffer occasionally from fatigue and exhaustion, especially during the hours nearest to noon; but he has few of those vexatious hindrances and exhausting privations to impede him, which the most enterprising tourist had to encounter fifteen years ago.

Let us hope that all these indications may be an earnest of something to come: that Greece may not only exhibit progress, but attain a proud position; that as she once shone out a sun amidst the darkness, she may yet again shine, a star in the constellation of the nations; that, small as she is, she may be enabled to resist the encroachments of the great and grasping powers that surround her; and that, if she be singly unequal to the struggle, she may claim and obtain the assistance of that remote, but ever-present and influential empire, which has witnessed with such intense and glowing interest the spirit of early Greece reviving in the bosoms of her sons.

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