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TURKEY AND SYRIA REBORN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TURKEY IN TRAVAIL

THE MOSQUE OF THE ROSES

THE BODLEY HEAD

TURKEY AND SYRIA REBORN

A RECORD OF TWO YEARS OF TRAVEL

By HAROLD ARMSTRONG
WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUS-
TRATIONS AND SKETCH-MAP

LONDON

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PREFACE

FROM the date of the signing of the Armistice between the British and the Turks at Mudros in October 1918 the Ottoman Empire began to decompose rapidly. It had long been dead, but its dead body, artificially preserved by the European Powers for their own ends, had lain, stifling all beneath it, strewn out across the whole Middle East.

From that date, also, within the decomposing mass there appeared the stirrings of new life; states and countries began to struggle into existence. Some, such as Syria and Iraq, were artificially constructed by the Peace Conference and their life-blood was pumped into them. Others, such as the kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula, and above all the Turkish Republic, were begotten by their own strivings and brought through the agonies of travail to birth by their own strength.

During those years of agony and confused effort, from 1918 to 1923, I was in a position to know and judge the facts and in intimate contact with the chief personalities. In my *Turkey in Travail* I have tried to describe their dramatic history. For the next four years I was forced to live in Europe, and then in 1927 I returned as one of the delegates of the Commission for Assessment of War Damage.

My letter of appointment came on a January day. London was chilly and drear with rain and fog, which seemed to have darkened the world for weeks; and my soul leapt at the thought of sun, of the taste in the nostrils of stale dust newly sprinkled by the water-carriers in Eastern alley-ways, of all the confusion and bustle as the caravans swung out of dark gateways on to roads coming grey in

the false dawn. The thrill and drive of vagabondage pulsed hot through my blood once more. Moreover, my duties would put me in touch both with the rulers and officials and with the ordinary townsmen and villagers. I had a unique opportunity of seeing how these countries, where I had worked and dreamed my dreams when it seemed as if the whole world was to be reborn, had developed in their new life.

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This book is a record of many months of travel. It is not a learned treatise. I have not tried to make an encyclopædia of facts nor a logical study of politics, antiques or history. But I have taken my reader as my fellow-traveller. Together we have climbed up into the mountains of the pagan Nusairi, wandered in the bazaars and alleys of great cities, toiled across deserts, and talked with all manner of men. And he must paint his own pictures and form his own opinions from what he has seen and heard as we journeyed together in reborn Turkey and Syria.

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I left London without regret. Kent was a squall of rain; the Channel was grey with angry churned waves; the *pavé* streets of Paris gleamed with wet; in Milan there was an evil cold wind. From Brindisi I took ship for Syria and steamed out with a light spirit. Behind me lay Europe, with its slag-heaps of cities; overhead was the wide sky and the wind drumming in the rigging, and ahead the open road.

H. A.

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CORRIGENDA.

- P. 40, l. 8: for *petit bourgeoisie* read *petite bourgeoisie*.
P. 50, third line from bottom: for *Merhab* read *Merkab*.
P. 51, l. 7: for *Quadmus* read *Qadmus*.
P. 140, eighth line from bottom: for *Kartal* read *Katl*.
P. 194, bottom line: for *Prima Vera* read *Primo de Rivera*.
P. 200, l. 18: for *infidèles* read *infidèles*.
P. 220, l. 21: for *pitaïff* read *pilaïff*.
P. 237, l. 16: for *ajubaldjis* read *arzubaldjis*.
Index, p. 268: for *Prima Vera* read *Primo de Rivera*.
Index, p. 268: for *Quadmus* read *Qadmus*.

CHAPTER I

BEYROUTH AND THE DRUSES

AT dawn we steamed into the harbour of Beyrouth—a grimy little harbour inside a low breakwater and crowded with Arab sailing craft. It had rained during the night and the sailors had loosened the sails, which swung crumpled and dishevelled as they dried in the pale morning sunlight. Two French destroyers, hung with the week's washing, and badly needing a coat of paint—for the Republic is always remarkably stingy with its paint, and there is nothing so dingy and untidy as a French ship-of-war in port—were moored to a quay.

From the sea Beyrouth was a pleasant place of red-roofed houses, topped by a church or two, the minarets of a mosque and some graceful palms, and close behind it the Lebanon mountains rose sheer to the snows. But inside it was a mongrel sea-port without beauty or attraction.

It was a town without a soul, with the hard, blatant, vulgar character of a Marseilles dancing-girl; a sea-port whose only excuse for existence was that, like some noisy railway station, it was a stage to better things beyond and a convenient collecting place for the wealth of the country behind it. The French had made it the centre of their administration, but it was in no way typical of the country or of the people.

I stayed not one minute longer than was necessary, and hiring a car, fled from its stench-laden, damp climate, which robbed me of will-power and energy.

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"Do we take the road for *Sham*?" asked my driver politely, and not waiting for an answer, with all the reckless daring of the Syrian chauffeur he drove headlong down the crowded streets, twisting between the banging, racing trams, swinging his wheel savagely over to avoid running down the careless pedestrians, bouncing over the pot-holes and the cobbles of the atrocious streets.

The town was full of cars of every make, principally American. The higher the horse-power and the turn of speed, and the more noise they would make with the exhaust open, the more the Syrians delighted in them. I found out from the chauffeur that they were bought on a liberal instalment system, but as trade was rapidly growing worse, the cars were being run in competition at rates that could not possibly pay, and as the owners had no money, there was coming a time in the near future when the agents would be snowed under with old cars which had been raced to pieces in a few months. When I told the chauffeur this he shrugged his shoulders: they had the cars, why worry about the carless to-morrow?—and he rushed through a crowd of Arabs, hooting and cursing filthily at them for daring to be in the way.

"That is the road to *Sham*!" he said, pointing ahead as we reached the edge of the town, and suddenly I was thrilled. The road to *Sham*! To the Great City of Damascus! I had dreamt often of the day that I should visit it.

We climbed the steep mountain that towered above us sheer as a cliff, by a road that zigzagged across its face. On every side the hilltops and ridges were covered with villages and gardens full of fruit trees, and there was an abundance of water. The hillsides were covered with a myriad of little fields, each terraced up to prevent it slipping down into the ravines. At one point three men, the tails of their shirt-like dresses girt up round them as loin-cloths, and all three working at one long-handled spade, two with ropes and the third at the handle,

were retrieving a field. The rain had broken a wall the night before, and the field was now some ten barrow-loads of earth strewn out on a piece of bare rock twenty feet lower down. Laboriously they shovelled it into baskets and carried it back into place.

At Alayia we halted. It was a straggling village along a crest, where the air was fresh and vigorous, and here the French administration and the rich of Beyrouth came to escape the fœtid heat of the shore, which becomes a pestilential oven in the summer. I looked back. Below me the mountains ran down sheer, and the terraced fields gave them the look of a contoured map. The shore-plain, a narrow strip between the mountains and the sea, covered close with villages and gardens, stretched away north into the misted horizon. The sea was a sheet of grey steel, and a few sailing craft were unfurling their sails to catch the early breeze under the foot of the mountains.

Beyond Alayia, and still climbing steeply, we turned south off the main road into the country of the Druses, for there I had property to investigate.

We travelled through a fierce hard country of great gorges, of immense, resentful, rocky mountains, broken into ravines and reaching right up to the snows which cap the Lebanon for three-quarters of the year. There were only a few trees, some pine and scrub, and the rest was barren stones and rocks. Except where the French had built them to control the country, the roads were rough, now running dangerously along the edge of some tremendous ravine, and now down into a valley where there would be a little cultivation and a naked village. It was a difficult and an evil country in which to fight, and the Druses had been a stubborn, resentful enemy of the French.

They had always hated the French. Their ancient enemies were the Maronites, who lived more to the north. In 1860, incited by the Turks, they had set out to massacre the Maronites. The European Powers had

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intervened, and France had adopted the Maronites as her protégés, and forced the Sultan to make them into an independent state within the Ottoman Empire, but looking to France as their protector. Almost automatically the Druses had looked to England for help. In 1919 they opposed the French mandate, and in 1925, when General Sarrail, the French High Commissioner, began to treat them roughly, interfere with their old privileges and insult them, they flamed out into fierce revolt.

They are mysterious people who have never let any foreigner into their confidence. Courageous, persistent in their enmity and good fighters in their barren hills, they are at heart half-nomads. Bound by the fellowship of their secret mystic religion, they hold together with amazing tenacity. Perhaps they are the old Hivites of the Bible. Certainly as the Hivites were a thorn in the flesh to the Israelites, so are the Druses a thorn in the flesh to the French.

For two years they fought valiantly, and at one time with such success that they threatened the French position in the country, and they were only defeated by the employment of fifty thousand troops.

I was treated by them with much hospitality, and they had a sense of humour and a kindliness—provided one was not a Frenchman—which made them pleasant and courteous people to live among.

I found them beaten into submission ; their resistance at an end ; their leaders, such as Sultan Pasha Al Atrash and Captain Fawzi Qawquaji, escaped to Egypt and Transjordan ; but they were not cowed. It would be an ill return for their hospitality and kindness if I were to give names and places, but as I travelled I saw and heard things that showed their hatred. For the minute it was damped down under the cover of defeat, but glowed hotter than ever, fed by the memory of their burnt villages and the losing of Senegalese and irregular troops among their women. I saw that spirit flame out—

the unbroken, resentful, unforgiving fighting spirit of these people, beaten but not crushed; and the women were as stout-hearted as the men.

There was a *sheik*—he was now called *muktar* or headman, as the French had forbidden the old title of *sheik*—who gave me hospitality for a few days. He was a sturdy, handsome man, with brown eyes that looked straight at one and were shrewd though without rudeness or undue curiosity. He gave a sense of quiet restraint, of absolute self-control, and had a dignity and a presence that were characteristic of the Druse *sheiks*.

One evening we sat talking by the door of his house. Behind us in the shadow of the doorway crouched his women. Over their heads and round their shoulders they wore white cloths, which they drew as veils across their faces, leaving one eye exposed. Round their heads were bound black bands which gave them a mediæval look. They were silent, never entering into the conversation, except now and again drawing their breath in a hiss through their teeth when they were more than usually interested, but they watched me with a silent intensity.

The *muktar* was dressed in native clothes of black cloth, with long leather boots, big-seated pleated trousers, a black shirt, and a white turban wound round a soft-topped fez such as is worn by Druses.

We squatted together looking at the official book that gave the ownership of the land in his area, as I was trying to locate certain houses and vineyards. It was a cheap copy-book, thumbed and dirty and torn. The titles to property were written in haphazard, sometimes sales were noted, at other times they had been ignored or scrawled in in pencil. Often, though the owners had died, there was no entry for thirty years. Pages had been torn out, entries made illegible by the spilling of water. The book had been buried during the revolt, and now and again an outgoing *muktar* had torn out a sheet to annoy his successor. On this book and the

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memory of the elders of the village depended all the ownership of property.

A fattish fellow with a cheery face and a monster of a dragoon's moustache, a shawl slung round his neck and leading a mule, came up, salaamed and squatted, holding the mule's chain, while the animal stamped restless with the flies behind him. When it stamped almost on him he cursed it fluently.

A long, lanky fellow in a reach-me-down suit out of an American store lounged up, and in a drawl told me that he was an American citizen. He was a Druse who had migrated, and was back on a holiday—though many go only with the object of making a little money, and then come back to the Lebanon to live.

We talked a jumble of languages, for the *muktar's* English was as bad as my Arabic, and the lanky fellow had forgotten most of the one and could only drawl in the other. After we had exhausted the courtesies and talked of the air and the water, the conversation languished. The Druses, except the lanky fellow, who was now a mongrel, would have sat peacefully silent, but my European mind would not let me rest, and for something to say I asked why the carpet on which we sat was so curiously worn.

"It was buried in the earth to save it during the troubles," said the *muktar*.

"Troubles!" ejaculated the lanky fellow—"always troubles here! It would be a sweet and happy country in which to live if there was more money and less politics. Troubles, always troubles! I go back to America."

Suddenly the quiet restraint of the *muktar* was gone. He flamed out. His brown eyes were concentrated with anger. He was alive, resentful, coiled as a taut spring, ready to strike like an angry snake.

"Troubles," he snarled, and used some word that I did not know, but learnt later meant deserter. "What do you know of troubles? You and the young men who went away when we needed men. What do you know

of troubles? Did you see the French burn our town of Sueida? Have you seen the inside of a French prison and our men murdered? Have you sat with your arms tied behind you, on this hill, as I have, and helpless seen them burn those houses"—and he pointed to some ruins to one side—"while their Circassians and Armenians, their negroes and Chinese mercenaries, shown the way by the Maronite devils, went fouling our women and looting all they could find? The Turks were soft-handed compared with these black-hearted French." Then the old man was silent, quiet and still, reserved as before, and the women in the shadows of the doorway had ceased to hiss in sympathy, but I had seen the spirit that was in them. The lanky fellow, with a muttered apology, hurried away, for fear that someone might have overheard and would repeat, for it was unwise to speak too freely.

CHAPTER II

DAMASCUS

I WOULD have stayed longer among the Druses, but on the one hand my work made it necessary that I should hurry on, and on the other hand I might have lived among them for a lifetime, been treated with unfailing courtesy and hospitality and yet I should never have penetrated their reserve or known them any better.

From the skirts of the mountains of the Hauran I came by rough tracks to where the oasis that surrounds and protects Damascus meets the desert—the greedy desert that presses in with its hungry sand on every side. The sand crept down the pathways and mixed in the fields; it lay deep in the lanes and came up to the doorways of the huts, and fought with the hedges of monstrous primeval cactus plants, until it met the water which came racing through the city in the great rivers of Abana and Pharphar and was spilled prodigal into the oasis. There the sand shrank back and there were fruit trees and gardens and vineyards.

The Spring had come, but not Spring with the fresh vigour of the English countryside, the birds mating in every spinney, the grass wet with dew and every laughing stream full of a thousand shadows and edged with the soft green of the willows. Here Spring was weary and stale with the taste of dust. It was as short as the virginity of an Arab girl; and all the flowers and trees raced into blossom together so that they might bear fruit and fulfil themselves before the summer heat blasted them. Roses and daffodils, peach, cherry and oranges, and the Judas trees with the flowers oozing

from the bark like drops of blood, red flax and purple flags—all bloomed in riot together, and the corn was hastening to the harvest.

I came to Damascus as a pilgrim, humble and thrilled in anticipation, for I had woven into the texture of many dreams the history, the romance and the glamour of this renowned city. A few hours in its streets dissolved many of my dreams.

It is an ancient town, perhaps the oldest living town in the world. It was old when the Apostle Paul escaped over the walls by the corner where then, as now, was thrown the refuse, and where the flies and the pariah dogs made their breeding ground. It was old when the Tartars sacked it and carried away the metal-workers who had made its steel renowned. It was sacked many times before and after that, and had always revived. To-day it is very old, and it had far better have died, for it is like some ancient man, smelling of all his stale vices, his eyes red-lidded and bleared, skin wrinkled and unclean, a querulous and ill-natured dodderer. Death gives a measure of dignity which decrepit old age cannot share.

I understood now how towns could die. Perhaps from an earthquake or an invasion, or again from a change of water or atmosphere, or just because of old age their spirit died and they would rot away and disappear, and the sand would come in and cover them over, as it had at Salamis. Damascus was kept alive only by the great rivers that ran through it and fed its protecting oasis.

Its celebrated art was cheap and brazen. In the Azam Palace the French had opened an Institute of Musulman Archæology and Art. The collections and the decorations, except for a few good carpets and some pottery, were tawdry; and I believe that they were characteristic. But in the exquisite art of drowsing the Damascenes were true artists, learned and cunning in its technique. It was pleasant to drowse in one of the palace courtyards with some shady alcove of cool marble

and listen to the fountains playing in their marble tank, while from beyond the high palace walls came the dulled sounds of the raucous city and the stench of stale dust and great heat in alley-ways. It was exquisite to lie languid in the warm air pregnant with the scents of roses, jasmine and orange-blossoms and idly watch the fat fish slide up through the green, warm water of the tank, to feed between the water-lilies, while from behind some latticed window a woman softly sang a love-song to the accompaniment of her zither—and so to feel the faint tingling of desire that would be satisfied when night came down. No need to talk, to think: no need for action or effort, but just to let all the senses drowse placid and in peace.

The renowned Mosque of Omar was a disappointment. Inside, with the Eagle Dome towering above, it ~~was~~ immense, but only as the Palais de Danse at Hammersmith or a sky-scraper is immense, without grandeur. At one end behind a black cloth were the relics of Saladin and the head of the martyr Husein. Its fourteen hundred square feet of floor, with prayer niches for each sect, were covered with cheap carpets. A *hodja* told me the story of the cunning Jew who had persuaded the simple-minded mosque officials to exchange the worn and torn carpets for his handsome new pieces, and so got the priceless rugs for a song. I too have bought rugs from the mosques, but I have never found the priest unduly credulous, only over greedy.

In the mosque courtyard there were many pilgrims resting, for Damascus is the terminus of the railway to Mecca. It was built by Abdul Hamid, the Red Sultan of Turkey, when he tried to revive Islam and the ancient splendour and influence of the Khalifate. The pilgrims came from Bokhara and the Caucasus and all Central Asia, and collected in Damascus before they took the road to Mecca.

I spoke with one, an Afghan, who was delighted to

find someone with whom he could talk in Urdu and Pushtu. He put on his *pugree*, which was now no more than a disordered and dirty mass of twisted linen, drew his curled-toed shoes to one side, and made room for me beside him on a stone slab in a colonnade. He was a man of Peshawar, and though he was not a fanatic, yet the fire of his faith burnt hot in him, and he was determined to complete the Haj Pilgrimage to the Holy Cities before he died. Two years before, quite penniless, putting his trust in God, he had left his family and taken the road from Quetta. Travelling steadily and begging his way, he had come to Bagdad, and so, following the Euphrates, to Aleppo, and from there the English Consul had sent him to Damascus.

Out of a leather wallet hidden deep in his clothes he produced a passport, the familiar blue British passport with its "We, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston . . . etc., etc., etc. . . . request and require in the name of His Majesty . . . to allow the bearer without let or hindrance to pass freely. . . ." And Mohammed Ali Khan, the Afghan of Peshawar, without any clear understanding of the document, but knowing that it was a talisman, hid it again in the greasy leather pouch that he wore next to his skin, together with the relic that the village *mollah* had given him. He would rest a week, and then, if God was merciful, set off for the south and Mecca. He would go on foot, for he had sworn to use no wheeled vehicle.

From the courtyard a great studded gateway led down some worn steps into the native bazaar, and there, where a bronze tap spilt water into a trough and the worshippers came to wash, I sat down in a minute café to drink a cup of coffee. The street was a cobbled alleyway roofed over with a trellis-work, where a vine was coming into leaf. A grocer opposite squatted cross-legged in his shop, drawing at a bubbling water-pipe. His goods—dried peas, flour, beans, lumps of soap, cubes of sugar and a thousand more things—were laid out in

shallow baskets. Women in coarse black clothes and thick veils were buying at the booth-shops. If none of their men was watching they would lift their veils and look at me with licentious eyes, for, like Englishwomen, they are often freer and kinder to foreigners than to their own men.

Further down an engraver was rasping on metal, and I could hear the cobblers hammering on their lasts and the steady metallic drone as with bronze pestles the coffee sellers beat the coffee beans in the great resounding mortars.

Hidden in corners and side alleys were low doorways; one into a bank, another into the office of the principal shipping agency. They had no addresses or signs, and it needed a diviner to find them.

One doorway led down steps into a mosque, where men were washing, for it was already time for evening prayer. In a corner of the mosque stood a heap of trestles covered with barbed wire ready to block the street if there was a rising. A policeman, dressed as the Turkish police in Stambul were dressed before the Republic, came out of his post now and again and stared at me with suspicion. A secret agent who had followed me since I arrived—for the French administration watches all foreigners carefully—sat in an engraver's shop, with a studied indifference that made it quite clear what he was.

From a doorway a girl came out, a brass pitcher balanced on her shoulder, and for a minute I saw beyond her a garden and a pool with a tessellated floor where the sun threw shadows, and then the door was closed. The girl stood for a minute looking down the street, holding the pitcher gracefully with one hand. She was a mere child, perhaps twelve years old, white-skinned and black-eyed. Seeing me, she dropped her veil, and at once she ceased to be a child. I saw the promise of the woman's body beneath her dress. She had become desirable and mysterious.

The *muezzins* had finished calling to prayer, and in the alley-ways it was growing dark. By the shop of the silk-weavers, where a man was setting the skeins for the next day's work, a blackbird hung in a cage on the wall, a fine yellow-legged and orange-beaked bird, which paced up and down its narrow wicker cage and then began to sing full-throatedly. A hill-partridge close beside began to call, for the Spring was in the open country and the desire to breed was on him. Far overhead a cloud was caught by the late sun and turned to rose, and the swifts went screaming past as they played. The alleys were stale and foul-stenched, the calcined veins of the old city. As I climbed back up the steps into the mosque courtyard the caged partridge called again for his liberty out of the cavern of the dark alleys below me.

In the main street, as I found my way home, the shopmen were pulling down their wooden shutters for the night. A troop of men cantered past, fierce-moustached men, dark-faced and haughty, on sturdy ponies, with belts of ammunition round their waists and their rifles held on the pommels of their saddles. They were the night patrol going into the desert.

Always in this city there was the sensation that the red desert, which stretched fifteen hundred miles unbroken to the south, was waiting at the gates greedy to enter and destroy.

CHAPTER III

THE FRENCH IN SYRIA

A LITTLE beyond my hotel, which was unclean, bug-ridden and expensive, was the Maidan, the best quarter of Damascus, but which had been blown to pieces by the French during the revolt of the Druses in 1925.

I wandered in the Maidan. It was still in ruins, the houses dishevelled heaps of stones, twisted girders and bricks. Marble tanks that had stood with the fountains playing in the shady courtyards were now exposed, their sides ripped open by shells and their pavements pock-marked with shrapnel; and the neglected jasmine and orange trees struggled into flower among the weeds where the pariah dogs were sleeping or chasing the fleas through their rough coats.

Drastic as it had been, the bombardment had been the logical result of the past. Force can only be justified by force, by carrying it out to its bitter end until the object is attained. When the Allies agreed to the French mandate, they knew that it would mean the use of force, and the bombardment was the culmination of five years of fighting and revolt, and the final act which established the French military control of the country.

The French had been intent on having the mandate of Syria. For a century, even before Napoleon invaded Egypt, they had special interests in the country. During the last seventy years of Ottoman rule they had increased their influence. The Maronites and the Roman Catholics had become their protégés, and the French had used all their influence on their behalf; French

consuls and traders had obtained special privileges; French schools had been opened in the big towns and French was the polite language of Beyrouth and the coast towns. The French had become the popular foreign protectors of the Christian population against the Turkish misrule, and they made it clear that at the inevitable break-up of the Turkish Empire they had the right of first refusal of Syria. In 1916 the British wished to attack at Alexandretta and cut the route through the Taurus mountains. It was the only route to Bagdad and Syria and was the jugular vein of the Turkish Empire. To this proposal the French refused to agree. They even threatened to treat such a move as a hostile act—only French troops, they said, must be allowed in Syria and Cilicia, and there were no French troops available from the Western Front. So it was decided instead to attack at Gallipoli, and thus resulted disaster, and the fall of Kut-al-Amarah and the long campaigns in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and millions of pounds and thousands of good lives were thrown away.

The Peace Conference gave the French the mandate, and as soon as they had taken over they set to work to turn Syria into a French colony, but they had not calculated the difficulties ahead nor the resistance they would encounter.

Syria was not one country, but split up by nationalities and religions. The Lebanon was mainly Christian, with strong Moslem and Druse minorities. The mountains of the Hauran were Druse, and intensely hostile to all things French. Damascus and Aleppo were Arab, with a mixture of Orthodox Christians. Behind Lattakia there were the Alouites, and masses of smaller sects were scattered all over the country. Each section and each religion hated its neighbours with a bitter and ancient hatred, and on the north there was a dangerous frontier with the revived and pugnacious Turkish nation.

Hardly had the French taken over from the British Administration of the Enemy Occupied Territories and

replaced it with a federation of states, centralised under a High Commissioner, before the trouble began. Section by section the country rose against them. King Feisal, who had been set up by the British in Damascus, refused to submit to any idea of a French control. He was still dreaming the vain dreams of T. E. Lawrence, and of a great Arab Empire. After some fighting which antagonised the Arabs, he was expelled. Next the Turks attacked in the north, and the French were so harried that they ended the disastrous campaign with a peace equally disastrous, for it was made in secret, without the consent of the other Allies, and was obtained only by the surrender of a part of northern Syria and a great loss of prestige.

Hardly was that done than the Alouites revolted, and it needed months of guerrilla warfare to crush them. This done, the French once more returned to their first plan of making a number of States and combining them under the closely centralised rule of a High Commissioner.

The position was difficult, and it was grossly mis-handled by General Sarrail, the new High Commissioner. He was a politician-soldier, whose advancement had been due to the extreme socialists, for he was a Free-thinker, a socialist and a member of a continental lodge of Freemasons. His career had been stormy, mostly in revolt against his superiors. He had been suspected during the war of wanting to make himself a military dictator, and though he had shown considerable ability as a divisional and an army commander, he had failed to agree with the General Staff, and been sent to Salonika. At his going Clemenceau was reported to have said that his leaving France was worth a fresh division, and had released half the secret service men for more profitable work.

In 1925 his political friends had obtained for him the post of High Commissioner. The French had allowed their home politics—and they were none too pleasant—to permeate what should have been a purely colonial

administration. Politics decided the appointment of the High Commissioner, his staff and the generals. They broke up all continuity of policy. They led to an unending labyrinth of intrigues in France and Syria. In five years the High Commissioner was changed six times, and each man came with his own policy and as the nominee of some political group and without any security of tenure of office.

Sarrail behaved as his enemies had prophesied. He was tactless and rough, openly hostile to the Catholics and all the Christian bodies. He interfered with the ancient privileges of the Druses, insulted them publicly, and refused to see their delegations. In revenge the Druses in Damascus planned to come over the roof-tops one night and kidnap him in the Azam Palace where he then lived. Sarrail was warned and escaped. He collected the French subjects in the city and then systematically bombarded the Maidan, which was the Park Lane of Damascus and where were the houses of his opponents and of the rich people.

At once the city was full of fighting; the French colonial troops looted all they could find, and every ruffian who could find a gun was out with the insurgents. The local rising spread rapidly. All southern Syria flamed up; the French garrison in Suedia was besieged; the French troops retiring from Nebd and Medj-el-Sham lost 1500 men. It looked for a time as if Ibn Saud and his Wahabis would join the Druses. The French hurried up more troops. The fighting died down, to flare up again the next year, and this time the French bombarded the villages of the Damascus oasis. Sarrail was recalled, and Monsieur de Jouvenal, his successor, gradually got control, but at a ruinous cost in men and money, the burning of villages and the devastation of whole areas. By the end of 1927 the revolt was over.

Damascus had been the centre of resistance to the French, the centre for the Arabs who dreamed of an

Empire under Husein Sherif of Mecca and later under Ibn Saud the Wahabi; the centre for the Druse and for the Syrian Nationalists. The bombardment was the final blow to all organised resistance. It was carried out with a mathematical precision that terrified the inhabitants. For centuries they have been known for their fanaticism and their discourtesy to strangers, and having none of the courage of the Druse hillmen, they were cowed into docility. Before the war I could not have walked in the streets in a hat without being insulted, but now the people were meek and obliging.

Before I left, however, they had begun to pluck up heart. The French Government had decided that it was impossible to hold the country indefinitely by force, and had sent as High Commissioner a Monsieur Ponsot with instructions to persuade the Syrians to co-operate. Monsieur Ponsot had made friends with the Nationalists. He had held a free election to find out the feeling of the people and instructed the newly elected Assembly to draft a constitution for the whole country.

I tried to avoid politics, but they filled the air. Local Europeans would button-hole me and curse the French administration, but they had no alternative, and when I asked them for one they went angrily away. The Syrian politicians were rabid, full of big-sounding words and utterly unreliable. In every café and corner the people of Damascus were indulging raucously in their favourite pastime of political argument. Should they have a federation or an united Syria? Should they have a king or a president? and who should he be? They talked of inviting a son of Ibn Saud, of Emir George Lutfallah, an Egyptian-Syrian millionaire, of Sheik Tajeddine, the Nationalist Prime Minister. Others still bleated of an Arab Empire, and others fiercely opposed any constitution until the French had evacuated and left them to themselves. Now and again there was even some talk of Syrian unity. A Maronite bishop, a meeting of Moslem notables, an Arab paper and even Sultan Pasha al Atrash,

the Druse leader, from his exile spoke publicly of it as a necessity if Syria was ever to be free and independent.

As yet, however, there was no real sign of Syrian unity. There was no tie of blood, nor of language, religion, nor even of some common interest. Only for the time being there was a common hatred, hatred of the French, whose coming had meant civil war and the burning of villages and the disappearance of trade and commerce—a hatred that temporarily bound them loosely together, but would disappear at once if ever the French should evacuate.

After I left Damascus the Assembly produced a draft constitution. Syria was to be proclaimed a sovereign independent country, republican in government and its capital at Damascus. It was to be one united whole, ignoring all old divisions. The President was to have the power of pardon, and the parliament to control the police and the army, to handle all relations with foreign countries, to declare martial law and to conduct the finances. This done, Syria, realising that the country needed outside help, would make a treaty with France accepting and defining her mandatory supervision. To this the French Government would not agree. The Assembly refused to give way, and was eventually prorogued *sine die* and a deadlock resulted.

CHAPTER IV

A SULTAN'S GRAVE

CHANCE took me by the edge of the Barada river to the Mosque of Sultan Selim. Entering by a heavy gateway, I came to a broad courtyard. On three sides of it were cloisters, and in them cells to lodge the pilgrims on their road to the Holy Cities. On the fourth was the mosque, with its many cupola roofs gleaming white in the sun, and above it showed the barren red hills where the desert began.

In the centre of the courtyard, surrounded by a marble pavement—the cracks full of weeds—was a tank where a fountain played softly in the sun. An old man sat nodding on a worn carpet beside the tank. At first I did not recognise him, and then I saw that it was — Pasha, the Albanian, who had been one of the great ones of the Yildiz Palace when the Sultan still ruled in Stambul before the proclamation of the republic. He rose slowly, and greeted me with all the courtesy and dignity that is natural to every Turk—for in the old days we had been friends. He was gaunt and ill, half starved, and still wearing a faded uniform that showed his rank. He was living in one of the cells in the mosque.

“And why living here?” I asked.

“Because His Majesty is buried here,” he replied, and took me to a corner where, among a pile of rubbish thrown away by the pilgrims, in a piece of waste land with a few wild poppies in flower and an acacia tree dropping its white petals, there was a piece of ragged concrete making a grave top, but without any inscription.

A priest came over to us from the mosque.

"Is it just and right," I asked him, "that a Sultan and a Khalif of the Faithful should lie buried like a dog among the rubbish?"

"What can we do?" he replied. "Ghazi Mustapha Kemal might be angry if we did more, and take revenge on us."

"Mustapha Kemal?" I said. "What has he to do here? This is Syria, and protected by the French."

The priest looked at me strangely and made no reply. I found the same thing throughout the East. Away in India, in Egypt, in Central Asia, Mustapha Kemal the Ghazi was the great hero, the champion who had defeated the Victorious Allies and saved a Moslem people from the yoke of Europe. His prestige stood sky-high. Here in French-protected Syria they were afraid of him.

"So?" I said, looking inquiringly at the *pasha*; but he was broken and old, and made no reply, but accepted his fate. He was typical of the remnants of the Sultan's supporters who were starving in Egypt and Switzerland and were without spirit. There would be no counter-revolution in Turkey from such as these.

As I went away I slipped some money under the pillow on the *pasha's* broken-down bed in his tiny stone cell, for he was too proud for me to offer it, and too helpless to work, and he was starving.

On the way out I passed the grave again, and I stood for a minute in prayer and to pay my respects. Here lay Wahad-ed-Din, Sultan Mohamed, Khalif of the Faithful and Emperor of All the Ottomans, whose ancestors had conquered half the known world and frightened all the Kings of Europe and who lay in splendour in the great mosques and shrines of Stambul; and Wahad-ed-Din the frightened old man I had known eight years before, lost in the complications of the Armistice, and at last deserted by his own people and deluded by the Allies, and especially the English. They had shovelled him into this hole like a dog, where the pilgrims threw their rubbish, and a few weeds had begun

to cover the rough concrete slab that they had put over him.

Vaguely I saw that this was symbolical; that as they had treated their Khalif, so the Moslems of the Balkans, of Cyprus, of Turkey and even of Syria were treating Islam. For them the salt had gone ~~out~~ of Islam and it had lost its savour. But away in Arabia, in India, in Afghanistan and in Central Asia it was the same fighting, driving faith as in the old days.

Before I left Damascus I climbed the Djebel Kasyour, the mountain that looks over the city. At its foot was the Kurdish village, where the people drew away on one side to let us pass and the men eyed us, as foreigners and Christians, with eyes full of hatred. Near the crest we came to the Caves of the Seven Sleepers, which lead into long galleries cut far into the limestone heart of the mountain. It was unsafe to follow these, for there were often criminals hiding in their labyrinths, and occasionally some lunatic.

In front of one cave was a terrace in the hillside. It had been cut for the Kaiser when he visited Damascus on his Eastern tour before he set out to conquer the world. The German Emperor had understood the immense effect of dramatic action on the mentality of Eastern peoples, the prestige and the power that it gives. So that he might ride into Jerusalem on horseback, he had made them drive a passage through the city wall. Here on the Djebel Kasyour, at great labour, he had built this terrace. He came in state. For three minutes he stood alone brooding over the city, and then flung out a hand in majestic blessing and strode away in state. And he left his mark. Throughout all Syria men showed me the places where he had stood, where he had visited, and told me what he had said, though they had forgotten all the things that had happened since his visit.

Below us stretched the city, with its gardens and trees and the two great rivers that raced through it, and above

the trees showed the white cupolas and the minarets of many mosques, and beyond were the vineyards and the fields of the oasis. But ringing it in on every side, pressing in, relentless, fierce and raw, was the red desert of stones and shingle and the barren rock hills. Water was the life-blood of Damascus. If ever the rivers should fail, the desert would sweep in at once and overwhelm the city.

It was evening as we came back through the Kurdish village, by paths protected with barbed wire, past heaps of refuse and more barbed wire, through the ancient city walls and down streets where on every corner there were forts of sandbags, and sentries watched the streets through loopholes. From the minarets of the mosques the *muezzins* were calling to prayer. Night swept up, throwing a shadow of the world above the sunset, purpling the red hills, softening the brutality of the greedy desert, laying cool hands of shadows on the tired eyes of the day. One by one, like diamonds, the stars came out in the immensity above the desert and the city.

CHAPTER V

BAALBEK

AT my coming into Damascus the officials had been suspicious and fussy, and spies had followed me wherever I had gone. It was even worse when I wanted to leave. The police made endless inquiries and formalities over my passport and its diplomatic visas. The Custom officials searched deep into my 'boxes,' for I was going across the frontier, and this frontier was not between countries, but between the Damascus state and its neighbour, the Lebanon, and both were part of Syria. The Turkish Empire had been one great undivided area from Bosnia to Basra. Now Syria had new and jealous frontiers on every side of it, and it was itself divided into states, each with its own frontier and its tariff barrier.

A few miles out of Damascus we came to the frontier, and once more went through all the motions of being controlled, and were carefully inspected by guards who were as nervous as if they were under fire. After that we came into the Anti-Lebanon mountains, which were barren, ill-natured hills, where the road twisted through narrow passes; and my driver pointed out the places where the French and the Arabs in 1920 and the French and the Druses in 1926 had fought. We passed a shell of a house where a French garrison had been wiped out. A little further there was a large fort inside barbed wire and trenches with sentries patrolling. Then we crossed a plain and came into the village of Rayak.

The village was in a turmoil, the people talking excitedly in the café. There were reports that the

Druses were out again, and the French were patrolling the roads.

Every spring there was a crop of these rumours. The French kept a stern military censorship of all news, with the result that they concealed much, and rumour distorted much more to their disadvantage.

A camel column of Moroccans marched in, the band—the maddest band that man ever produced—of four men on swaying camels beating with the palms of their hands on leather drums, and two blowing on reed pipes that gasped and lost the shrill tune and started again as the blowers got their breath. Halting, they dismounted and forced their grumbling, bubbling camels to kneel. I was not surprised that the Syrians resented the use of these men in their country. They were brutes to look at, with bloodshot eyes, coarse lips and faces as black as ebony, and their heavy cloaks of red and their white head-dresses accentuated their brutality. They beat the camels relentlessly; they leered evilly at the women; they cursed filthily and man-handled roughly any one who came near them. One giant negro beside me savagely beat a sleeping dog for the pleasure of brutality. They were mere animals, as unpleasant as their camels, and they were there to strike terror into the people of the country. They, like other French patrols and troops I met on the roads and in the villages, treated the people roughly, as if they were in a hostile country in time of war.

Their commander was a wild-looking Frenchman with a foot of straggling beard, and together with his French non-commissioned officers was dressed, except for *kepis*, in the same clothes as the Moroccans, and went barefooted.

In such matters the French and the English are poles apart. An Englishman gone native—a Lawrence, a Leachman, a Doughty—has some special sympathy with and insight into the native character, but always he is acutely conscious of his own superiority, and in spirit he remains aloof. To know a people a man must know

their women. English sentiment outlaws the man who takes a native woman. But for the French there is no colour bar, nor does morality or sentiment prevent them taking the native women, living the native life, conforming to the native habits and codes. As a result colonial administration and the command of native troops generally improve the Englishman, whereas they often debase the Frenchman.

The difference deep in individuals colours the whole colonial outlook and policy of the two peoples. The British administration stands aloof. It builds roads, railways, irrigation systems, even improves the laws, but it rigidly avoids touching the life or customs of the people. The English, like islands in a native sea, live lifted up above the people they rule. But the French become part of their colonies, and their colonies become part of France. Their hold is more subtle, perhaps even more lasting. If the British evacuated India, within a few years there would be little to show that they had been there except the neglected ruins of fine buildings, government houses, schools and hospitals, and the broken tracks of once good roads.

In Syria, however, the French were at a loss. In the old days, as the foreign protectors, they had been popular; now, as rulers, they were hated. They had tried to make Syria into a colony, but the Syrians did not acknowledge the superiority of French culture or ability; they did not wish to become a part of France. In 1920 the Peace Conference from Paris sent the Crane Delegation to find out the wishes of the Syrians, who voted for an American mandate first, then a British, and lastly for the French. They voted in the order of the richest first, and in the hope that some money would come with the mandate. They did not want American, British or French institutions or ideals. They wanted someone to finance them, and the French, though prodigal in blood and bravery, are close-fisted in the expenditure of money.

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In the village café was a Maronite bishop with his secretary, travelling to Damascus, and we fell into conversation.

"We have been mistaken," he said quite frankly, eyeing the Moroccans with open disfavour. "It is true that the French helped us in the past. They gave us freedom from the Turks. Now they wish to take our independence away from us, and their officials, who are neither efficient nor polite, come interfering with all our own affairs. . . ."

After he had gone, a Catholic priest, glad to take the coffee that I offered, and to air the little English he had learnt on a visit to America:

"Ah!" he said, "if the Devil was ever lost, I should search to find him first under the cassock of a Maronite bishop."

From Rayak we turned north, and came to Zahlé, a big village full of Armenian refugees from Turkey, who lived in utter poverty. After that we ran on to ill-kept roads, and having punctured a tyre near the headquarters of a French armoured-car detachment, I sat down with the mechanics to get their news. They were conscripts. Their term of service was almost up. They hated Syria and all Syrians, and their only desire was to get back to France as quickly as possible. Their officers had told them that the British were in trouble; that the Arabs had risen against them and the King of Egypt had declared war on England. They were convinced that their own difficulties in Syria were in some way due to the British, and though they could not explain how, they were resentful.

Climbing steadily at evening, we came to Baalbek. At this height it was colder, and a chilly wind blew down the passes. The ruins of the great shrine stood alone and tremendous, except for a few naked poplars, on the bare plain between the wall of the snowclad Lebanon on the one side and the Anti-Lebanon on the

other. Beyond it the plain stretched away north along the valley of the Orontes river to Homs and Hama and Aleppo.

Baalbek was staggering in its immensity: in the majesty of its buildings, in its tall colonnades and the great sweep of its terraces of steps, that ran from mighty doorways far up into dim temples, where stone altars still waited for the worshippers. To build this there must have been some great driving force, some faith, some belief. Every block of stone was the square that a man might span with arms outstretched, and the biggest blocks would have taken a regiment to move, and yet the whole was balanced and moulded into a beautiful symmetry.

I was not surprised any more that the early Christians should have feared the Pagans and the Old Gods, for they were vital, natural, earthy with the realities and not demanding ascetic impossibilities of their followers, as did Jehovah and the Christians. And yet they were able to rouse and inspire their worshippers. And as I wandered in the Lebanon I found often, hidden away in the mountains, the worship of the Old Gods, sometimes cloaked under other forms, as where the Virgin Mary was in reality the Great Mother, or Christ had replaced Adonis more in name than belief. But they remained, and if Islam and Christianity should falter, they would come creeping back into the pagan hearts of the people.

I had wandered in the ruins all one day, and at sunset prepared to go home. Round me lay three thousand years of history. Baalbek had been great because in this desert country where there is water there is life, and a fine spring welled out of the cliff side beside the shrine. Since the first builders, three thousand years had slid relentlessly by, religions had been born and died of old age. The Assyrians had built first, and the Egyptians

had enlarged the temples. Baal had changed his name to that of Jupiter, and the Romans and Greeks had made shrines to Bacchus and Mercury and Aphrodite. Theodosius had built a Christian basilica, and the Arabs, under Abu Obedda, the Conqueror of Damascus, had turned it into a citadel with a mosque, and then Jenghis Khan and Saladin and Tamerlane, all the world's great destroyers, had in turn captured it and looted it. And after that had come earthquake and droughts, and then the Turks, and against all these the great shrine had stood steadfast. Now, lastly, came neglect and Arab *fellaheen*, who dug the lead out of the joints of the pillars and stole carved bits to sell, and tourists who scribbled their names on the marble, so that it had begun to look shabby and dishevelled.

In the sunset glow the young moon hung, holding in its arms the old dead moon. A fleet of crows, black against the darkening sky, came home to roost. A hawk grumbled as he hunted, for it was late and he would have to sleep hungry in a niche of a Corinthian capital. In a temple well among the maidenhair ferns that filled the crevices linnets were calling to each other and quarrelling as they found their sleeping places. Under the fort wall some Arabs were talking harshly, and one burst into a nasal love-song. A stork or two were feeding in the marshy fields by the stream that ran from the great spring and overflowed its artificial channel, for the mill by the temple gate was not working, and the miller had forgotten to open his sluice-gate. The pillars of the temple of Jupiter stood out against the last flush in the west, and an owl began to call in the ruins.

And I realised the driving force, the immense strength of Life, the spark that welds together dead eternal matter into new shapes, and then breaks and welds them again. Beside me was a giant block of granite split in half by a fig tree. Into a crack years ago there must have fallen a tiny seed, that had germinated and burst and put forth a shoot and so become a tree. As it grew it broke the

iron stone that held it in, and now the rain and the frost had bitten into the edges of the stone, and slowly the whole block would crumble into dust. I knew that there is no Death, for matter is eternal; and what we call Death is but the dissolution of one combination of elements; and then once more in new form they combine round some germ of life and become a new thing.

As I came home the Anti-Lebanon had turned to orange colour and the snows on their peaks were touched with rose. The Lebanons were black in their own shadow. In the valley in the half-light the fresh wheat was a smear of green. By the citadel gate there were Arab women collecting their washing. A troop of French Algerian troops went by, showing off, the men standing up in the saddles to rouse the horses into kicking, so that the frightened women scattered and ran for safety under the walls, at which the Algerians laughed uproariously and shouted indecent questions at the cowering women. An Arab who was winding flax into rope near the mill cursed the French Algerians under his breath.

CHAPTER VI

A MARONITE VILLAGE

FROM Baalbek we took the valley northwards, and then down into the plain, which is mostly stones. In the summer it was bleak and burnt with the sun and in the winter parched with cold. Through it ran the Orontes river and along its banks there were rich patches of vineyards and wheat-fields. Some of the villages had beehive-shaped houses like those of the Kurds and the north of Syria, while the rest were the usual flat-roofed huts. Many of them were deserted, and among the ruins the gipsies and shepherds had pitched their black-hair tents, and their sheep and goats grazed near by.

The country was very stony, and the fields had been made by carefully picking off the stones and piling them in walls round, so that I understood the Bible references, and how an army would ruin its enemies' fields by taking these stones and flinging them back on the land, and the plough would not plough and it was useless to sow.

At Hama we stopped by the Orontes, which flowed, muddy, turbulent with snow-water, and fierce, between high banks, where Persian water-wheels drew the water up to irrigate the land and a few poplars were coming into leaf. In Hama there were many troops, as it had been made a military centre, with aeroplane sheds and depots for artillery, and troops of Syrian mercenaries and Bedouin cavalry on white horses. As I stood watching them I heard a French officer talking loudly behind me. He was obviously talking at me, and was giving a *résumé* of the aims and the foul methods of the "politique

anglaise." He was a major, and what he really meant was that he hated Hama and Syria and all Syrians, and it annoyed him the way the British seemed to get on with these sort of people. What he wanted was to get back to France and be done with life in colonies. He was a waspish little fellow, as homesick as are all the French, and with all the anti-British prejudices strong.

Below Hama I struck westward by a path which went across the bleak plain into the foot of the Lebanon mountains, climbed by a pass close under the snows, where the wind blew cold, and then led down again, and suddenly, abruptly, we were out on the western slopes of the mountains and in the Spring.

The mountains ran steep down to the sea sheer below us. With infinite labour every inch had been cut into terraces, where there were fields and gardens often only twenty paces long and half a dozen broad, buttressed up with loose stones fitted cunningly into walls. In these were wheat already green and mulberry trees newly burst into leaf. The almonds were in full blossom, and the vines and the fig-trees filled every spare space. On every hill-top and along every ridge were red-roofed villages and more gardens and vineyards, and there was an abundance of water, so that after the bleak valley and plain beyond the mountains this was a paradise of richness. In the valleys and ravines were streams racing down from the snows to work mills, and to be led by cunningly constructed channels into the terraced fields. In the clefts of the rocks were mountain pines—*snowbar*, the Maronites call them. All the mountains were full of flowers—red peonies and peach and apple blossom and asphodels and ox-eyed daisies—and every cranny was filled with a myriad of minute flowers whose scents mixed with that of the pines and the arbutus, and the air was rich with their fragrance. I felt like Persephone newly released from the grim bleak Kingdom of Pluto and led by Mercury back into the world, with the Spring dancing up to meet her.

With a mule for the kit and a guide, I took the paths along the mountain-side. Now they twisted their way up between the terraces, and then dropped a thousand feet into ravines where streams foamed and tore their way between the boulders, and always above us were the snows. At Ghazir there was an Armenian monastery full of refugees from Turkey. In the sheds and shops the Armenian girls, mainly children, were building carpets, their flying subtle fingers tying the Senna and the Ghiordes knots with amazing rapidity, so that the carpets grew on the looms as I watched. They were like slaves, for they never stopped even to look at me. The village was full of evil Syrian townsmen, who loafed in the cafés and watched the Armenian girls with lecherous eyes; and when very young the Armenian girls are dark and comely to look on.

At Shananhir the people were all out pruning the vines. We laboriously climbed the streets, which were of cobbles and as steep as a staircase in a suburban villa, but found no one, until we reached the school, where the school-mistress, a dark, Hebrew-looking woman, told us that the headman had gone to Beyrouth, and she sent a boy to find the priest. Meanwhile the school sat round me, squatting on the floor, watching me with steady, unflickering curiosity.

Outside in an alley-way between two gardens sat a boy with a sickle and a bundle of cut grass. A girl, barefooted and in a loose shift, stood leaning beside him. A monk, his gown rolled up round his waist so that he could walk, stopped to talk to them. He pushed his skull-cap back and mopped his pate. From the stray words that I heard, from the look in the monk's eyes and the way the girl answered his questions it was clear that the man of God was talking of something that fired his blood more than religion. Strange that God should give these—the stupid, almost handsome-faced girl, the dirty unkempt monk, the loafing boy—the power to breed, to create something that might hold a human soul, which

must push and fight its way through life. And to what end—this human spawning?

Long before he arrived I could hear the village priest protesting at being forced to climb up the thousand odd feet from his vineyards. He was a small man with a well-kept beard, cope-shaped cap and a long gown, his face full of wrinkles, but, unlike other Maronites, it had in it a touch of humour, though it was a cynical humour. In his speech he was crusty and trenchant.

"Yes," he said, without much greeting, and spitting to show his contempt of the monk, who was not of his sect, "my accursed workmen will now sit lazy while I come hunting property with you."

"But I come to look at the property of your parishioners and to compensate them for damage."

"So," he replied, "I have walked all this way for that, and to help the scoundrels to defraud you." And he came, still protesting, but showed us the properties that I wished to see.

"When was the damage done?" I asked.

"When that Turkish devil, the Black Djemal Pasha the Butcher, ringed in the Lebanon at the beginning of the war, refused to let us work, took away our young men. Then the mulberry trees died and the terrace walls fell down. And again, when these French came and all Syria was full of fighting. Let them all go away with their interfering officials and leave us in peace. We were better off before they came."

Here and there we found a wife at home, and sat down to rest, and were offered *arach*—pure alcohol—to drink. Outside, the sun was still high, so I refused. Whereupon the priest at a gulp drank my share as well as his own, smacking his lips at the raw stuff. It seemed to have little effect on him except to give the wrinkles of his face even a little more humour and make his conversation more trenchant. As I left he accepted some money from me without hesitation, and without even the usual pretence that it was for his church.

"Money," he said, "the one friend that never fails a man," and hurried back down to his vineyards brandishing a pair of nippers.

From the village our path ran down a steep ravine where great cedar trees drowsed in the afternoon heat. Then we climbed a steep rocky path for some time, and halted on a crest to look back. My guide showed, far down below, a black spot which was the priest at work among his fruit trees. Cupping my hands round my mouth I called to him :

"Please will you come up here and show me a vineyard which belongs to one of your parishioners?"

"No," came the answer back, clear, though he was a mile away; and the distance softened all the harshness out of the Arab gutturals. "No, not even to save your black Protestant soul," and he hesitated as if calculating. "Not even for five good golden pounds." So low did he assess my soul's value.

Still we climbed, until from a high peak we could see a great stretch of country. Sheer below us lay the sea, silvered in heat mist. Along its shore were the houses of the town of Djouni, the old capital of the Lebanon, with more houses stretching away to the left, mile after mile, until I could see Beyrouth on a promontory. Close to our right was the mouth of the Dog River, sacred to Adonis, and already running red like blood, heaving itself up into a line of surf where its swift current met the incoming rollers of the sea.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARONITES

AMONG the prosperous villages and their terraced gardens round us were the houses of many religions and their sects—a Dervish *tekké*, a Maronite monastery, a Druse *sheik's* hut, a mosque or two, churches by the score, a village of the Ishmaeli, and in the distance was the huge Roman Catholic statue of “La Madonna du Liban,” close by the house of the Apostolic Delegate. Creeds, religions, secret beliefs, rituals, weird half-pagan rites and a multitude of priests of every denomination thrived in these mountains.

The Maronite Patriarch, Mgr. Ælias Huayek, officially the Patriarch of Antioch, happened to be in his house. He was a fierce old man. The week before he had received some of the senior French officials and expressed his objections both to their policy and to their interfering in the affairs of the Lebanon state in such lurid terms that he had been nicknamed “le Vieillard terrible.” He was a typical Maronite, cantankerous, dour and relentless, and he voiced the complaints of his people openly and without hesitation.

And the Maronites had some cause for complaint. They had always been in sympathy with the French back away even to the days of the Crusades. For this friendship they had suffered. They had been ill-treated and massacred, and their reward had been the independence that the French Government had forced the Sultan in 1890 to give them. The Maronites had been the basis of the French claim to Syria. When the French took the mandate they were the only people who welcomed them.

At first the French had decided to rule the country as a federation of states grouped round the Lebanon, where they could count on loyalty and friendship. In 1920 General Gouraud, and again in 1926 Monsieur de Jouvenal increased its size, brought a number of Moslems and Druses under its rule, and made Beyrouth, the administrative centre of Syria, its capital. The federation failed, and the French decided to unite Syria under one government and to rule it by a parliament with the co-operation of the Syrians, but the Maronites stoutly refused to give up their independence. The old friends of France became her opponents. A dozen reasons for irritation sprang up. The Maronites objected to the increasing interference by the French officials in their internal affairs; to the unfair distribution of the custom receipts; to the adjustment of the Ottoman debt.

As all the peoples of the Middle East, they began to regret the Ottoman Empire, with its slack, lazy ways. They had forgotten the old injustices and the insecurity, and were angered to fury by rulers who had irritating ideas of efficiency, who made laws which they expected to be kept and not side-stepped, and who methodically collected taxes. Week by week the Maronites grew crustier and more sullen. I got the impression that their resentment could easily become active, and that unless they were very carefully handled the French would have serious trouble.

My last night I slept in the *muktar's* house at Ghusta, which, like every Maronite house, stood on the edge of a precipice. Before the low doorway was a minute terrace surrounded with cactus plants, where the family slept when the nights grew over hot. Sheer below us was the sea, misted with heat, so that it was like clouded silver.

The house was of rough stone, with a flat mud roof, and consisted of one room. It was scrupulously clean, its mud floor shiny from use. Inside the door was a

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small square, where I left my boots, and in a corner a piece of matting with two red rugs laid out for sitting on. At one end was a curtain behind which there were a number of heavy boxes containing clothes and bedding. On the walls were a few crude designs and a bracket with an ill-designed model of a saint and some artificial flowers.

I was treated well and fed liberally on coarse food. The Maronites were as kindly and friendly as their nature would let them be, but they are a hard-bitten, dour race, thrifty, hard-working, ill-natured and unlovable, and so grasping and unpleasant that there has grown up as a common saying "as cantankerous as a Maronite." Normally they took little interest in politics, but at the moment they were incensed at the threat to their independence. The men were ill to look on, often with a sort of Mephistopheles cast of face, and the women were ugly and ungainly.

Next day, hiring a car that was sent from Djouni, I took the road down to Beyrouth. It was a drive to turn the hair grey. The road was a narrow strip which traversed backwards and forwards across the cliff side, doubling back on itself in the most hideous hairpin bends and with great drops at every turn. The driver was as mad as the road. Like all Syrians, he was as illogical in his actions as a monkey. Now he would race off at top speed; now slow down without rhyme or reason. Where the traffic was thickest or the corners and gradients were the worst he would drive at his fastest, and then go slow and dawdle, utterly bored, when the road was broad and the traffic thin. He would swing across the road to attract the attention of a girl. He cursed every other chauffeur he met, and was cursed back with a flood of filth that passed as humour, and each, travelling in opposite directions at high speed, would turn round to look and wave and shout at the other. Every journey with these drivers was a perilous adventure, but at last

we reached Beyrouth, through endless streams of horses and carts and cattle coming home in the evening light. A low damp fog lay over the town, and after the exquisite air of the mountains the atmosphere was as furry-mouthed as fever.

CHAPTER VIII

BEYROUTH

BEYROUTH was full of officials, for it was the centre of the French administration and all the government was closely centralised in the High Commissioner, who lived here, with his office in the old Turkish *serai*.

The high officials were helpful and pleasant, and had all the traditional courtesy of the Frenchman, but the junior officials had all the faults of the *petit bourgeoisie* set in authority—brusqueness, a thin-skinned insistence on their dignity, and rigid departmentalism, with a dread of accepting any responsibility. They were not the best type, but hating Syria, despising the Syrians, homesick and close-fisted, they saved for the day when they would be able to go home to France and settle down on a little land. Though prodigal in men and blood, the French are mean to dourness in money, and an empire and a colony cannot thrive on such officials, nor develop on meanness.

These officials openly disliked the British, blaming them in some vague way as being responsible for all their troubles. So that often I had to take care that my personal irritation did not sour and overrule my judgment.

There were also large numbers of troops in the town ; Senegalese, bedraggled French regular soldiers who on the march must be nearly the world's most slovenly, as they are nearly the best in action. There were many Syrian mercenaries, weak, flabby men whose packs and equipment seemed too heavy for their round shoulders and their narrow chests.

Beyond the town, where there was a heave of rock and the sea had cut out a bay, known as the Bay of the Pigeon Rocks, in a camp surrounded by barbed wire, were Algerians, Arabs, Annamese, half-castes and more irregulars. It is strange that it should be possible, by the payment of a few sous and some rations, to hire men to hold their own country in bondage for a foreign race. It indicated how unfit the people were to rule themselves. In the quarter guard were negroes hobnobbing with the French N.C.O.'s, sharing their evil jokes and casting licentious eyes on the girls of a school walking past in pairs. The use of such troops to hold Syria had made the name of the French stink in the nostrils.

As I came back, the feet of the Lebanon were hidden by the rising heat, and the snows stood out far above against a sky blinded by the sun's glare. Outside the lodge gates of the American College, loafing and ogling the girls, lounged a number of students. They were flabby Syrian boys, good-looking in the effeminate Syrian way and wearing loud reach-me-down suits. They were jeering at some villagers who went by in their quaint country clothes and with their women veiled. Most of the boys were from up country, and their own mothers were probably veiled.

One of them caught sight of the Grand Chelebi of the Mevlevi Dervishes. He had been expelled from Konia by the Turkish Government, and was living in Beyrouth, and was out for his evening walk in his flowing robes and tall hat, with two ascetic Dervishes as his bodyguard behind him—stalking along as if he lived in the princely days of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The students became vulgarly uproarious at his expense, until at last he deigned to look at them and his attendants threatened with their eyes, when the students were suddenly silent and disappeared.

The American College and America as a whole have much to answer for. They have brought unbelief in

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the old faiths and codes and have given nothing to replace what they have destroyed. They have introduced advanced American ideas into this primitive country, and yet are both unwilling and unable to take any responsibility for the results. Often the college has made of a contented boy a disgruntled youth, for he will not go back to his old life on the land of his fathers or to other employment, and as there is no new opening for him, he loafs in the cafés, unhappy and discontented, and eventually becomes a cheap politician.

Side by side with the college the Christian missionaries have had their headquarters in Beyrouth for many years. They have laboured assiduously, offering hospitals and schools with one hand and Bible and Prayer-book with the other, giving a zest to religion by the prospects of a commercial career. The results have not been pleasant. Wherever the missionaries have influenced the Syrian they have taken from him any stability and virtues which his own traditions and beliefs could give him, and they have offered him nothing to fill the gap. They have vulgarised him in the clothes he wears, in his outlook on life, in his speech and his manners and his aims. He has remained Oriental, but having adopted the in-essentials of Western civilisation, he has become unhappy and less pleasant than before. The material on which the missionaries worked was bad; the results they have produced are infinitely worse.

Such results are not surprising, for the missionaries have based their work on a materialised perversion of Christianity. Christianity was born in Syria—for Palestine and Syria are all one Holy Land—as a spiritual Eastern religion in a spiritual Eastern land. During the early centuries it adopted and sometimes absorbed the pagan festivals. It was filled with Greek ideas and overlaid with Roman ceremonies. Later it was adjusted to the Western outlook by Puritans and Protestants, and eventually materialised to suit a commercial civilisation and to the American outlook on life. And then

out of the farthest West came the American missionaries to offer the patchwork result to the land of its birth, with the attraction of material prosperity added as a bait.

As long as the Turks ruled, and Abdul Hamid, the Red Sultan, suppressed all education, the missionaries and their schools, protected by the Powers, had been the only outlet for ambitious Syrians. With the end of the Turkish rule and the establishment of State schools and liberty of learning by the French, together with greater facilities for travelling, the influence of the missionaries was rapidly growing less.

CHAPTER IX

THE SYRIAN COAST

I WAS eager as before to leave Beyruth with its crude uproar and stench-laden atmosphere, and finding a chance acquaintance going to the country of the Nusairi to visit his estates, I took a passage with him on a coasting steamer going north.

I had gone in the evening to a café to meet him and make the final arrangements. It was crowded with Arabs and Syrians, drinking coffee, pulling on gurgling water-pipes, spitting with a wealth of vomitic preparation, playing tric-trac and quarrelling and arguing over their eternal politics. On a cheap platform sat a row of tired, uninterested girls, harlots by trade. Now and again a man with a violin would start up and a girl would come forward, and while she screeched the shrill notes of a love-song she would walk up and down, rolling her hips and breasts.

While the girls went to get some food two Russian artists came on, a girl and a man. They danced with abandon, as if they were part of some superb ballet in a great theatre filled with a brilliant audience to applaud them. They whirled and poised and stepped, interpreting the music beaten out of a cracked piano by another Russian. They flung away their art in prodigal waste, for the Arabs who filled the broken-down, smoke-filled, foul-aired café hardly noticed them. The artists of no other nation could have done that without deteriorating to the Arab level.

My companion, to show his higher standard of education, copied me in applause. He was a little fat man

with a white flabby face, a mouth full of irregular dirty teeth and a dripping moustache. He was a Syrian, wearing day in and day out, and I suspected at night too, a lounge suit bought out of an American store, which was spattered with food stains and creased into a thousand preposterous wrinkles. At Syrians he shouted shrilly in guttural Arabic. To me he talked in broken French or English, or in worse Turkish. He had business—buying silk—in Tripoli and in the coast towns of the Alouite State. After that he planned to go on to inspect his estates in the mountains behind Lattakia, where lived the clans and the secret sects of the Nusairi.

A storm, which had somewhat cleared the air, was still grumbling along the face of the mountains of the Lebanon as the ship throbbed her way out of the harbour.

It was late evening as we crossed the Bay of Djouni. We kept close under the foothills, which, piled steeply up from the shore, were crowded along every ridge and crest, with the red-roofed villages set among gardens and trees; and I could see our route among the Maronite villages far up the mountain side, and the places I had visited from Beyrouth—the ford across the Dog River and above it the cliff that, like some gigantic page of a book, held inscribed in live stone the signatures and inscriptions of every conqueror who had come marching south for the wealth of Egypt; and beyond that the mouth of the ravine down which raced the red Adonis River from its sacred caves above Afqa, to leap raging into the sea, and beyond that again the ancient town of Byblus, where in their startled discovery of the resurrection of the soul the Phœnicians had established the worship of Astarte and Elioun and the Ancients had performed their rites to Adonis and Aphrodite.

Then the sun dived into the sea, and a timid crescent moon slid down behind the haze of twilight. Beneath us, heaving her long shoulders, the tideless sea rolled by to roar and whisper on the now-dim shore; and out

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of the East came Night, flinging his black cloak across the sky and then coaxing out one by one the trembling stars.

We were in the dark. The shore villages were no more than handfuls of sparks in the gloom. Beyond, the dim hills climbed up as shadowy outlines until they reached far above us, still in the light of the dying day, the great mountains of the Lebanon towering up, tremendous, superb, peak on peak snow-covered, close against the pale stars.

And down on the surface of the black, moving waters, blinded and deaf as I was from living in great cities, suddenly I felt the magic of this land, realised its age, its wisdom, and its timeless history.

"Mystery," said my companion, coming across the deck from the glare of the first-class saloon. "This is a land of mystery; the mountains the mother of many religions, and even to-day still full of secrets"—and for a second I could have struck this unkempt gnome of a man, so much did I resent and react against his intruding on my innermost thoughts.

We rounded, before the dawn, the rocks which guard Tripoli from the south wind, and went early ashore.

The morning was my own, for my companion was doing business in a café over cups of black coffee with other fat men, monstrously built men, with chins and bodies full of creases. Among them were one or two who were thin, angular, acid and lean. They had vicious eyes and evil faces.

If man be fashioned in the image of God, then the world had better become godless. But this must be a belief born only out of the blasphemy of men's own conceit; for from Alexandretta to Alexandria, whether they be Arabs, Syrians, Jews, Levantines or Egyptians, these tradesmen of the coast towns have not one virtue, not one lovable characteristic, mental, moral or physical.

For a while I watched the silk merchants bargain, throw up arms in dissent, get up angrily on legs bowed

with fat, hold whispered conferences in corners, and return fingering their strings of beads to talk again with sly smiles. Then I went out into the street, glad to be among the crowds of uneducated peasants, jostling and bargaining at the diminutive booths of shops, and to watch the Dervishes with their high hats and the Maronite priests in skull-caps go hurrying by.

The streets were crowded with villagers and their animals, with men hawking their wares : sellers of Persian sherbet and ice-cold water ; vendors of rugs, and shawls, and sweetmeats ; and crafty-eyed money-changers stalking slowly along clinking a pile of silver *medjieh* pieces from hand to hand. There was the uproar and confusion of many people bargaining, of shopmen crying the quality of their goods, and drivers of loaded donkeys shouting to the crowd to give way.

I followed the flagged alleys of streets. Sometimes they twisted between the shops under trellis-work where vines struggled to put forth leaves. At others they dived beneath long dark vaults of arches built of grey stone, where water dripped and lichens and ferns grew in the crevices ; and now and again a brass-studded door would open and a veiled woman come out, and I would see beyond a courtyard where a fountain played and where there were orange trees in flower.

And my Western mind rapped impatiently with the Knuckle of Inquiry on the closed doors of the East. Sometimes they were opened to show beyond luring half-views, and then again closed firmly against my intrusion.

Descending some steps, I came to the central mosque, and as already the heat of the day was close I chose a cool corner in the courtyard and sat down beside a grey-bearded Turk.

Very quickly we fell into conversation, and a crowd collected, squatting round us, wondering that I talked Turkish, but politely asking me no direct questions.

The town was inhabited mainly by Moslems—they told me in reply to my inquiries—and by devout Moslems

keeping the good strict old rules, and not allowing their women to go shameless and uncovered in the streets. The Turks of Turkey were good men and stout-hearted, and Mustapha Kemal the Ghazi was a great hero, but for the minute they had been swept off their feet into a sort of Bolshevik madness. They would recover and come back to the old days. Anyway, the old days were better than this new foreign rule.

Then the crowd fell suddenly silent, as if they had been indiscreet, until I asked them for news of the Nusairi, when they looked at me queerly.

"I go to visit them," I said. "I am told that they are Moslems, but with strange ideas, not praying in mosques, but honouring Ali in the Moon."

"They are not Moslems!" said the old man curtly.

"Then they are Christians?" I asked, accustomed to divide all whom I met into these two groups.

"No, not Christians either," he replied. "We do not know what they are: some offspring of the accursed Persian Shiah—*hiwan* they are," he continued, with a look of intense disgust on his wrinkled face, "*hiwan*, animals, beasts." And the crowd nodded its assent, for it consisted of men of the Sunni persuasion, who prayed towards Mecca, and hated, even worse than they hated Christians and Jews, the Shiahs who worship at Kerbela and honour Ali and the *imams*.

"Ah!" said another man, "the Turks knew how to deal with the Nusairi. They treated them as unbelievers and trod them down; but these French encourage them."

Already the sun was high. The courtyard was filling with men washing before they went into the mosque, and an old *muezzin* was slowly climbing the long stairs of the square-shaped minaret to cry the Call to Mid-day Prayer.

The crowd ushered me to the steps of the courtyard, and with salaams and dignified gestures, and with many wishes for a good journey bade me a ceremonious good-bye.

From his café my companion came reluctantly, heaving himself up into the back seat of the car we had hired, stopping now and again to carry on a guttural, vulgar, short-of-breath argument with his gesticulating, noisy acquaintances.

Then we were away, out through the gardens of olives and lemons and orange trees, between hedges of enormous cacti, under the ruins of the great castle of Count Raymond—for Tripoli had once been the centre of the principalities of the Crusaders on the coast—and so we came out on to the shore-plain beyond. To our right, rounding the northern end of the Lebanon, ran a deep valley carrying a road up to Homs.

“Beyond,” said my companion, pointing to mountains further north reaching away into the distance, “are the mountains of the Nusairi. We are now across the border out of the Lebanon State, and in the State of the Alouites—which was a name invented by the French when they took over control of the country.”

CHAPTER X

FROM TRIPOLI TO LATTAKIA

THE shore plain, sweltering in the heat and covered with ripe corn, stretched far ahead of us between the sea and the foothills. Laid out across it, as if for our inspection as we raced by, were the jumbled remains of thirty centuries of man's endeavours—Phœnician tombs, a Greek temple, a Roman forum, a Crusader's castle, a broken Turkish bridge, a French gendarme post.

At Tartous we watched a negro weigh, by the sackful, silk cocoons which glowed like tarnished gold, beneath the wall of a ruined church built in golden sandstone. It was as beautiful and spacious as a cathedral. Once it had been consecrated to Our Lady, miracles had been performed in it, and Crusaders had come piously to beg its relics. Now its traced windows were torn down in gaps, its floors were fouled with offal, and the tombs of knights in armour in its crypt were newly desecrated. Before the Church to Our Lady had been built in this place there had been a shrine to the Mother of the Gods.

At Baniyas, where the hovels of the town, topped by a long barracks for Syrian troops under French officers, crowded along the shore, we sat on backless chairs, surrounded by the sluggard, lounging inhabitants, and drank black coffee.

A spur of the Nusairi mountains ran out steep above us. From it frowned down the great castle of Merhab, massive and grim, with towers and keeps, dungeons and moat and drawbridge, with turrets and embrasured

battlements, constructed of immense blocks of grey stone—a fitting reminder of those crusading centuries which move as it were in a dim twilight of history; for this was the great Castle of the Knights Hospitallers, built to defend the Crusader principalities of the coast against the Assassins in their mountain fortresses of Quadmus and Nasyaf above Hama.

By the mean village of Djeble we found a Roman town strewn in grey ruins over a hillside; beyond that, on a rise, a monument in white marble to a French officer who had been killed in the fighting in 1920, "Pour la Patrie"; and in the valley below, where an old Turkish bridge crossed a pleasant stream, a solitary olive tree, beneath which we halted to eat a luscious melon.

I have seen an olive tree in the hills of Cyprus behind Poli round whose trunk the Phœnicians piled the slag from their copper mines; and there are to-day in the Garden of Gethsemane olive trees beneath which Christ may have walked as He strove in the Agony. But these must be children to the old greybeard of a tree under which we sat, which rivalled in age even the hills themselves.

A Dervish had been buried beneath the tree, and the wall round his tomb made a corner with the tree-trunk where I could rest comfortably:

It may have been that the spirit of the old tree entered into me, for in the drowsiness of the late afternoon I saw go past, down this passage-way of the ancient world, the pageant of the centuries—envoys and ambassadors with swaggering retinues from great empire to great empire, from Babylon and Egypt and Persia. Rich caravans of merchants swayed by me, trading from great city to great city—Antioch and Bagdad, Aleppo and Thebes. From far below the Euphrates came Phœnicians, and the coast bustled with ports as the traders sailed out beyond the horizon to the west, to Spain and Cornwall.

And there came also great armies, pillaging and destroying as they conquered—Sargon of Akkad; the Hittites from below the Black Sea, dressed in short tunic and high-peaked cap and long, turned-up shoes; and Philistines; and Egyptians carrying the severed hands of their enemies at their belts; and Arabs and Hebrews with their crinkled, black-bearded settlers; and that terror of the ancient world, the Assyrian, mutilating, pillaging, destroying; and Sennacherib and his successors on their way down to the destruction of Egypt and the sack of Thebes.

Again and again it was repeated—the cities built, the religions founded and the shrines honoured, the wealth accumulated, the pomp and majesty of law and order established, and then came the raider and the destroyer and the destructive armies. The land was laid waste, the wealth was poured out or scattered, and the people were led away into captivity.

For a while the Romans built and held the peace, and after them the Byzantines, and then commenced more raiders and armies wave on wave, to rip and tear and destroy—Arabs from the south, Tartars out of Central Asia, Hulagu to lay Bagdad waste, and Timur the Lame to create deserts wherever he rode. Crusaders and Saracens and Assassins and Ishmaeli fought across the plain; and when these were finished the Osmanli Turk possessed the land.

And I saw life disappear: the people sank into poverty, the towns became ruins, the villages mud hovels. No caravans of merchants went swinging by, only now and again some ragged troops. The ports became deserted and the sea empty of ships. The desolation created by the Tartar was followed by the squalor created by Turkish rule.

For a great space of time it remained so. The road beside us was deserted, for the hills opposite were full of brigands, and no man was safe from them or from the rapacity and the infliction of the soldiery.

After that there was a new stir. Hurrying northwards there went by a few ragged Turkish troops, a *pasha* or two in frock coats, and some decrepit officials, and herding them along came the British and the French victorious armies. The Ottoman rule was gone, and the land was flung wide open to the world.

I woke to find my companion shaking my arm and saying that we must move, as it was evening.

Beside me the old Dervish lay quiet beneath the venerable tree. From its branches fluttered strips of cloths, pagan votive-offerings from the peasants. The monument to the Frenchman who had died "Pour la Patrie" stood solitary and white in the sun. He was a stranger in the land.

Close by was a stretch of ripe corn and reapers at work—a line of men in a half circle cutting with hand-sickles. Behind these were their women, gathering up the sheaves and carrying them to kneeling camels, and beside the road, in gay light clothes, a crowd was waiting for permission to glean, and chattering softly together like starlings on a November morning.

I saw that great changes were at hand in this country. Its distant past had been splendid in spiritual endeavour and material success. It had been ruined by successive hordes of devastating raiders from the north and from Central Asia. It had been crushed down under the deadening centuries of Ottoman rule. Shut away from the outside world and essentially Oriental, it had sunk into formless sloth and featureless decay. It had become placid and characterless. Now it was clay ready to be moulded. As yet it was hardly touched by outside influences. The reapers in the corn were reaping as their fathers had done for a thousand years before them. The villages I could see dotted over the blue hills beyond were as primitive as in the days of the Apostles. Only along the shore the contact of the East and West had produced the breed to which belonged my fat com-

panion and his friends of the Tripoli café. For centuries Syria had been closed. Now it stood wide open and ready for the new influences already at work.

As I drowsed there under the olive tree I realised the great wave of post-war materialism which had swept over Europe, of which the driving force and the crest was America, with its incredible material prosperity. That wave was just reaching Syria, bringing its bustling salesmen; its cheap standardised products; its cinemas and wild-headlined newspapers; its doctrines that life is short and must be speeded up like a car roaring round a racing track; its impatience with easy ways and inefficiency; its conception that a man should put vague theory behind him and lay hold for himself of the tangible.

I realised too that such a wave would be more revolutionary than the most vibrating of religions or the most violent political upheaval. It would swirl down into the life of each individual, sweep away the placid past, destroy the old beliefs and accepted facts. It would rip the moss from the pleasant rocks of the tranquil past and leave them bare, or smear them with the mud of factories and slum cities. There would be no gradual evolution of the old into the new, but the new would come in on great overwhelming breakers.

The road beside me was a symbol. It was built as a racing track, with corners graded for speed and a fine surface. Hitherto all locomotion in the Alouite State had been by donkey, horse or camel, and there had been no wheeled vehicles; so the French built the road for the motor-cars and left a rough path for the animals to use. Here was the sudden leap from the old to the new, from the slow-moving, quiet mule to the rattling, hurrying machinery of the car. At any moment the line of reapers in the corn might turn into a reaping-machine, and the spiritual and cultural life of the people be equally revolutionised.

The gates, locked for centuries, stood wide open, and

change was sweeping in on a flood-tide, but as yet it was too early to judge of the results.

My companion had grown impatient. The cafés in Lattakia would be filling up and his cronies waiting for him. Our driver wished to be in before dark, as he mistrusted his headlights. Already the reapers were finished; the gleaners were hurrying to make use of all the light that remained, and the loaded camels were swinging away by a path towards the hills.

We left Djebble behind us—a jumble of hovels, a minaret and a palm tree or two, and one stone building for the Government officials. The old olive tree shivered silver grey in a fresh sea-breeze. The monument to the French officer stood white and lonely in this foreign land.

We travelled by the same rolling plain between the mountains and the shore. The sun sank suddenly into the sea on our left beyond Cyprus, flared up into a blaze, and then died as suddenly into dusk, so that the shadows swirled round us like grey smoke. We passed over the Kebir river by a rocking, dangerous trestle bridge, and as the mountains of the Nusairi around us turned purple in the evening light and the first stars showed out over the sea, we came into Lattakia.

CHAPTER XI

BEHIND LATTAKIA

LATTAKIA was a country town drowsing peacefully by the seashore. It was the capital of the Alouite or Nusairi state. For a few weeks early each summer it roused itself to quarrel and haggle over the price, and then to buy and ship away in great fragrant bales the renowned Abouriha tobacco which the Nusairi tribesmen brought down from the mountains. Then it slept placidly again, within an amphitheatre of low hills, and surrounded by vineyards and gardens of fig trees and olives.

It was rarely disturbed. A few native-built sailing-ships plied along the coast, and once a week, on her way back from Mersina to Egypt, the steamer of the Khedivial Line called for any freight—provided the weather would allow her to anchor off in the open sea.

In the walls of its houses and of its twisting, vault-like alleys of streets were mixed the relics of thirty centuries of ruins—arches and carvings, coats-of-arms, inscriptions, and marble capitals; a dilapidated Turkish fort built of flint pillars and pieces from ancient temples guarded a diminutive artificial harbour whose sea wall was made of blocks of stones cut for Crusaders' castles.

The French governor was a man of discretion, and he understood the mentality of the people. He was determined not to rush reforms on to them. He had loosened the town out a little, driven a broad road through it and built a garden of flowers and soft-playing fountains by the seashore. He had constructed a pleasant hotel and a pipe-line that brought good drinking water into the town—a thing unknown since the Roman aqueduct

broke down five centuries before. In Lattakia the French had achieved some measure of success.

Of the Alouite State the Nusairi form a large percentage. None the less, in Lattakia I could get little information about them except that they lived in clans under *sheiks* in the mountains which showed as hazy outlines across the shore-plain behind the town.

They were clearly an ancient people, for the Phœnicians when they came from the Persian Gulf in 2500 B.C. found them here, and it is probable that they were in these hills even before the waves of Semitic invasion rolled up from the south and decided the character of Syria some thousand years before the Phœnicians arrived.

They had no history. They had never founded an empire, a religion or a philosophy. Except in an occasional quarrel with their neighbours, they had no aptitude or inclination for war or conquest. Throughout the centuries they had kept strictly to themselves. Their strength had lain in their acquiescence in the demands of any aggressor, their acceptance of any rulers, and their willingness to adopt any outward forms required by the needs of the moment. Only under great provocation had they revolted in 1920 against the French. Already that fighting was forgotten and the wounds were healed. The country was happier than it had been for centuries. Whereas in Turkish times it had been overrun with brigands, now there was reasonable security of life and limb. A traveller might journey in safety through the hills and the villagers could work unmolested in their fields. There was a measure of rough justice for all, an end of impositions and forced labour, and above all the hated conscription had been abolished.

The Nusairi had a secret system of life, but they neither defended nor expressed their beliefs, while at the same time they maintained them tenaciously, together with a strict and secret social organisation of their own.

The people of Lattakia spoke of them with some

contempt, but with a sense of mystery, so that I was eager to get on, and the minute my companion was finished with his business we set out, taking a motor-car for the first few miles back along the shore road by which we had come.

Then we turned eastward into a track which the French plan one day to make into the main road over the mountains to Aleppo.

At once we were in a primitive world. I had a sense of being suddenly close to Nature, not the cold Nature of the open sky and the majestic sunsets, but of the land rank with the earth-smells, pregnant and fertile under the rich sun. A partridge dusted itself in the track. A dove fled into a dark tree where linnets were calling. A myriad bees and great painted butterflies worked and played on the grass and flowers which grew fragrant and luxuriant up to the edge of the hot corn. The soft, scented air was full of the clamour of the tree-cricket, and a wild-eyed people were reaping the corn.

A tall man with a black beard and steady, deep eyes stepped aside to let me pass. On his wrist he carried a yellow-eyed hawk, and in a net bag on his back was a landrail caught by its wings in the mesh. A quail disturbed slid over the corn. The man threw the hawk at it so that it struck true. Picking them up and separating them, he fixed the hawk back on his wrist and holding the quail with his teeth he tied its wings together by two feathers and dropped it within his shirt. The black-bearded man holding the quail with his white teeth while he tied its wings, the fierce hawk, the landrail with its numb eyes—there was no pity here. They neither asked nor expected it. Nor was there any cruelty, for the one implies the other, and it requires an educated imagination to create both.

We crossed a river where the current ran fiercely as high as the axles of the wheels, and bumped slowly up into the hills beyond. The track became a path along a cliff. A ravine barred our way, and leaving the car

we climbed down by a steep path to a stream, beside which we awaited the animals we had arranged to take us the rest of our journey.

We were met by a crowd of men who came running and laughing. Salaaming and kissing hands, they heaved my fat companion on to a donkey and helped me up on to a grey stallion, where I sat perched on a high country saddle.

They were wild, black-eyed men, ragged and unkempt. They wore long, crudely made boots of native leather, into which they tucked the bottoms of big, capacious trousers; a shirt which came to the knees, a short coat with sleeves cut off at the elbows, and round their stomach a belt of many layers of coloured cloth, which they used as pockets to hold all their possessions—a tin box for tobacco and cigarette papers, a steel and tinder, a cloth bag tied by the neck holding a few coins, a knife, and perhaps a ring with a name on it for a seal and signature, since none of them could write, and identity papers to show to any officious nosy gendarme. On their heads were small skull-caps. Though wild-eyed, they had the dark, effeminate look which is characteristic of the Afghans and the Albanian highlanders.

They led us down a gorge where a river raged and out beyond into valleys which were fragrant with the scents of flowers and trees. On each side the hills towered up, covered with scrub of small oak and juniper and myrtle, and here and there clumps of Aleppo pines. On every level space there was corn. Everywhere there was water. The valleys sang with the sound of streams. Again and again we had to ford. Even on the peaks of the steepest and highest hills there were springs of water, delicious and cool.

Far up on the crests were villages of mud huts built in the shape of a square, with one better house of stone on a corner for the landowner or his agent.

In one valley I found the ruins of the Roman aqueduct which once had carried drinking water twenty

miles down to Lattakia. It was a wonderful piece of engineering, now travelling through a hill, now twisting along a cliff side; and it reminded me once more of the prosperous, splendid centuries of the past, of this land then overrun and devastated by the hordes of invaders out of Central Asia, and of the dreary five hundred years of deadening Turkish rule. And now these primitive people snatched a precarious living out of its richness.

Towards late evening we reached our destination, a village on the spur of a hill running high over a long valley, where we were received with every appearance of pleasure. The villagers, men, women and children, flocked out to meet us and crowded round my companion, who, perched on his donkey, held out a fat hand to be kissed, and leered fatly at their enthusiasm.

After some formality we ate our dinner squatting on carpets, and, being tired, I went early to sleep in a room on a roof top.

CHAPTER XII

A NUSAIRI VILLAGE

I WAS awake and out on the flat mud roof before dawn. The village was placid; a few men sat smoking under a wall, and the women had already gone to work in the fields. The main street was the dried bed of a winter stream. The houses were of mud bricks with low doorways and no windows, so as to keep out both the heat and the cold. Inside they were dark. From the ceilings, which were constructed of brushwood holding up mud, hung long festoons of tobacco in rows. The air was choking and eye-splitting with pungent smoke, for they fumigate in their houses the tobacco they grow, and they live in the dense smoke of smouldering oak and pine.

The sanitary system consisted of throwing the refuse over the edge of the steep hill on which the village stood, and there the chickens scratched and the pigs routled the garbage down the hillside.

Between the houses were a number of brushwood huts perched precariously on four poles. These they called *kharms*, and used them as sleeping quarters in the summer, when the houses became over-hot and the fleas over-persistent.

To each a rough ladder led up, and over the door were tiny windows in pairs, with the edges finished off with mud. I asked why they were in pairs, and was told that if a spirit wished to enter, any spirit already inside could get out without the two meeting at the window-sill; which seemed to me somewhat unfriendly of the spirits in these parts.

Below the *kharms* were tied the cattle. Some children, who had shed their one shirt-like garment, and a few chickens, who looked as if they had been plucked but were equally unashamed of their stark-nakedness, stalked and grubbed together in the manure between the cattle, which moved restlessly under the countless flies. A whimsical kid came butting in, kicking his heels, and was chased out by an infuriated hen with a newly-hatched brood; and now and again a pig would come grumbling and grunting along and scatter the whole crowd.

Below us the valley stretched far away in both directions, its bottom full of vines and olives and tobacco, and its sides covered with scrub, except where tiny fields of corn had been worked out on ledges. In the morning light it was asheen with the wings of myriads of red-bodied dragon-flies, hunting incessantly, and from far below came up the pleasant sound of a stream racing between boulders.

My companion was sitting among the men who squatted by a wall, and he called to me to come down from the roof-top, for the *sheik* of the district was paying us a visit.

The *sheik* was an old man, tall and stately, with a long beard going white and a face clear-cut, fine and ascetic, with the keen, beaked outline of a hawk's head, but with no evil or fierceness in it. His eyes were almond-shaped and cool and placid, and his actions deliberate and unhurried. He replied with a slow gesture to my salaam, ran a shrewd eye over me, and then sat looking away across the valley.

He had a great reputation for sanctity and for powers of healing, especially in cases of poison and snake-bite; and his influence over a large area was such that the French had tried to subsidise him, but he had refused. He refused also my cigarettes, for though the ordinary Nusairi will share with any man, the *sheiks* will take nothing from a Christian.

We sat mostly in silence, smoking. Now and again,

in reply to my questions, one of the other men would answer for the *sheik*, and though the old man carried himself with a sort of concentrated, self-centred dignity, as one expecting respect as a matter of course, there was no hauteur nor disdain in him.

He gave an impression of tranquillity and of stillness, of mind and body held steady and at rest. It was this stillness which I noticed in the village round us. The squatting men talked Arabic, but with few gesticulations and with all the harsh guttural sounds of that language softened down. The sun was now up, and those of the women who had not gone to the fields were passing with pitchers on their shoulders, coming up with water from the stream; others were sweeping out the houses, feeding the cattle and baking bread in open ovens. But they worked silently and moved on bare, silent feet. There were no sounds of shrill voices nor of quarrels or discordant calls. The children played with a strange sage air. They had faces as ancient and wrinkled as those of new-born monkeys.

Our morning meal was set in the upper room of the only stone house in the village and where my companion's estate agent lived. Below was a stable, from which came the pungent smells of cattle. The room was white-washed, but without any decoration or furniture. The windows had no glass, only wood shutters. On the floor were rush matting and some carpets, and the bedding of the agent and his family was rolled up and stacked in one corner.

They brought the food in on a metal tray a yard broad, which was set on a tripod six inches high. Squatting on the carpets, my companion and I faced each other, while the *sheik* sat in a corner with his back to the wall.

My companion, his short legs crossed under him and his paunch resting on his knees, started at once with eager hands. Women came to the door with more plates, which the men took and piled up before us—*bulgur* or

soaked grain like coarse porridge, honey, *yaourt* or curdled sheep's milk, eggs fried and floating luxuriously in tail fat, a chicken boiled, a partridge—out of season—cooked to soft shreds, and bread made of wholemeal wheat ground between the stones of the village mill and baked in great thin flaps two feet round, one of which I used, being perhaps over-dainty, for napkin, finger-cleaner and mouth-wiper.

My companion ate steadily, with an obvious and noisy relish, now and again picking out a toothsome morsel or tearing off a piece of white meat to offer to me, belching occasionally with satisfaction, and at times with the long nail of a little finger releasing a juicy piece of meat from between two teeth so that it might be rechewed.

A swarm of flies followed the food, and three men brought branches of a tree of which the flowers were a delicate purple in colour and of soft threads, so that a branch looked like an ostrich-feather fan. One stood behind me; a second stroked gently over the food; and the third waved the flies from my companion with as much ceremony as if he had been an Egyptian Pharaoh.

Still more women came whispering to the door, carrying food, until at last, and long since past repletion, we refused and leant back for coffee and to smoke. At once the remains of the food were snatched and carried out and divided among the villagers.

Without preliminaries, with just a phrase of good wishes, the *sheik* left us, and without looking back he strode silently away, leaning on his long stick, the men grouped round him.

Using this village as our centre, we travelled for days up and down the fragrant valleys, visiting the extensive estates and villages of my companion and talking to the people.

The Nusairi are accused of being thieves and vagabonds, and in the plains the townsmen sneered at them, but I learned to like them. They laughed often and freely, but softly, almost silently. Easy, simple jokes

took their fancy: a man stumbled crossing a ford and fell up to the neck into a pool; a horse bucked in devilment and upset its rider; one asked what the houses in London were like, and was told by my companion that the cattle in England had better "dining and bedrooms" than the fat agent in this stone house on the village corner. These amused them.

Both men and women looked at me with open interest, but it was a pleasant interest, without any of the vulgar, peering, scandal-searching curiosity which irritates one among the noisy Greeks.

They lived close to the starvation limit, yet unconcerned. At the same time they were intensely reserved. Any questions as to their ways of life were met by silence or acquiescence in an implied answer. I saw no churches, mosques or places of worship; nor did I hear these villagers call on God in their conversation, as do all the other peoples of the Near East, whether Christian, Moslem or Jew, with a tiring persistency: "Allah! By Allah I did not do it. God knows I speak the truth. Let me go by the Mercy of Allah: I have ten children starving at home. Allah! Allah! Hollah!" of some Arab caught thieving, and every word a lie.

From a Christian who lived in one village as an agent for the tobacco, and from a Turkoman Moslem I learnt a little about these people.

When they wished to pray, the Nusairi went far away into the hills with the *sheik*, and there, in a place guarded from all intruders, carried out their rites. But this was a privilege enjoyed by only a few of the men, for they were divided rigidly into initiated and uninitiated, and the women were never initiated.

The Turkoman had lived among the Ishmaeli and the Druses, and he said that it seemed very much the same system as practised by them. There was a severe initiation ceremony. The novice must be twenty years of age, of good repute, and produce twelve sponsors as to his character and his trustworthiness. These twelve

had to produce three sureties for themselves in turn. Hitherto, no Nusairi had revealed the details of their beliefs and ceremonies. They seemed to pay great respect to the sun and the stars, and were popularly believed to pray to "Ali in the Moon," though what that exactly meant was not clear. In the ceremonies they used wine freely in libation, and the Christian said that the wine was the material symbol of the revelation of God, who was Unity, but He had been revealed to the world seven times by seven prophets, Adam, Noah, Jacob, Moses, Solomon, Jesus and Mohammed, and each prophet had been helped by two assistants, so that the Unity had been revealed seven times by trinities of prophets, and to denote this the mystic Arabic letters of *Ain*, *Mim* and *Sin* were used.

The Christian, moreover, was a Freemason of an Oriental Lodge. He had noticed certain resemblances to his own craft, but when he tried to get into touch he was treated with the greatest suspicion.

Beyond these confused, meaningless and meagre hints, the impenetrable, laughing reserve of the people made it impossible for me to find anything out.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NUSAIRI HILLMEN

IT was pleasant travelling in this country, for the people were happy and kindly. The men were bedraggled lazy fellows, but the women worked steadily.

They were fine women, tall and straight, and both deft in their movements and strong. I saw one without effort catch a half-grown calf by the fetlock, throw it on its back, pick it up by its four legs, and after carrying it for a hundred yards toss it easily into a pool, where men were washing the cattle.

They had a gallant, easy manner, and on the mountain paths they swung by us, travelling on naked feet with long, easy strides. They loved bright clothes, especially of orange and sun-yellow. They wore great trousers, over these a long robe from shoulder to knee, drawn in with a girdle at the waist. A little brocaded waistcoat was buttoned so as to catch up their breasts. On their heads were circular hard caps, round which they bound a coloured veil so that the tails hung down their backs, together with their black hair in long plaits, and the whole gave them a mediæval look.

They did most of the work; and as we passed them in the hills or in the fields they would stop and in a slow, deliberate manner give us a frank, straight look, which would slowly again turn into a smile of greeting that was half luring and half shy and wholly delightful. They talked little, and then in soft, still voices.

The children were lusty, and this because no sickly child could stand the hardships of the life and because

there was no one to nurse the weaklings until they grew up and produced more weaklings. The law of the survival of the fittest was in full force. Pity did not exist.

Nature deals with the inefficient breeding by the law of the survival of the fittest. Men have struggled against the fact that they are bedded deep in—that they are, in fact, a part of Nature. They have built round themselves, like a flimsy palisade against the dangerous jungle, their civilisation. Behind it they hide, hoping that it will be a defence against Nature, and erroneously confounding Nature with the jungle.

Within the palisade they try to ignore the laws of Nature. They breed unchecked, often foully, and with no adequate control. Urged by pity, they nurse the diseased with more care than they assist the healthy. They create disease and then build hospitals and clinics to deal with it. They tend the inefficient and the weakling as if they were something of value, and so rot the basis of their civilisation. And Nature comes searching for her own and imposes her laws, though men hide in their cities and their fœtid unnatural slums.

Pity was the curse which the old gods laid on the new order when Christianity hustled them out into forgetfulness—a curse acting relentlessly, under the guise of a virtue, and destroying insidiously.

Among the Nusairi there was no such pity. There was no sentiment to create a system, as in civilised countries, whereby weakly children were tended through the agonies of sickly childhood into puling manhood and turned out to breed unrestrained. If the Nusairi children were not up to standard, they died and took their weakness with them.

The Persian Omar Khayyám in his *Rubáiyát* sighed that the hand of the Great Potter seemed sometimes to tremble, and to create here a cracked and there an unsightly jar—a blind child, a hump-backed monstrosity.

In reality the Creator experiments, always flinging

life broadcast in prodigal waste—a million living germs into a barren womb, a billion pine seeds on to an earthless rock. Now and again He collects a little dust, mixes in water, introduces a spark of life-fire and moulds the whole into human form. If the result is poor, He destroys—to mould and destroy again continuously until He is satisfied. Death and birth are but two processes in His experimental construction. It is men who interfere to save the twisted and the valueless—the syphilitic child and the hopeless cripple to become a loathsome parent. The Persian poet should have cursed men, not sighed over the Creator.

The townsmen had told me with a sneer that the Nusairi women were slaves and treated by their husbands as beasts of burden. Undoubtedly the women had few rights. Divorce was easy and also rare. They were never initiated into the inner and secret circle of the clan, but neither were many of the men. In some places the *sheiks* had the *droit de seigneur*, and could demand any woman.

The men were frankly lazy. When it was necessary, they did the heavy and the technical labour, but the women carried out all the routine work of life. One morning at 10 a.m. I wished to take a photograph in a village. A willing crowd of laughing men collected at once, but when I asked for a few women to brighten the picture, I was told that I must wait until sunset, as they had all gone to the fields to work.

Yet the women had not the manner of slaves or beasts of burden. They moved about freely, tall and gallant and unveiled. They looked me full in the face as equals. They were not shut away or separated from the men, though they often hung back in a shy way which was attractive in being feminine. The men had none of the jealousy nor of that haughty arrogance with which Arabs treat their women. Nor was there any of the attitude so marked in the Koran, and which St. Paul

expounded, that women are the "weaker vessels" both morally and physically, and to be protected and shut away from temptation and danger.

I never heard the men speak roughly nor give orders to the women, who went about their work quietly and without hesitation, as if it was all allotted. Often man and wife walked happily hand in hand, one carrying a child in the crook of an arm; and more than once I saw in a man's eyes a look of open admiration for his wife, which is something altogether rare among the peoples of the Middle East.

Sometimes it seemed to me that the women treated their bedraggled, lazy, handsome husbands much as some spiders treat their mates. The female is the stronger. She builds the web, lays the eggs, brings up the young, catches the food, treats the male as a necessity with a fine condescension; but in the case of real need hustles him out of the web. Under stress the female spider has been known to treat her mate as an emergency ration and eat him.

CHAPTER XIV

NUSAIRI RITUAL

IN all things the Nusairi were primitive. I saw them harvesting the corn, the men, the skirts of their clothing girt up round them, reaping with clumsy hand-sickles, and their women following behind collecting the sheaves in armfuls. On level places other men were preparing the circular mud threshing-floors, and below one village I rested beneath a plane tree, where beside a water-mill there were carpenters at work.

My companion had gone elsewhere, and I rested gratefully. From above a stream shot down into the mill-house and escaped raging from one side and fled away, laughing to be free again, between rocks and tall grass out of the deep shadow of the plane tree into the yellow sunlight beyond.

The carpenters were making threshing sledges. A ten-foot log was brought and hoisted on to a structure like a diving-board over a pit. There it was lashed by a complicated system of knots and wedges which indicated an equally complicated knowledge of and experience in the use of the laws of stress and strain.

It was cut into curved planks by one man above, who stood on the log and guided with a naked toe, and by two below in the pit, and with a saw which was a blade in a wooden frame kept taut by a fantasy of twisted string and a hysterical network of cords and knots. The cut planks were measured out into lines by two men using a string dipped in pitch, and not with pencil and ruler. The string was laid along the line to be marked and held firmly at each end. One man pulled it up by the centre with a finger and thumb, and let it

go suddenly, so that it beat down on to the plank and made a mark. Along the lines the planks were then chipped with a tool like a pick-axe, and pieces of flint driven in with the sharp edges projecting. Finally the planks were dressed with a clumsy adze and joined together, and the sledge was ready to be dragged hour after hour by oxen round the threshing-floor, so that the flints could beat out the grain and cut the straw into chaff.

It was an astounding piece of work in its crude effectiveness, in the immense amount of wasted labour, and in the ingenuity of the tools used. I had seen the same thing in a hundred places in the East and Near East—among the carpet-makers of Anatolia with their complex frames and bobbins and heavy stones for weights; among the silk-weavers of Damascus; among the potters outside Basra with their foot-worked turn-tables; and among the innumerable craftsmen in India who use their tools with toes as deftly as with fingers.

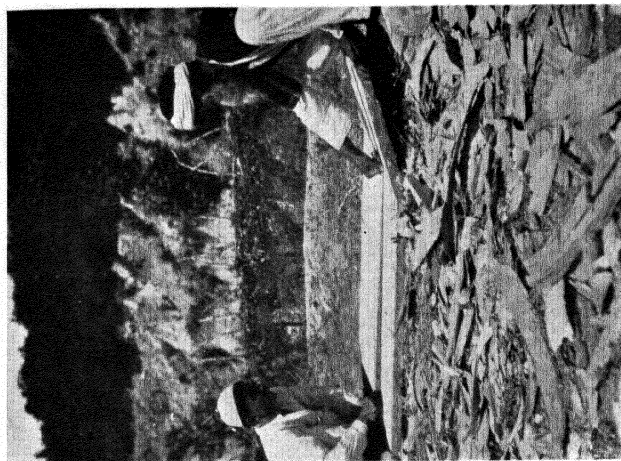
It seemed as if for centuries men had planned, evolved, and invented, until with a sort of crazy ingenuity, Oriental and perverted, they eventually produced the sickle, the camel's pack-saddle, the cord-strung saw, the threshing sledge and a hundred more implements. Then all constructive and creative effort ceased. The tools and the methods of work became fixed and standardised throughout the whole East. For twenty centuries there had been no change, and now waiting to come in were the noisy, time-saving, labour-saving racing machines evolved in the West.

Once again I saw that there could be no gradual evolution, but a leap from the standardised old to the mobile new; and once more I was left wondering what would be the result of this impact of the West on the East.

As I watched the carpenters we talked, a little lazily, for the day was hot and because the sound of the stream



NUSAIRI WOMAN HARVESTING



NUSAIRI CARPENTERS

laughing beside us was soothing. A number of villagers and a *sheik*, who had come down from villages higher up in the mountains to buy sledges for their threshing, sat squatting round, rolling and smoking cigarettes, and now and again renewed an interrupted bargaining with the carpenters as to the prices.

We talked of many things: of the crops, of the tobacco harvest and whether the Abouriha tobacco would fetch a good price; of the fighting between the Turkomans and the Turkish irregulars and the French in 1920, when all this country had been deserted and the Nusairi had revolted and their villages had been burnt. And one, more talkative than the rest, uplifted his voice, and while the others nodded their approval in time he cursed all Turks in what appeared to be a regular chant, praying for the downfall of the house of Othman—though this was already a fact, since Sultan Wahad-ed-Din, the last of the Ottoman Sultans, had been driven out by his own people in 1921 and now slept in his mean grave beneath the rubbish of the Sultan Selim mosque in Damascus—and calling down damnation on all Turks and Sunnis.

“The souls of the Jews,” he sang, “enter at death into the bodies of male apes, and those of Maronites into the bodies of swine, but the souls of Turks and Sunnis descend into the black void of annihilation!”

Of the French and their rule they spoke well. Peace and a reasonable security had been established. No one interfered with their customs. The taxes were lighter, fixed and not farmed out to rapacious money-lenders, and conscription—the hated conscription—was gone.

With us in the shade had come myriads of flies, restless and persistent, irritating men and horses. Wishing to raise a smile, I cursed the flies as the other had cursed the Turks.

“You have evil gods here,” I ended, “and one evil above the rest is Beelzebub, the God of Flies.”

Suddenly there was silence. The circle of men round me were watching me out of the corners of their eyes, suspicious, curious. Fingers that had been rolling cigarettes became motionless, poised. There was fear and hostility to me, as if I had stumbled among a gang engaged in some crime.

And I too was afraid, as if close to me there was something evil, something inhuman, primeval, malignant. And beyond the rim of shadow under the plane tree and the threat of the silent circle of men-animals I could hear the bees among the flowers and the linnets calling gaily to each other and the laughter of the hurrying stream.

"It is not meet to speak thus." It was the *sheik*, using Turkish, but mixed with high-flown Arabic words, partly probably because I had spoken Turkish at first and partly in order that the men round should not understand clearly. "It is not meet to speak thus," he repeated. "The *Names*"—he would not use a word for the Gods—"may be good; they may be evil. They are hidden in the gloom of darkness and by the blindness of light. But their ears are at your lips to catch your whispers, even your thoughts. Their hands are along your limbs to help or hurt. If you speak, speak well; but better be dumb and without thought than draw their attention. In the battle of Good and Evil take no side."

He stopped, and I rose abruptly and strode out of the shadow. I shivered in the warm, friendly sunlight as if I had come out of some cold, gloomy, evil cave. A man brought my horse without a word, and without looking back I rode away down the valley. But I knew that in the deep shadow of the plane tree the circle of men sat silently staring at the ground with unseeing eyes, waiting for me to be gone as something dangerous and to be avoided.

CHAPTER XV

A NUSAIRI DANCE

THE days grew into weeks. His work done, my companion was bubbling fretfully to get back to his streets and his cafés; and our central village decided, as a farewell, to give us a dance.

It was a moonless night with no wind except an occasional sigh among the pine trees.

They laid red carpets on a mud roof-top and piled up cushions, on which my companion, the *sheik* and I lay easily. Sprawled out face upwards, I stared into the limitless black night, pierced with the myriad stars, and saw the Milky Way swing its tremendous arch of lustre from one black jagged rim of the earth to the other. Below us the valley was a black pit, silent except for the call of a stray nightbird and the sound of the stream far down among the rocks laughing softly to itself. Round us, beyond the edge of the red carpets, crouched the elders of the village.

My companion lay at full length, propped up on the cushions. He moved restlessly, fiddling with his cigarette, continuously pulling his trousers this way and that, twitching at his coat and his moustache, adjusting and readjusting his fat body, but always maintaining his townsman's attitude of superiority and disdain at the crude efforts of these "savages." The *sheik* sat upright, cross-legged, silent and cold, calm. The firelight now and again threw his face into relief—a clear-cut silhouette, hawk-like, yet still as a piece of statuary. For myself I was disembodied, swept up into and lost in the tremendous wonder of the night.

76 TURKEY AND SYRIA REBORN

As we waited there came the distant beat of a drum and the squeal of a clarionet with a high reed pipe. I sat forward expectant. From the roof-top we looked down into a square between the houses where a great fire of pine branches and dry bracken had been lit; from which the fragrant scent of the burning wood came up to us, a primeval, haunting, luring smell. Now and again as the fire sank to hot embers a man would heap it up, and the flames would leap straight up high, so that the lurid smoke hazed out the low stars. Beyond the glare I could see the dim shapes of the silent villagers sitting waiting.

Over a hill in the dark came the musicians, and below us the people stirred and spoke together like the last whispering of a tired wave on the sand floor of a sea cave. Then the musicians reached the square, and the drummer bounded into the circle of the firelight, a wild, fantastic figure beating a huge drum. With his right hand he beat a deep note with a wooden drum-stick, and with his left a tenor note with a cane; and he beat the two one against the other in a hundred fantasies of rhythm and time, syncopated to even, out of time slowly back into time, and with such a variety of beat and metre as could make a prize negro orchestra seem tame and dull.

Already the people were lined up in a half-circle round the roaring fire, the men first, each wedged close to the next, with his left shoulder half across the body of his neighbour, and after them the women and the girls, in bright dresses of vivid oranges and reds mellowed by the firelight.

At the first they danced slowly, beating time together, two steps forward and one back and a beat on one heel, with their bodies swaying all together as they went. Then their steps grew more complicated, and one caught up a handkerchief and became the leader, whirling out in front of the line, beating heavily with his feet to show the time, and dropping on to his heels at the accentuated

beats. As he led them the feet of the dancers raced into a maze of steps, now slow, now fast, now slow; and while the drummer, leaping fantastically, beat his drum and the clarionet squealed like a drunken bagpipe, their bodies swayed altogether, slowly and steadily circling the fire like a sinuous snake.

While they rested there was an interlude. A corpse covered with a rug was carried in on a plank and laid where the firelight showed brightest. From its sides appeared dolls, who played in dumb show across the body in all the ancient foolery of the English Punch and Judy and the *Kara Geuz* of the Turks and Tartars. I noticed that it was always the wife who successfully defeated the man, and that no third person or devil was introduced.

This play over the corpse was pushed closer to the fire, until it must have been near to roasting, and as this failed to rouse it, one of its attendants dropped a heavy stone on its stomach. Whereupon it groaned deeply, leapt up suddenly with a yell, clouted its aggressor, and fled away, a living man with its bag of dolls in one hand. And at this the people laughed even more than they had at the antics of the dolls, for they loved schoolboy practical jokes.

Once more they danced, slowly swaying in the sinuous, snake-like line round the fire. And there was one among them, a girl with a madonna face. Her single saffron-coloured robe showed all her lithe body. A little waistcoat of brocaded silk held her firm breasts, and her black hair was plaited down her back. Her feet, naked and perfect in cast, the toes henna-dyed, began, even before the dance, weaving a delicate maze of steps in the shallow white dust of the dancing floor.

While she danced, her soul, in an ecstasy of concentration, was in her eyes, and the lilt of the music swayed through her supple body. She was an artist—potentially a great artist if the Fates called her, carrying the divine spark of genius in her, capable of rousing a crowded

theatre into raging enthusiasm, or of setting the heart of a people sighing or laughing as she willed; and then receiving in regal state success and applause under the glare of a city's lights. Yet she was just a little Nusairi girl weaving steps by a pine fire, unknown, never to be known, but to pass from her mother's hovel to her husband's hut, and to grow lean and tired bearing children and gleaning corn for some lazy, bedraggled Nusairi hillman.

It is good that God has cloistered each of us within the walls of his own experience, and given only to a few to see beyond the swinging door of imagination; for beyond lie dreams and visions and also discontent, madness, and despair.

After that I saw only this girl as she came and went through the light and shadow round the unstable, leaping fire. The rest had become a shadowy background. I heard the dancers sigh softly and plaintively in time to their steps, now slow and measured. The voices died away. The fire became a glow of red embers. The drum was quiet. The clarionet trailed away out of breath, and like shadows the dancers were gone.

Two children flitted like moths across the square and stopped to play with the fire. Out of the darkness a woman called them. I saw suddenly that the village was already still.

My restless, itchy Syrian companion was rolling a cigarette beside me, making some observation futile and sneerful as usual. The *sheik* had not moved except to stroke his beard slowly. The night was still young. The dance was quickly over because the people were tired from harvesting and must work again before dawn.

On her bare feet I heard a woman come softly across the roofs to offer us coffee and sweetmeats, and, all a-quiver, I dared not look up lest, in my folly, it might be the girl who had danced by the firelight.

"Are you married, and have you any children?" I

asked the *sheik* bluntly, speaking without thinking, only wishing to break the spell on me. In the darkness he stirred, and I knew that I had intruded shamelessly. I did not know his tragedy—that his *sheikdom* was hereditary, that his son had been killed in an accident, and his daughter, who was renowned for her beauty, had died in child-birth, a week after her husband had been murdered by raiding Turkomans in the fighting of 1920.

At last he spoke out of great distance. Except for greetings in coming and going this was the first time he had himself spoken to us.

"I grow old. My son has gone before me," he said, and raising a hand in the darkness he pointed upwards to the stars. "He waits for me there. May God protect him and shield him with a sheath of light."

CHAPTER XVI

PAGANISM

THAT night I could not sleep. The complicated rhythm of the drum was in my head ; the plaintive song of the dancers sighed still in the air ; the feet of the girl treading steps in the white dust with her henna-coloured toes filled my eyes. And when at last I lay down, a hundred thousand stabbing sandflies came to make the darkness a nightmare.

I walked on the roof-top. The Milky Way still flung its great arch across the sky. The point of the Wain was just touching the black rim of the opposite hills. The river laughed up from the darkness, and an owl called from beyond the sleeping village.

I turned over in my mind all I knew and had learned of the Nusairi. They lived in clans, and each clan had a central secret organisation, into which a small number of the men were carefully initiated and from which all women were excluded. They worshipped secretly, used wine freely in libations, and had signs and knowledge that roused the interests of Freemasons. They believed in some sort of transmigration, the souls of the Jews and those they hated going into the bodies of foul animals, and the souls of the good upward into the stars to be hidden and protected in sheaths of light. The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and Light were sacred. God, revealed seven times to the world by trinities of prophets, was yet veiled behind light and behind the blindness of the fierce sun. They believed that the principles of Good and Evil fought for the mastery of the universe, and they advised men not to take sides in the struggle.

Here was a complicated jumble of religions to which I had no key—Persian sun-worship, Zoroastrianism, parts of the cults of the Assyrians and Phœnicians and those of the Assassins and the Ishmaeli.

Suddenly I saw that the Nusairi were pagans; that they had absorbed parts of the many faiths which had swept over them; that they had adopted names and formulas to protect themselves. Christianity had not affected them. The Crusaders had been distant rulers, and as far from them as the British to-day are from the lives of the Indians. But the successive waves of Moslems, and especially that of the Assassins, had come right into their lives. They had become nominally Shiah Moslems, venerating Ali the Fourth Khalif, but honouring the moon more, so that they were said to pray to "Ali in the Moon." From the Assassins also they had adopted the close inner sect of initiated men.

But under this profession of Islam and Ali the Fourth Khalif and the *imams*, and cloaking their beliefs with cabalistic signs, with a secret organisation, and with an intricate and closely guarded ritual, they still worshipped the Old Gods.

As I walked on the house-top under the wide sky, the Old Gods were close round me. They had been there always. Only as the human ear cannot hear the thousand songs that fill the atmosphere until the wireless receiver tunes them down, so I needed something to bring me into touch with the Old Gods. Now I knew them to be close round me—in the hills, in the valleys by the stream, under the olive trees, filling the night and the darkness.

I saw the change across the centuries in the attitude of men. The Ancients had recognised the Divine force. For them it took a thousand shapes in the Old Gods, intimate and earthy—gods who helped them to love's desire; who lashed the fruit trees in sudden anger or nursed the purple bunches of the grape with tender,

sun-warmed hands; who whipped the sea into storm or spilled down soft rain on the young corn; familiar, living personalities, whether haughty in dispensing justice or lightly playing tricks with a man's affairs with that Divine puckishness which we call Luck.

To them they prayed and sacrificed, sometimes to propitiate, often to ask their help, but as often to help the gods, for as food and laughter are to men so worshippers and sacrifice are to the gods.

And they recognised that men were themselves as much part of nature, of the material tangible universe, as the dust and the rain and the flowers and the animals.

Then came the Hebrew, morbid and florid in asceticism. His terrible zealous tribal God he exalted into a Supreme Being, omnipotent, distant, inhuman, unreal, spiritual; holding in one hand the tortures of Hell and in the other the pale joys of a sanctimonious Heaven. He hunted away the intimate earthy old gods and replaced them with cold angels and sad-faced saints and skeletons and bones and pictures performing miracles.

He taught the West—the East has gone its own divers ways—that men were closely linked to this spiritual Being; that they must fight Nature, the material world, even their own minds and bodies, which held them down, fouled them, and clogged their relationship with the Divine: that with asceticism they must strive up to the spiritual and break their earth connection. And the logical results of this were such things as the bestiality of Simeon Stylites squatting in his own ordure on his pillar, the tight-lipped hauteur of the Puritans, and the crude priesthood, the morbid dreariness and the blasphemous ikons of the Orthodox Church.

With the Old Gods the Hebrew drove away joy in the beauty of the body and of living, the purity of sex, and replaced laughter with the weak wan smile of spiritual superiority.

CHAPTER XVII

THROUGH THE NUSAIRI MOUNTAINS

IN the first pale light of the false dawn we set out, my companion and I, and a crowd of Nusairi to see us on our way. The women, already at work drawing water and harvesting, smiled us good-bye as we passed. I bathed in the valley where the stream ran into a deep rock pool.

I saw the world with new eyes. The trees, the hills, even the rocks were no longer inanimate things to be catalogued into a scientist's lists, but each had a living personality. The stream was alive—laughing over the pebbles, raging angrily to push aside the rocks in its path, sliding stealthily into the deep green pools to hold the fat fish. I felt its hands along my bare body, and, while the sunlight dried me, the morning breeze stroked my skin with her cool, caressing fingers.

At the pool my companion and I parted. He took the path to the west on his way back to Lattakia.

I watched him go through the groves of olives where the heat lay heavy and pregnant. A Nusairi on either side of him held him up with a hand under his armpit. Even then he rolled in fatty creases on his donkey as, with ears forward, it picked its way among the loose boulders.

Beneath an old grey olive—beyond which the path twisted out of sight—he stopped and, surrounded by a crowd of laughing villagers, looked back; and suddenly, through the guise of his American store-suit and his Homburg hat, I saw Silenus, Silenus the Satyr, bubbling with immense laughter, ogling and leering back at me.

Then he was gone, and the Nusairi round me were in my path, so that I could not follow him, and two of them, deaf to my remonstrances, caught my horse by the bridle and led it on to the track which went east.

It was Silenus himself—and masquerading as an offensive, itchy Syrian Christian townsman, as a living jeer at and reproach to the Christian civilisation which had chased him away.

I remembered the respect the Nusairi had paid him; how our way had been made easy; how they had treated him at that meal at the agent's house like a Pharaoh in state, and I remembered the story told in the first centuries of Christianity—how that the Old Gods and the lesser deities, hunted from their temples, had taken the shapes of men and wandered into towns and villages, and how now and again when they met a stray worshipper still unconverted to the new faith they became Gods again.

For one brief night and morning I had hobnobbed with the Old Gods.

The path along which they led my horse followed the steep bed of the river—for I intended to cross the mountains and make for the desert and Aleppo. The current swept down, leaping over the falls, tearing round boulders. Its bed, white and chalky, was splashed here and there with red oleanders in flower and fringed with dark olives and myrtles and pines.

We filed through ravines where far overhead the eagles and the vultures sailed with steady wings, the hawks hunted and the pigeons shot home to their nests in cliffs in the precipices.

So, climbing steadily and now leaving the stream, we threaded through a forest of great pines on the steep sides of a mountain, and picking our way cautiously over the slippery pine-needles, we came at last to the High Peak.

Below us on every side stretched the land. To the

west was the sea, grey as ashes in the heat, with Lattakia a quivering blot on the shore plain, and far away a smear that was Tripoli.

To the south, cut off from us by the deep valley which carries the road from Tripoli to Homs, the Lebanon Mountains stood imperial, wrapped in a purple cloak of mist so that their snow-streaked peaks almost seemed as if suspended in mid-air.

To the north, again cut off from us by a deep valley where the Orontes river swung westwards to the sea past Antioch, were the high tableland and the mountains of Turkey, but these were only shadowy, immense outlines.

Below us to the east the hills ran sheer down, so that the Orontes river flowed close beneath our feet, with Homs and Hama showing vaguely in its valley. Beyond it, stretching into horizonless distant, was the red desert beyond Aleppo, far away down to Der-Ez-Zor and the Euphrates and Bagdad.

I stood on the peak of an island of mountains, and an island where the Old Gods still lived and moved and had their being, and where they were still honoured with ritual and worship.

With regret I left the peak, for the majesty and splendour of the mountains caught my heart and left me disturbed and regretful, as if one of life's few chances were slipping through my hands and I was powerless to grasp it. Whereas the red desert meant mere physical effort devoid of thought, a steady driving forward to nothing.

Our track now twisted steeply, so that even the mountain ponies found it hard to keep their feet. We crossed waterfalls and deep ravines by bridges of mud and branches which trembled beneath us; while far below streams tore angrily at the boulders and eagles hunting threw great shadows on the cliff-sides, and so at last we found the road that the French were cutting out of the mountain-side.

There I said good-bye to the Nusairi who had accompanied me, and as they went away up into the hills they called back a dozen kindly messages to me, laughing as they went—the laughing, happy pagans.

Then, regretfully leaving behind me the brace of the mountain air, the freedom of the high places, I turned down to the drugged atmosphere of the plains and the restraint of towns; and remembered that once more I must suffer the Semitic peoples—the rasping-voiced, quarrelling Arabs, the dreary-faced Christians of Syria, the morbid, grasping Jews. It is strange that the Semites are mainly of the plains and do not thrive above 2500 feet up, except in the more luxurious and plutocratic hotels of the Swiss Alps.

The road ran along a cliff-side, and then swung sharply round a spur, and a few minutes later I clattered over the stone-paved streets of Jisr-el-Shaur and came to the place where I should lodge.

CHAPTER XVIII

LAWRENCE AND THE ARABS

JISR and its temper were typical of all this part of Syria. The people were Arabs. They took me for a Frenchman, and watched me with hostile, resentful eyes. The men sitting before the cafés in the paved roadway, drinking coffee or drawing at their water-pipes glared at me when they thought that I was not looking or studiously avoided noticing me when I passed. It was an angry, ill-natured town, and over it crouched a military post full of soldiers. In one corner there was a nest of machine-guns with a French non-commissioned officer in charge, and a Moroccan sentry paced up and down on a roof.

As I walked in the streets of Jisr and remembered all the Arabs I had known—the Arabs of Iraq and of the Marshes, of Transjordan and the desert beyond, of Damascus and those of the Orontes valley—I realised the folly of the dream of an Arab Empire which was to include all Arabs in one great state.

It was an old dream, and during the war the Oriental Bureau of the High Commissioner in Egypt saw its value. The British in 1916 were in a bad way. Gallipoli had been evacuated and the Dardanelles campaign a failure; Kut-al-Amarah had fallen; the Arabs were likely to join the winning side, that was their nature; they must be persuaded not to join the Turks and Germans, or the position of the British Empire in the whole of the Middle East and her communication with India would be in danger.

So it was that Ronald Storrs, at that time the Oriental Secretary in Cairo and now the Governor of Cyprus,

took T. E. Lawrence, the young archæologist who was working in the intelligence branch, and whose abnormalities had brought him into the limelight, down to Arabia and introduced him to the Emir Feisal, the son of Husein Sherif of Mecca.

Lawrence inspired Feisal with the dream of a great empire. With handfuls of good gold and promises of support, he not only prevented the Arabs from joining the Turks, but brought them in as allies on the flank of the enemy. Their help was a decisive factor in the final victory of the Allies. But Lawrence had lit a flame which was to singe the British and destroy the home of his friend the Sherif of Mecca.

The Armistice brought failure to Lawrence's plan. The flow of good English gold ceased, and with it the Arab enthusiasm for the Allied cause. The promises given by the Allies could not be carried out. The British and the French quarrelled. Feisal had been made King of Damascus; the French, as soon as they took the mandate, chased him out. The British Government departments were at loggerheads. The officials in Egypt were backing Husein Sherif of Mecca; for a century the Indian Government had supplied Ibn Saud and his ancestors with arms and ammunition and a subsidy, and so kept the peace in South Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Ibn Saud and Husein were hereditary deadly enemies. Feeling the financial strain, the British ceased to subsidise or help either Ibn Saud or Husein. The former took the opportunity, called on his fanatic Wahabi followers, attacked Husein and drove him headlong out of the country, and the foolish, cantankerous, incapable old man, who had proclaimed himself a king, fled to Cyprus, where he lives to-day and passes his time quarrelling with his servants.

By force of character and arms Ibn Saud made himself master of the major portion of Arabia. His admirers proclaimed him to be the greatest Arab since Mohammed, but his handling of his success only made it the

more evident that the idea of an Arab Empire was a piece of vanity. Neither he nor the Arabs had in them the stuff of which empires are built.

I had watched Lawrence at work. I had argued with him for hours. He was a meteor of a man who had almost burnt himself out in one great flame, and to-day as air-mechanic No. XYZ of the Royal Air Force tries to damp down his restless vitality and his craving for the old life under the monotony of routine work. I always failed to follow his mental process. His intense self-consciousness made him develop an armour of cynicism, so that it was impossible to know what were his real thoughts and whether his queer illogical actions and his brilliant flashes of satire were merely for effect or the result of his considered opinions.

We saw every problem of the Middle East from a different angle. Both of us had suffered at the hands of the Turks; I perhaps more than he had. Lawrence hated all Turks, as later he hated all Frenchmen; that was his one stable view. He was the driving force behind the idea of the great Arab state. For him all Arabs were brave and chivalrous heroes, who could do no wrong. Whereas I saw the helpless inefficiency, the cruelty and the injustices of the Ottoman Empire, and I also saw the drab uselessness, the brutality and the incompetence of the Arabs. How far Lawrence believed in an Arab Empire under Hussein of Mecca I do not know. I think that at first he dreamed a fine dream; then he woke to reality, but refused to allow it; and finally hid himself behind his queer cynical manner and pretended that he had always known that it was a fantasy. While I had dreamt no dreams—only realised that there were problems without solutions and that the destruction of the Ottoman Empire had not produced a new heaven and a new earth, but was more like the turning over and the breaking up of a pile of stinking rubbish, which only stank the more for being turned.

Finally our arguments slid down on to a lower plane,

as to the respective values of the Arabs and Turks, and we parted, having arranged that if the choice should come our way—and in those days it was possible—we would pit a hundred Turks against a hundred Arabs and back our shirts on our fancies. It would have been a poor bet, for I must have won, as ten Turks would have chased a hundred of the best Arabs, as wolves chase sheep.

Before dawn I set out from Jisr. The police, as inquisitive as ever, took a long time to satisfy, but at last they opened the gates and let us cross the bridge over the Orontes, out of the town. Here the river was a swirling stream that raced into whirlpools under the many low arches. Into these brown-skinned boys were diving from above the bridge, and the current caught them, swept them deep down under-water so that I could see them swimming far below until they were thrown out, with lungs strained to bursting, fifty yards lower down in a back-water, where a huge Persian water-wheel slowly turned as it irrigated a garden.

Beyond the bridge the road ran across a plain and up into the steep, low hills of the Jebel Wartani, and there we halted. By the roadside a chain-gang of men were digging a trench, guarded by some Arab ruffians with rifles, who urged the chain-gang on with blows from sticks. The guards were the same type of brutes that I had seen driving the Armenians during the deportations and our prisoners from Kut up to Mosul. Behind us the mountains of the Nusairi made a great wall. Below us the Orontes wound like a snake away northwards, with the corn ripening on its banks. Here and there a marsh gleamed like a sheet of silver where the river had overflowed; and in the distance I could see the inland sea by Antioch, where the river doubles back on itself and then makes for the Mediterranean.

Beyond that the road was of red dust, impassable after rain, but now easy. It ran through miles of grey olives,

under which the heat lay banked. After that we came again to the same type of country as that beyond Baalbek and Hama. Here and there were areas of corn, but the rest was rolling steppes, very stony and bare, except during the short spring and early summer months before the sun burnt it up. Nearly all the villages were of beehive-shaped huts, with the doors very low and no windows as protection against the intense heat and the equally intense cold of the country.

At Idlib we hired a car. The heat of the early summer was already fierce, and the town was crowded with Arabs and animals. Every corner was piled with offal, and everywhere there was the stale damp stench of the Arab. For all these villages and towns, from Port Said and Cairo up to Aleppo, one might have sung a dirge of filth, of flies and evil smells and sore-eyed children, of squalor and offal, of mangy dogs and beastliness.

It was evening as we came to Aleppo through the empty country, and for many hours we had not seen a tree nor a yard of shade from the blistering sun. The car was a miracle of loading. Inside behind there were four Arabs; on the running-boards were strapped rolls of bedding and mattresses and on the top of them lay an Arab on each side. I was alone with the driver, but there was still another passenger, lying along the bonnet and resting against a front mudguard. Somewhere in all this was my luggage, which was considerable, and the whole mass raced down the road at forty-five miles an hour, bucking and kicking over the broken surface and the pot-holes, trailing the bedding so that we made a clatter and a dust like a battery of guns going full-gallop into action.

As the ground darkened with the coming night we passed a pillar to commemorate the last engagement between the British and the Turks in 1919, and then, coming over a rise in the dark, we saw the lights of a city below us and came down into Aleppo.

CHAPTER XIX

ALEPPO

ALEPPO, the great city of Eastern commerce, was dying, strangled by the new frontiers that were on its every side. For centuries it had been the point where the trade-routes crossed each other and the merchants with their caravans of goods from the Crimea and the Caucasus and Central Asia, from Persia and Arabia and Egypt, met and did their business in its Covered Bazaars.

Now the Ottoman Empire was gone, and in its place was a mass of jealous states, Iraq, Palestine, Turkey, Transjordan, each with its own laws and its own frontiers. The old trade-routes had been cut by tariff barriers and passport restrictions. In the old days a merchant would have calculated in his bill of costs the expenses of the escort, the bribes to governors, gendarmes and police, and the chances of being raided by brigands; now he had the steady drain of the customs and even more bribes to eat his profits. Only rarely did the caravans from Ispahan and Tabriz come swaying down the alley-ways to dump their rich loads of merchandise and carpets in the courtyards of some *khan* or native inn. The cattle and the produce of Anatolia did not cross the frontier, but went to Adana and Mersina. No more were there Circassian girls for sale in the slave-mart behind the Great Mosque.

In the centre of the city was a hill of sheer rock tunnelled into a citadel that brooded over and guarded it. Except for this there seemed to be no reason why Aleppo should have been built on this site. Winter and summer the climate was evil and unhealthy. Except for a few

weeks in the early summer, the country round was a barren, burnt-up desert. The only water was from a stream which had its source beyond Aintab in Turkey, and the Turks had begun to divert the water to their own use, so that the French administration and the people were looking for a new supply. To the west beyond the mountains on the sea-shore and to the east on the bank of the Euphrates there were good sites where a city might have been built to advantage.

I climbed the citadel. At the portcullis-gate a Senegalese halted me, and after some hesitation and inspection of my permit a French junior officer let me pass, but sent a corporal to show me the way and to watch that I did not spy. We followed dark galleries cut deep in the live rock and climbed twisting rock-stairs where the only light came from narrow arrow slits. Often we were halted by sentries, truculent negroes with fixed bayonets, and so wild-looking that in the gloom of the galleries I felt as if we were dealing with unreasoning animals. The citadel was packed with soldiers, and there was a general air of nervous tension.

At last we came out on the battlements above. The country stretched away into the heat haze on every side in rolling plains of desert and yellow sand, streaked with the rust-coloured rocks of some barren hills, and here and there patches of corn yellow and gold to the harvest. Below us was the city, yellow and streaked too with rust-red and gold of stone houses, so that in the yellow, burning sun to my tired eyes the city and the desert were one great yellow dusty glare.

"A wasps' nest of a place," said the corporal as he pushed back his topee to mop his forehead and we turned to descend into the dark coolness of the citadel.

The next day was the Holiday of Bairam, which ended the Fast of Ramazan. The Prophet had ordered that, for the good of their souls and stomachs alike, his followers should not eat, drink or smoke between sunrise and

sunset from new moon to new moon once each year. Like much else that he ordered, this was sound medical treatment given a divine sanction. But the Fast of Ramazan had been perverted. The Moslems rose late in the morning, and did no work, being ill-natured and cantankerous all day, and as soon as the evening gun had sounded and the *muezzins* were calling to prayer they gorged themselves and drank and smoked and rioted all night, so that whatever good had been done by the day's restraint was more than undone by the night's excess.

I was up early and out while the water-carriers were still sprinkling the streets and the smell of dust was rank in the air. The streets were empty and all the shops shut for the festival. Aleppo was an evil place. It was only late May, but already the sun was banking its heat down into the narrow streets as in an oven—heat so thick and heavy that I could take great handfuls of it and squeeze it out like putty between my sweating fingers. It was May without new life or freshness, but sullen night had given place to sullen day, and the sullen heat haze hid the sky and the horizons. The dirty streets were clammy with rank stench, and the air was stale with a taste as of fever. Spring had shown as a smear of green on the desert as the corn hurried to ripen before the sun could blast it, and its only sign now was a stork picking over his nest on the top of a broken minaret of a mosque and the swifts that screamed as they played and made love above the citadel.

My road took me to the Covered Bazaars, for I wished to pray at the Great Mosque. Usually the Covered Bazaars, which stretch for miles, were a seething mass of men and animals shouldering and pushing their way along past the women and villagers buying at the booth shops. To-day, except for an Armenian or two and the watchmen and some passers-by, the bazaars were empty, and I walked in half-darkness in its silent streets that boomed and echoed dully under its hollow roofs to my footsteps.

Here and there from holes in the roofs the darkness was torn with vivid white streaks of sunlight, and where the bazaars ended into the open streets the sunlight was a white wall as of molten metal that hurt the eyes.

Before a grating in a heavy stone wall I stopped, and when my eyes got used to the gloom I saw that it was the tomb of some great man. It was a vault, and round the walls were hung silken banners. Above the doorway was an Arabic inscription in golden letters, but so full of flourishes that I could not read it. Round the walls were arms, battle-axes and armour, arrows and the curved Turkish bows, a long horn trumpet, and on shelves numbers of drums—great drums with their sticks tied to them, tenor drums, and light, high-toned drums to be beaten with the fingers and the palms of the hand and shaped like an hour-glass. In the centre was the tomb, covered with shawls of green and blue and pink, at its head a Dervish's high hat and a blue shawl, and leaning against it, as a touch of divine humour, as a recognition of the frailty of man and the greatness of God, was a crutch once used by the dead man. All round was piled the panoply of a warrior and his triumphs, and then in the middle was set the crutch of a cripple. Perhaps God fears to make a man in perfection, for always He makes some flaw that holds the mortal down.

As I stood by—and I had replaced my hat by a fez, for the people of Aleppo dislike foreigners and Christians—a man went by on a mangy donkey with a boy up behind him. They stopped to pay their respects, and then, both swinging their legs and using their heels to make the animal move, trotted away. A little child wandered vaguely up, leading a blind man. The blind man stopped as by instinct, walked straight to the tomb window and placing his forehead to the bars prayed for a while. One would have thought that it would have been hard for him, with his rags and in his darkness, to pray to the Giver of Eyes.

Two Arabs strolled up hand in hand, fingers intertwined and caressing. They were handsome, slim youths, with clean, aristocratic features, sensitive mouths and the faint line of a moustache pencilled on their lips. They made a fine picture in their loose Bedouin clothes of the desert and red-leather shoes—for at that Festival of Bairam red-leather shoes were all the vogue in Aleppo. For a while the youths talked softly together, and then one tied a piece of cloth to the bars as a votive offering and the two prayed side by side. Finished, they ran their hands, of which the palms were lighter in colour than the dark backs, over their faces once or twice, which gave me a curious sensation of their strength and character and yet of smoothness. Then they strolled on hand in hand, fingers entwined and caressing, hips and shoulders touching, absorbed in each other—acknowledged lovers.

Behind them came an old man in a thick coat, for in the East sometimes they wear heavy clothes to keep out the rays of the sun, and moreover under the sun there is in Aleppo often a treacherous wind. He was in a hurry, but stopped to salaam before the tomb, and then paced fussily on, turning only to curse a boy who carried a bundle for him. The boy was lame and could keep up on the rough cobbles only with difficulty, and in this city there was a great number of lame.

A Kurd in a high beehive-shaped hat came down an alley-way, his two wives behind him, heavily veiled and carrying children. They too stopped to pray.

"Of whom—of what renowned man is this the tomb?" I asked.

"I do not know," he replied, "I am a stranger, a Kurd; but undoubtedly it is of a saint or a *sheik*, and worthy of respect," and he moved on, a little suspicious at being accosted in this city, where every other man was a rogue and lying in wait for a stupid villager.

Further up in an alley-way a man was closing down the shutters of a shop, and as he turned to go I saw that

it was Garabet Manushakian, the Armenian carpet merchant of Stambul, but grown old and bald.

"*Hosh geldiniz, Effendi*," he said excitedly. "You are welcome."

"*Hosh bulduk*. I find myself welcome," I replied, and we began to exchange our news.

"*Effendi*," he said, and looked cautiously round, "we must talk at length, but not here. My trade is with the Arabs, and they hate the French, and in fact they hate all Europeans, and I should suffer if I was seen with you. Come to the Tabriz Han if you are free to-night, and I will be waiting for you by the door. It is in the Street of the Leather Workers, on the other side of the Great Mosque. And," he continued, again looking round cautiously, "Blanche is also here, and I will call her to come after she finishes her work in the *café-chantant*."

Blanche! the dancer of Skutari—Blanche! That was ten years ago! And there came back to me the vivid memories of the hot, breathless nights in Stambul, of the cool Bosphorus below a window, of drooping, lazy, tired eyes and the passion that had set the blood racing. Blanche!—for in the old days Garabet had known all my private affairs.

I left the Covered Bazaars by the gateway that brought me out to the moat below the citadel. In an open space a fair was in progress. The white sun beat down on the white dust that rose in clouds as a carriage or a car went by. In one corner by the gateway into the citadel were three desert musicians. One beat on a tenor drum with the palms of his hands, the second blew lustily on a reedy pipe that wheezed and gasped as he got his breath, and the third in a pure tenor voice sang the hundred verses of a love-song, and then, when the hero was in difficulties and the crowd grew interested, he sent the hat round. Rarely have I heard anyone enunciate so clearly, and I was fascinated watching the movements of his fine lips and his white perfect teeth. Round him

were squatted many women with their children, some Bedouin youths holding hands, a Senegalese French soldier or two, whose brutal negro faces contrasted with the aristocratic features of the Bedouins. There were many Arab townsmen, with their faces scarred either by smallpox or by the Aleppo boil on their foreheads and cheeks. A hag with a little girl of eight or nine in her best clothes stopped to listen, the child dressed in a new blue-velvet dress and new silver-heeled shoes. As I looked at her she dropped her veil, and at once the child became a woman and the hag hurried her away.

It was already nearly noon, and I turned to go to the Great Mosque. A narrow alley brought me to a high studded gateway, of which only the postern door was open. Taking off my shoes and carrying them, I made across the courtyard, where the yellow marble was warm to my stockinged feet. At the fountain a crowd of men were washing before going in to pray, and some Algerian cavalry soldiers were unlacing their gaiters and heavy boots. The Arabs avoided them, for there was no love lost between the inhabitants and the French troops.

Inside the mosque it was dark, cool and refreshing after the dust and the glare of the fair-ground and the streets. From the courtyard came the soothing sounds of pigeons love-making on a cornice and the splash and gurgle of the fountain playing into its pool. The floor of the mosque was covered with rich Persian and Turkish carpets, on which the worshippers were squatting, waiting for the service to begin. An *imam* was chanting in front of the *kebla*, and in the galleries, behind lattice-work, the women were whispering together, and now and again a child cried and was crooned to sleep.

From far up above in the minaret the *muezzin* began the Call to Prayer, and I in my corner knelt too and prayed. The Athenians had an altar to an Unknown God that Paul told them was the one true God; the Kurd had done reverence to the tomb in the Covered

Bazaar because it was "worthy of respect." Who was I that I should turn aside? *Allah Kerim, Allah-u Akbar.* God is merciful, God is great, there is no God but God.

Aleppo was not on the main tourist routes, so that in the hotel the people were more typical of the French colonies and the Middle East. By the door lounged a number of French soldiers, orderlies of the officers who lodged in the hotel, their uniforms dirty and their boots done up outside their puttees, showing that they had slept in their puttees and trousers. A smart cavalry officer in boots and spurs clanked down and saluted a General who was on some commission of inspection, a little old man with a bald head and a quiet manner, who wore a rather seedy uniform covered with medals, and elastic-sided boots. There was a French colonial official who mealed with the General, a tall lanky fellow, his hair parted low above one ear. He always looked untidy, wearing a reach-me-down suit, a high stiff collar despite the heat, and trousers that were preposterously narrow for his long legs. He was an excitable, ill-natured fellow, with a thin skin and an exaggerated sense of his own importance. There were two drab missionary women, their skin the colour and texture of parchment, and full of wrinkles, and with a sour look in their eyes. An Englishman travelling through by car from Bagdad arrived. He was either an official or something to do with oil. The General he treated with courtesy, and even the French official; but the hotel staff and his chauffeur he treated like dogs, and he seemed to have a constant list of complaints and a yellow liver that grew better as the day grew older, so that by dinner-time he could be approached with caution, but he was distant and suspicious of all the English he met in these parts.

Two Armenian harlots left their bedroom door always open, joked with the waiters and orderlies; painted and over-dressed even in the heat. They used a heavy licentious scent that fought for mastery with

the stench of urine and the stale heat that filled the hotel always. Some Syrian merchants who were unshaved, noisy and argumentative and seemed to spend a great deal of their time wandering about in their night-shirts, their heavy paunches projected in front of them, made friends with the harlots and lived uncleanly.

CHAPTER XX

BLANCHE THE DANCER

AS soon as the sun was down I set out for the Tabriz Han; and with a sense of adventure, for behind me came one of the secret agents that the French had sent to watch me, and who had dogged my footsteps since I arrived. I was determined to throw him off my scent. I twisted down alley-ways, took sudden turnings and then returned as suddenly, so that he ran into me as he hurried to keep up. At last I laid a trap for him, so that he lost me, and as I stood in the black shadow of a doorway he passed, still hurrying and cursing me lustily under his breath, for he was growing fat, and the night was windless and sodden and no time for violent exercise.

Then I doubled back for the *han*. Garabet sat smoking by the gateway, and because he saw that I had hurried, without a word he showed me the way. It was getting dark, and in the gloaming and by the light of an oil flare that hung over a diminutive café in one corner I could see that the courtyard was full of animals and men.

These *hans* were the centre of the life. Here came the caravans and the travellers and passed the news; here the intriguers and the scandal-mongers met, and the pimps made assignations for their clients; and here was done much of the long-drawn-out bargaining of the merchants.

Half the courtyard was roofed over with vines, and under these on the cobbles were piled up sacks and corded bales and cases of merchandise, and the bedding of their owners was laid out beside them. Beyond a

drinking trough where a tap ran noisily was a mulberry tree newly in leaf and camels squatting. A caravan, though it was Bairam, was just in, the camels grumbling and snarling as the drivers lifted their loads and cursed them in Persian and Kurdish. Before the café some merchants were checking the loads and an Armenian money-lender was already demanding his cash from a driver, an Arab, who protested, calling on Allah in guttural rage. Every spare space in the courtyard was packed with country carts, and the drivers and carters sat smoking water-pipes before the stable doors. In the gloaming there came the rich gurgle of the water in the glass of the pipes and a match flared as some one lit a cigarette. Now and again a lanky fellow from the café brought coffee.

Garabet led the way up some rickety stairs. In the rooms of the upper story there were small oil-lamps, and on a broken-down verandah women, who drew their veils as we passed, were cooking over charcoal braziers. Up another flight of broken stairs we came out on the mud roof, where a carpet had been laid for us to sit upon.

"I came hurried without greeting," I said apologetically as we squatted down, "for there were spies behind me."

"Ah!" he replied. "*Effendi*, it is here as it was in Stambul in the days of Abdul Hamid. There are spies everywhere, and making great tales from little things. The French and the Arabs watch each other and all who come here, and the French are afraid lest the Turks once more break the frontier and come to Aleppo—which God forbid, for we Armenians are many thousands of refugees who begin to settle again and to own land and houses and shops."

"But the Arabs too hate the Turks?" I asked.

"That is past, *Effendi*," he said. "They cried out against them when they were here. They have forgotten the old oppression. They remember only that when the Sultan ruled Aleppo was full of merchants,

who now come no more. They hate all Christians, and especially the French. Everywhere there grows the hatred of the Christians, and the Moslems look to the Turks and to Mustapha Kemal to deliver them as he delivered Turkey from the yoke of Europe, and so always there is intrigue and the fear of the frontier."

Then we fell to talking of private matters, and Garabet told me how he had fled penniless from Turkey and lived for a while in the squalor of the refugee camp in Beyruth, and then by peddling had made a few pounds and extended his trade to travelling in the villages, until he had enough to buy a shop, and now he was becoming a prosperous grocer of Aleppo. Such is the unflagging persistency of the Armenians that gradually they would eat up the Arabs and hold all their lands and houses in mortgage and own all north Syria. But they were still homesick for Turkey and the pleasant villages and the kindly, easily cheated Turkish people of Anatolia.

The lanky fellow from the café brought us up food—*pillaf* and *eulanji dolmas* made of chopped meat, spiced and wrapped in fresh vine-leaves, and a chicken cooked to shreds to be eaten with the fingers, and cloying sweets and black coffee to cleanse the mouth of grease, and as I lay back smoking under the open sky, Garabet whispered that Blanche was come, and that we could meet again at the *han* whenever I wished if I would send word to his shop in the Covered Bazaar.

I heard her on the staircase as she spoke to the Armenian in soft Turkish in the same sighing voice that had always caught at the heart-strings, and then she came lightly across the roof-top and was beside me, dressed as a Turkish woman, with her veil down, and gave me her hand, slender and firm and white, and it trembled; and I was a-quiver with the old memories pulsing in my blood.

For a while we sat silent—and afraid; and then she lifted her veil, and our eyes met and we were close

together. In that light she was as beautiful as ever, white-skinned and lithe-limbed, and black eyes that drank up the soul of a man. But as we looked we knew that the old fire in the blood had died, that the years had put it out, and if there was anything between us it could only be tame, drab lust. Her eyes dropped; we drew apart; once she laughed shrilly without reason, and her fingers were unsteady and groping as she took the cigarette that I offered her, and then far into the night we talked as friends.

She was gone. I heard her light steps on the mud-roof, and I was minded to call her back and take what was left and be thankful, and then the stairs creaked as I hesitated, and the gateway door of the courtyard below squealed on rusted hinges as the night watchman let her out.

I was stifled and oppressed suddenly by the city round me. From a garden near by came up the scent of orange trees in blossom that mixed with the stench of stable manure in the courtyard below and with stale sweat and charcoal smoke and dust—the smell of Syria in the spring. From a house came the sounds of a zither and a man singing a shrill love-song. Far overhead the great stars swept across the sky.

I wished that I had not seen her again, but kept her as a wild great memory. She was gone, and with her my youth and the pulse of the old life and the lure and the glamour of these Eastern cities and their lives. As I went back to the hotel down the streets oppressed with heat, the years lay on my shoulders as heavy as a porter's load.

CHAPTER XXI

ARMENIANS AND FRENCH

AS soon as Bairam and the general holiday was over I visited the Armenian Patriarch. He was a very old man, tall and stately and well preserved, with the beard and the manner of a Moses. We talked in a room that, except for a beautiful Rose-Ghiordes carpet on a wall, might have been the sitting-room of a suburban villa of the late Victorian period—the nick-nacks, the uncomfortable plush sofa, the pictures in frames stuck with shells, the mantleshef covered with cheap ornaments that led up to the ormolu clock, and the uncomfortable chairs with their antimacassars. Age had made the old man autocratic, irritable and touchy on his dignity. He felt that the French did not pay him the respect that was his due.

"Then go to Cyprus and live under the British," said Garabet, who had introduced me.

"No," he replied grandly. "I and my people have seen much trouble together. We are many of us here, and I see more trouble ahead, and I will stay and die among my people. They need me. We must look to ourselves and trust no one else."

"In my youth," said an old priest, who was over ninety, "we stood well with the Turks; they were putty in our hands, and we prospered, until those fools of *Dasnak* Revolutionaries listened to Russia and began to dream of an Armenian Empire and we gave ear to all the European nations who wished to divide Turkey between them and could not agree. Each wanted a hold from the inside, and so they made us many promises.

We fought for the Allies in the war, and we were massacred, and at the Armistice they forgot us. So we began to look to our own interests and became a Soviet Republic, and to-day Armenia prospers as the ally of Russia. In Aintab and in all the Taurus we listened to the French and our men fought for them and they sent us a few arms, and then left us to face the Turks alone, and their Frankly-Bouillon made a secret peace with the Turks.

"No! no! No more put your trust in these nations, whether French, British or Russian." And all the men in the room nodded their agreement; and I had nothing to reply, for it was true, and though we could not help it, we had betrayed them. At the same time I realised that these Armenians were at heart revolutionaries, always in revolt against any government, always obstinately intolerant of any rulers; and I was not surprised to hear that they had prospered with the Bolsheviks.

The French Governor, though he had me always watched by spies, was kindly and courteous and helpful in my work. I visited him to say good-bye, and found him in a great rage. He burst into a tirade against the Turks—they had finally cut off all the water from Aintab; they would not come down to details and finish the delimitation of the frontier; they had accused him of encouraging certain brigand bands who worked backwards and forwards across the frontier; and they were making difficulties over the customs, and especially where the railway line crossed and recrossed from Turkey into Syria. As I left him I had some satisfaction from his annoyance, for a shrewd observer had said to me that if I wished to travel in Turkey it was wise to go first to Aleppo, and if I found that the French and the Turks were at loggerheads I could be sure that the Turks would treat an Englishman well, and if the French and the Turks were agreeing happily I would be advised to postpone my trip for a little, and wait until they quarrelled again.

The Governor was a capable, energetic man, but tied under the orders of the administration in Beyrouth, who only told him to temporise and avoid any trouble. To the French, Syria had meant the rich Lebanon alone and they neither understood nor particularly wanted the rest. They appeared to accept as a fact that all this northern area was Turkish, and they made little attempt to change or reorganise it. The administration, the silver money used, the personnel in many cases, the police and the whole general trend and sympathy were Turkish, but it was of the old decrepit Turkey of the Sultans before the Republic was declared. The French seemed to feel that Aleppo and its area was a good buffer state against trouble from the north.

The Governor, as all the French in Syria, gave the impression of being unsure and uncomfortable. In Beyrouth the officials and the officers were always on tiptoe, always ready to listen to and exaggerate any reports of a rising. In the south the armed posts and the patrols treated the people harshly, as if they were in a hostile country and had to intimidate them by brutality. In Damascus and the villages of the Orontes valley there had been the nests of troops, with the sentries watching and machine-guns handy. In the north here there was a sense of insecurity, with an unstable frontier and a discontented people and the Turks truculent, and even on the main roads I was not allowed to travel freely at night.

In the old days the French had been the popular foreign protectors against the traditional misrule of the Turks, and for a Syrian to have foreign protection was both pleasant and lucrative. Now as rulers the French were bewildered at the hatred that they had roused. They realised, however, that they could only hold Syria by force, and they ruled sourly over peoples who were in sullen surrender.

When the French took over Syria they did not visualise the problems and the difficulties. After nine years of

occupation they had not established an effective form of government nor brought prosperity to the country.

This had been due partly to circumstance and partly to their own errors. They have maintained no continuity of policy. In the first six years the High Commissioner had been changed five times; each man had come with his own views and each was backed by some political party in Paris, and so French home politics had been introduced into what should have been purely colonial administration. General Gouraud, Weygand, Sarraïl, de Jouvenal followed each other, and the Socialists were a weakness, for they adopted the evacuation of Syria as part of their programme. Instead of increasing the material prosperity, the French had been forced to flood the country with officials and troops, establish a censorship, shoot its inhabitants and burn its villages. Trade and commerce had slumped; the shopmen had become bankrupt; the fields were untilled and the tourists afraid to come. The Syrians had lost and not gained from the mandate. Moreover, they had grown to hate the French, for the officials and the officers were not of the best type; they were used to handling black men, and with their Senegalese and Annamese troops they had quickly angered the sensitive Syrians.

But the tide had turned. The French had established their position and learnt their lesson. M. Henri Ponsot, the new High Commissioner, was not the protégé of any party; he had a promise of a long term of office and instructions to set up a form of government with which the Syrians, who both respected and trusted him, would co-operate. France with her own increase in economic and financial prosperity was in a position to help Syria. The Syrians had realised that they needed outside help and that France alone was in a position to give it.

With a little tact and square dealing on the one hand, and a little common sense and realisation of the facts

on the other, it was possible that a position might be evolved in which France would retain her position as guide and controller and Syria might grow into a compact state, with the right and the ability to take her fate into her own hands and decide her own destiny. Herein lay the hope of the future.

CHAPTER XXII

ANTIOCH

GARABET and I met once more at the *han*, but he said nothing of the girl, though I had hungry ears for even a stray word so that I might talk of her. At parting I gave him a thin bracelet of beaten gold of two snakes, their lithe bodies wound together all their length, and the heads of a man and woman lip to lip, wrought cunningly in the bazaar by a silversmith. And then he produced from a wallet a locket with a broken spring. Many years ago it had been broken, and often I had meant to have it mended when Blanche wore it by a chain from her neck and between her breasts.

"She told me to give this—only if you spoke, *Effendi*," said Garabet.

"And a message?" I asked; and at that minute I would have found her out and taken her away with me.

"She said, 'Leave the dead in peace and go happily, for God is merciful and each spring there comes fresh life,'" he replied.

I left before the dawn. The city was an oven of heat, relentless and throttling, and the people were waking, tired and worn-out, to the sullen day. My nostrils resented the dull stench of it and the air staled with dust. It was an acid ant's nest of a place; its people an evil breed; its stench-clogged streets full of aimless bustling.

The road ran over the same rolling plains of red soil as that towards Idlib. Our dust blew down on us, for there was a hot morning wind out of the east and we travelled to the west. We passed a few villages, some

goats and gipsies and a traveller or two walking, and carts in which the passengers were asleep, and the drivers, muffled up, slept also as the horses plodded along unguided. At a police-post our papers were inspected, and twice a posse of mounted gendarmes questioned us, for the Turkish frontier was only a few miles to our north. Suddenly we came to a wall of mountains which had been hidden behind the thick heat-fog. They were the Amanus, which rose sheer and steep, and beyond them lay Alexandretta and the sea. Here we turned south to Antioch.

The road was of loose stones and ran by a narrow strip of country which lay between the mountains that heaved themselves sheer up on the one hand, and on the other a great lake that stretched far away into the misty distance. It was formed by the Orontes river, which here swings back on itself in a hairpin bend before it makes for the sea below Antioch. In the early light the lake was the metallic green of verdigris. Between the toes of the mountains there were villages very primitive, but set among trees and orchards, and the country was rich and luxurious in comparison with the red bare plains that we had crossed. Water had made it rich: there were birds and flowers and lush grass; a heron rose from some reeds as we passed, and out further there were hawks hunting and fleets of duck rose and wheeled, and always there were the mosquitoes and the midges in countless millions, and the threat of fever.

Most of the people were Arabs, but there were Nusairi also, their women in their gay-coloured dresses and their gold-and-silver braided circular caps, and striding gallantly along. A party of gipsy dancers passed us, coming up from Antioch, where they had been for the Bairam Festival. They were wild, unkempt men and women with drums and banners. With them were some donkeys for their kit, and a horde of children followed behind them.

We stopped to rest at a café, a wattle hut with a

thatched roof in which an Arab sold sherbet and weak tea made of lemon leaves, and very foul to the taste. At the edge of the lake where a clear stream raced down from the mountains there were boys bathing and one taking slimy mud eels out of wicker eel-traps. A naked man poled himself out some way in a primitive dug-out canoe, and there, balancing himself cleverly, threw a circular draw-net. He had the body of a god, and his muscles played evenly as he stood there bronze against the dull green of the lake.

Behind us was the peak known as the Boar's Head, which the ships look for as they steer into the Gulf of Alexandretta, and beyond that the Jebel Musa, where in 1916 the Armenians of this area took refuge and fought the Turks gallantly until a French gun-boat ran in and brought them out and many of them went to fight for the Allies on other fronts.

Our road lifted over some high ground, and below us in a basin made by the bare red hills of rock was Antioch. For a while I stood amazed. It was incredible that this should have once been the capital of the Roman Empire, where the Emperor Theodosius had held his splendid court and indulged in the "wildest debaucheries the world has seen"; where in the huge amphitheatre the Christians were thrown to the lions; where they were first called Christians and Peter was proclaimed the first bishop, so that even to-day a hundred prelates who have never visited it proudly keep "Bishop of Antioch" among their titles; and where a thousand years later the Crusaders marched in, singing hymns, and then in a drunken fury murdered ten thousand Moslems. There were no signs of the twelve miles of fortified walls nor of the great palaces and the massive buildings.

Below me was a flat, mean township of mud and stone houses roofed with tiles which were the colour of dead leaves. Now and again a wind would sweep down full of dust and hide it. The brown glare of it and of the hills under the fierce sun hurt the eyes. Only by the

edge of the Orontes River there was a strip of green, with gardens and trees and Persian wheels slowly turning in the racing current as they hoisted up water into the irrigation channels.

In the narrow cobbled alleys and streets of poverty-stricken shops the air was stifling. There must have occurred at some past date some fundamental climatic change in this area, for the rich and great nobles of the ancient world had come here eagerly to live. Now I would not have advised my worst enemy even to visit it, much less build a house and live here. Nor were there even the modern signs of past greatness—ruins, hotels and tourists.

The next evening I was back at the foot of the Amanus mountains and climbing the Bailan Pass. The road ran backwards and forwards across its steep face. The mountains were empty; there were rocks and dried grass, but no trees or life, except now and again we passed covered country carts heavily loaded and with the stallions straining gamely at their loads.

Near the top we came to Kirik Han, a grey-stone mountain village, which was full of Armenian refugees. Here once more the police halted us and inspected our passports. They talked broken French and were ill-natured and rough, until in annoyance I cursed them in Turkish. Whereupon an officer in charge sitting at a table looked up.

"You talk Turkish?" he asked.

"*Evvvet!* Yes, *Effendi*," I replied.

"How is that?"

"I was with the Turkish gendarmerie in Skutari," I said.

"So!" he said, and his manner changed and he became friendly. "We are friends, for I am a Turk."

"But you are a Syrian, wearing Syrian uniform and taking Syrian pay. And you are not polite like Turks," I said, still ruffled by their rudeness.

"I am a Turk," he said as grandly as a Roman might

have said "Romanus civis sum," and all the other police in the post joined in: "We are Turks."

"So are all the police and the gendarmes in all this country," said the officer. "Syrians! What are Syrians? And you are what?" he asked.

"English," I said.

"Then you know how petty are the French. I thought you were French. Please forgive our manners, but we have learnt them from our new rulers," and after that they demanded news of Stambul, and of Skutari and the places in Turkey that I had visited, for it was many years since they had been there, and one and all they were homesick. So it was throughout all this Northern Syria, and though many of the officials were Arab and Syrian, they spoke of themselves as Turks.

Beyond Kirik Han I topped the last half-mile of steep, twisting road, and came through the pass.

The scorching, relentless May sun was setting beyond the sea—setting abruptly without an after-glow. To the north, in the interior of Turkey, the peaks of the Karaman mountains and the last shreds of their winter snows stood out for a minute in relief against an olive sky. As we came down to the shore plain, night swept over us.

CHAPTER XXIII

ALEXANDRETTA

ALEXANDRETTA stood on a ledge between the mountains and the sea, and in it there was not a breath of air. On three sides the mountains and on the fourth a promontory of land shut out all the breeze. The people, restless in the damp air and under the countless mosquitoes, lay sprawled out in the streets and on the doorsteps.

Without delay we took ship and steamed out into the darkness. Overhead the sky, moonless and dusted with faint stars, was immense and black; round us the waters of the Mediterranean lay black, motionless and silent, except where the ship roused them into foam in the light of the binnacle lamps.

As I leaned over the ship's rail I could see the faint dark outline of the Turkish coast. For many years I had studied the Ottoman Empire, known its leading men, been in touch with the moves and counter-moves of its tortuous policies, lived as a Turk, seeing with Turkish eyes and hearing with Turkish ears, and I had seen the death struggles of the Empire in the Great War. From the British Embassy in Constantinople at the Armistice I had watched the victorious Allies quarrelling like vultures round the corpse, while each pecked at it for dainty pieces. And then within the putrescent collapsed mass which had been the Ottoman Empire there came the stir of a new energy; and there sprung forth, miraculously, almost in a night, like a warrior fully armed, New Turkey. She had held back Russia in the north; flung the French over the Syrian border; pushed the Italians into the sea; chased the Greek invaders

helter-skelter out of Anatolia, and swept the British and all the victorious Allies and their Armies of Occupation back from Chanak and Constantinople. She had cleansed Turkey, ejecting both the corrupt and effete Sultan Government and her disloyal Christian subjects; and with mailed fist, victorious in the face of all Europe, she had at the Conference of Lausanne dictated her frontiers and established her right to live and to rule herself.

It was at that moment in 1923, with the last troops of the retreating Army of Occupation, that I had left Turkey. For five years I had tried to follow events, but the news had been meagre, gleaned from paper correspondents, from disgusted concession hunters who did not know that the Ottomans were gone, from neurotic women who had been to Angora to hero-worship before Mustapha Kemal. Every account differed radically.

Now after five years I was coming back to see for myself. Officially I was to investigate the damage suffered by Allied subjects in the war, and this would take me into the interior of Turkey. But beyond my official duties I was eager to see this New Turkey, this Islamic yet secular republic which had been created out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Had New Turkey succeeded? Was it a nation, vital, alive, working out its own salvation, or was it just a piece of the old Empire plastered and bandaged and mistaken for some new and healthy growth? Had a fresh flame been lit, or was this the last bright flicker, like that of a dying candle?

Many people were interested in the same problem. Behind me in the music-room an Italian officer, in the harsh-speaking voice so curiously common among a musical people, was boasting vain-glory, as if Italy had already annexed southern Turkey. A couple of American women, who had strayed off the main tourist route, were asking questions of a missionary with tireless curiosity. In a corner a pushful German commercial traveller was writing letters.

The Turkish coast-line was now hidden behind the darkness. We should reach Mersina in the morning. As I turned down the companion-way the German was looking through a box of samples; the Italian had now caught the attention of the American women and was happy. Already the heavy night dew was glistening on the tarpaulin of the ship's boats.

CHAPTER XXIV

TURKEY : FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I WOKE to find the ship as she searched for her anchorage creeping cautiously through a white fog as heavy as a drugged sleep. The fog-horn sounded continuously; the native leadsman cried monotonously, "Four an' 'alf, sar." The ship, as if she were afraid, was feeling her way as if blind.

And they seemed to me symbolical—that ship creeping fearful and blind, and the fog hiding the shore—symbolical of the attitude of the outside world to the Turks. Diplomats, consuls and business men had warned me of the irritations and even of the dangers of landing in modern Turkey. Ordinary travellers, they said, met with rudeness; my work would make me unpopular, and I must expect active hostility; no one could say what the Turks would do under any special circumstance. They seemed afraid of the Turks, and to look on them much as they were looked on in the sixteenth century, as the "Terrible Turk," as something inhuman, not to be dealt with as man to man, but as terrifying as wild animals, with which it is impossible to get into touch or sympathy, to reason with or arrive at compromises. I wondered if the Turks whom I had known had changed so vitally, or whether this attitude was due to the traditional ignorance of the outside world of all things Turkish.

As I watched, the fog began to lift, and in the first light morning breeze the sea beneath us danced and sparkled as the sun came through.

Before us lay a long, low shore. By the water's edge at the feet of the dawn crouched Mersina, a town of low

red roofs set within orange groves, its flatness broken by a few palms, a lordly eucalyptus tree or two and the minaret of a mosque. Behind the town were low hills covered with scrub, and beyond them, through the rifts in the fog, showed the immense mountains of the Karaman and the Taurus, ripped into fierce ravines where clouds lay in purple shadows, and topped by great masses of snow which stood out sheer against the hot blue sky.

Beyond these lay the Central Plateau of Turkey. I have come to it by many roads: by the steep road behind Ineboli through the aggressive mountains which reach down to the shore of the restless Black Sea; from the rich plain behind Smyrna; from Constantinople; and I have plodded, following the Euphrates River, the weary miles through Kurdistan and Mesopotamia into its fastnesses. It stands back reserved, haughty, a fierce hard country, locked in on every side by great mountains.

Once again I felt the old pulse, the sense of leaving the humdrum and the ordinary and entering the forbidden, the thrill of mystery and adventure that catches at the heart of every traveller to this land with a strange compelling excitement.

We anchored far out, for there was only an open beach and no harbour, and a bottom where an anchor dragged easily. I was rowed ashore by noisy, gesticulating Syrian boatmen, who were incredibly avaricious. Like a flight of seagulls over a dainty piece of offal they cursed and quarrelled over me, shouting Arabic at each other, which is in sound the most uncouth and unlovely of all languages. It is full of guttural noises, as if the speaker were preparing his throat to spit. To listen to an Arab talking is to get the impression that he has a piece of gut tied across his back teeth, against which he continually catches the base of his tongue and half retches. It is strange that such a language should have produced the sonorous phrases of the Koran.

My ear resented the unholy harsh uproar, so that when I came ashore and heard Turkish—the soft Turkish in which the Arabic has had all its harshness toned away, the Persian has kept its sweetness and the original Tartar its incisiveness—it was like a melody. And it is even stranger that the Turks have produced no literature of value.

The passport controller received me courteously. He was a grizzled Albanian with a week's growth of grey stubble on his chin, but with the carriage and the dignity of an aristocrat. There is much truth in the saying that just as all good Greeks are Cretans—and the population of Crete is exceedingly sparse—so all good Turks are Albanians. The Customs official was restrained in his manner, yet frigidly polite. He was a returned prisoner of war who had learned to speak English and to hate the British in some prison camp in India.

On the landing-stage there was a crowd grouped round the body of a man which lay strewn out. An Italian ship had moved off in the early dawn without warning. The freight labourers had stampeded in a panic and the tally-clerk had been drowned. His body, which had just been dredged up, was heaved to one side to let me land—rolling head and rolling dead purplish-grey hands—heaved to one side and pitched over with all the careless indifference of the Eastern for the dead.

Leaving the American women still asking questions and the German checking his samples, I stepped out into the town to get my first impressions of New Turkey.

For a while I was astounded. I walked a little in the streets, endeavouring to understand. It was a characteristic Anatolian town, a jumble of twisting cobbled streets of diminutive shops, where the shopmen sat perched up cross-legged on the counters, smoking, and then dealing with a customer, but only occasionally and casually, and without any particular interest.

Before the shops and the cafés on the pavements were

men lolling on backless chairs, smoking nargileh water-pipes and rolling cigarettes from metal boxes, playing with prayer-chains, talking a little, mooning the live-long day, as they used to moon in Old Turkey before the Republic. There were many houses in ruins with broken walls and roofs, frameless windows covered with sacking, and in a square were peasants squatting beside thin, skinny donkeys and selling charcoal packed in tall goat-hair sacks.

But there appeared to be no Turks. The women were much as before: the townswomen were shapeless masses of black clothes, with their black *charchaff* cloaks drawn over their heads and shoulders down to their wrists, and thick veils; the peasant women in baggy striped bloomers, blouses and brocaded coats, and a white towel drawn across their faces, leaving one eye only exposed. But the men who loafed by the quay or passed me with donkeys and country carts did not look like Turks. They looked sallow and Levantine. They might have been any Greeks, Armenians or Syrians of these parts.

And then, against my own wishes, I realised that the abolition of the fez and the introduction of the peaked hat and cap had made this vast difference. A bare-footed porter with splayed-out toes, wearing trousers short in the leg and with huge pleated seat—which looked like the father and mother of all plus fours—and a bashed-in bowler on his head, went by with a box on his shoulder. After him came a villager selling curdled cream, skin shoes laced with rope and thick hand-made stockings on his feet, the same type of bagged trousers, a great leather belt with many pockets round his middle, an old jacket over his shoulders, and on his head what the salesmen call a gentleman's straw-boater, but somewhat decrepit; and behind him, squatting cross-legged on a donkey between two sacks of flour, was a venerable bearded old gentleman in a tweed coat and a thing like a dunce's cap on his head, which was obviously home-made by unskilled

hands, and the edges turned up to make a brim. The people in the streets and in the market-place wore a fantastic mixture of clothes. Mainly they kept the old-fashioned shoes and trousers, and mixed them with European coats and hats. All the rubbish of the rag-shops of Europe seemed to have been dumped in Turkey. Here and there a *hodja* or an *imam*, wearing long robes and fez with green turban, walking slowly by recalled the old dignity of the Turks; and in contrast the young bloods wore new caps of Austrian make, so virulent in colour and design that they would have shocked the beauty sense of a Parisian apache.

On artistic grounds the abolition of the fez could not be defended. The Turk had ceased to be picturesque. He had lost his old dignity, and at times become a little grotesque and self-conscious of the fact. But Mustapha Kemal had good reasons for the abolition.

The fez had become the mark of the Ottoman, whether Turk, Egyptian, Arab, Greek, Armenian or Syrian, and with the destruction of the Ottoman Empire the *Ghazi* was determined that the Turks should not wear a badge to distinguish them from the rest of the world. Curiously also, though the Egyptians, Arabs and Armenians wore the fez for preference, the Turks had always outside Turkey put on European headgear. In 1920 the Turkish delegates to the Paris Peace Conference consisted of conservative die-hards and were led by that old-fashioned Turk, Damad Ferid Pasha, the Grand Vizir, but they all wore top-hats and frock-coats.

Further, the fez had become the emblem of religion. The Moslem in prayer must remain covered and yet touch his forehead on the ground at stated intervals. The fez was aptly suited for this, and in his hatred of all the religious system of old Turkey, Mustapha Kemal abolished the fez, and allowed only a few licensed priests to wear it.

Looking round at the crowds, I could now believe the tales I had heard and previously thought fantastic:

of the *creations* produced by unskilled wives given a piece of cloth and told to make hat or cap; of the villagers behind Smyrna who found a shop, left by a deported Armenian, full of ladies' summer hats, and how they wore them, feathers, ribbons and all; and of the obedient old man in Sinope who bought in the bazaar, in all innocence, a Catholic bishop's broad-brimmed hat. His friends laughed at him, telling him that he had become more unbeliever than the unbeliever, from a sound follower of the Prophet he had become at one bound a Catholic priest. And the old man had re-put on his fez, taken the hat before the Governor, flung it on the ground, trampled on it and gone gladly to be hanged for disobedience.

CHAPTER XXV

MERSINA

THE Governor of Mersina, despite the warnings of the diplomats and consuls, received me kindly, and helped me in every way in my investigations. He was a dapper little man, who, though his pay was small, always dressed well in morning coat. He was always polite and infinitely courteous, and we talked of his many schemes to improve Mersina—to build a harbour, to double the railway-line and extend it, to encourage passenger traffic, to attract the trade of the hinterland, especially that in cattle, down to Mersina. Prior to the war it had gone to Aleppo and Alexandretta. But, though I searched diligently, of any great stir or new energy I found little—though the promise was there.

To help me the Governor introduced me to a German professor. For sixty-five years, unmoved by the war or outside events, the professor had toured Turkey, living as a Turk, collecting flowers, plants, skins, fossils and butterflies for museums in Europe and America. He was well known as "*Chickheki*," the Flower Man, looked on as a little mad, and allowed to travel freely everywhere.

He told me of the great mountains of the Karaman and Taurus behind us, an unknown country where no European except himself had been for years; of great pine forests where there were small bears and the big brown bears as tall as a man, and where wolves raided the scattered villages in the hard winters; of villages of strange cults; of the Nusairi and Kizil Bashis; of mines and untold mineral wealth untouched even by the Ancients. He showed me his sketches and photo-

graphs of ancient remains, Roman and Greek, of whole cities of older civilisations in ruins waiting the excavator, of castles perched on high crags, built by Crusaders or by the Kings of Armenia or by Sultans. He painted a picture of infinite possibilities if once the country should be opened.

I went eagerly to see him again a little later, but he had died suddenly, and with him had gone his vast knowledge of this unexplored, forbidden country, which lay only a few miles away beyond the mountains behind the town.

With the help of the Governor, I was able to travel freely within a narrow area. As I was returning one evening from inspecting a farm to the north of the town, where, among the orange groves, stood the remains of the village known as Ghiaour Keuy, the Infidels' Village, the Christian Village, I heard a man singing in Greek. I was astonished, for it seemed to me like suicide for anyone to sing in Greek in modern Turkey.

I turned my horse off the road and followed a path across a vineyard. The singer was a night watchman. He was pleased to see me because I was a foreigner. He told me he was a Cretan, a Moslem refugee. His language was Greek and he could as yet only speak a little broken Turkish with a thick Greek accent, though his ancestors had come from Constantinople. The Turkish and Greek Governments had been exchanging Christians and Moslems, he told me. He had been forcibly rooted up and sent here. He bemoaned his fate. In Crete he was happy and well off. His great-grandfather's father had owned the farm he had inherited, but the Greeks would only have Greeks in Greece. In the village, he said, were refugees from all parts: from Western Thrace, Greece proper, Salonika, Macedonia and even from Cyprus. They had tried to start life again, but they had no capital; the land was not theirs and at any moment they might be moved, so they had patched the houses just sufficiently to live in, and did only just enough work on

the land to make it produce. The fruit was beginning to ripen in the gardens and the vineyards; the country was full of foxes and thieves, so that if they did not watch they might be ruined in one night. He was like a child, helpless, lost, pathetic, homeless.

I rode home through the *Fellaheen Quarter* of Mersina. Here a hundred years before had been established an Egyptian colony. The roads were mud tracks, now all dust, and in the winter they would be knee-deep in mud. The people lived in reed and bamboo huts in squalor to be compared only with that in the slums of Port Said. On every side were garbage and flies, and naked big-bellied children played in the offal or scratched in the filth with the pariah dogs and the chickens.

These people had been given notice that they would be deported. They did not wish to become Turks, because they would then be liable for military service, and the Turkish Government had decided that none but Turks should be allowed to live in Turkey. They were poor. Each man had, as his father before him, his plot of ground fenced in with a cactus hedge and palm trees, his own share of the stream water, his own hut and bamboo palisade in which his women worked. It was his home. Now he was to be uprooted and sent penniless and lost to an unfriendly foreign land.

At the entrance to the town there were some barracks, old patched buildings with broken windows and cracked walls and roofs. A few bedraggled soldiers loafed aimlessly by the broken gateway. On the square an N.C.O., in the fading light, was teaching a squad of men a type of goose-step.

Everywhere there was the same folly and the same lament—the folly of troops training to kill, and the lament of the refugees. Europe all suspicious and grumbling. The countries of the Balkans on tiptoe ready to fly at each other. Turkey spending one-third of her income on war preparations. Cyprus and Greece full of Greek refugees. Outside Beyrouth, a town of squalor made

of tin and sacking, where lived forty thousand Armenian refugees. In Turkey, broken Turkish villages full of starving Moslem refugees.

My work was soon finished, for few Europeans or British live in Mersina. There might have been a dozen in all, and the foul summer climate and the primitive conditions made their lives unenviable.

Their one topic at the moment was the death of the tally-clerk and the arrest of the Italian ship's captain, who was in the local prison. By the Turkish law he was liable to several years' imprisonment. The Italian consul was working hard for his release. The French and English were gloating. Italy had voted for Turkey against the other Allies at the Hague Tribunal when a French ship's officer had been arrested in the Bosphorus two years before. Now she was getting what she deserved. All the old rivalries of the Great Powers that had kept the Ottoman Empire alive before the war still thrived in miniature in Mersina.

CHAPTER XXVI

TARSUS AND MITHRAS WORSHIP

I DECIDED to go eastwards first, and, hiring a car, set out along the renowned plain of Adana for Tarsus. The heat was intense. In the parched deserts of Baluchistan and Sind the temperature may run to 129° Fahrenheit in the shade for weeks at a time. The summer sun makes Basra and the damp Persian Gulf a hell, and sears the ground round Bagdad and Mosul, but none of these equals the discomfort experienced on this plain. There is a triangle of country which includes Mersina and Alexandretta and the island of Cyprus, where the heat is at its fiercest. Even the sea within that area, by July, lies tideless, oily, without motion, and slimy with the heat, so that bathing gives no freshness.

Our road ran due east mile after mile along the level, into the empty distance. It had no turning, for it had been built as part of the great Roman road system. To our north the haze was a screen shutting out the mountains, and reaching up to a sky that was steel-white in heat. Now and again a wind blew evilly, swirling up the choking, parching dust, and fluttering the strands of raw cotton, which, dirty as half-thawed snow, hung to the dead thistles by the road and to the telegraph wires and to the few dust-laden trees.

It was the cotton that had made this plain renowned. The soil was fertile and water abundant, but the Turks scratched it and sowed a little short staple cotton, and even then it produced wealth. Properly irrigated with canals, and cultivated for American long staple cotton, it would have given luxuriously, and been capable of

rivalling Egypt itself. From here the Germans got much of the cotton in the war, and it was this plain that the French came here to annex in 1919, and on it the Italians still cast longing eyes.

Tarsus lay in the middle of this plain. It is recorded that St. Paul was born here, but having once left Tarsus, after his eyes were opened he never returned. After a short enforced stay I appreciated his good judgment, for it was a village of hovels; the paths were ankle deep in dust; the place was scorched and burnt under the terrific sun. Beyond it was a river almost dry. In the stagnant pools the mosquitoes bred in thousands, and a few tired trees fringed the banks. That this was the Cydnus River, where Cleopatra, in fabulous luxury, met Mark Antony, that the muddle of crude huts was once a commercial centre linking the world capital at Antioch with the wealth of Asia Minor, and containing a University which rivalled Athens and Rome for learning, it was hard to believe. Yet here was established the centre of the worship of the great God Mithras, which for the first three Christian centuries was universal throughout the Roman Empire and especially among the legionaries.

At the birth of Christ, Mithras was all-popular. His faith had grouped up the profound truths for which men had searched from far back in the beginning of time before Assyria and Egypt and Persia. These it had presented in allegories or mysteries, and both its teachings and its ritual had caught the fancy of the Roman world.

For the first three centuries A.D. Christianity and Mithraism had run a neck-and-neck race for supremacy, and so much had they in common that they became insolubly mixed. Mithras was the Son of God, yet God; like the Greek Perseus, he was born of a virgin. He died and was buried and rose again, and ascended into heaven to plead for man as his Saviour and Redeemer from the spirit of Evil. His birth was celebrated at the winter solstice or Christmas, and his resurrection at the vernal equinox or our Easter. Sunday

was his day—the “ Lord’s Day ”—and he was called the Good Shepherd. Such parallels might be multiplied without end.

Gradually Christianity absorbed the older religion : it was more concrete, more material ; it appealed more directly to human hearts and sympathies. Mithras was a mythical God ; his teaching was very symbolical, and the organisation of his followers was a close freemasonry. Christ was a carpenter, a man, and the Son of Man, and His teachings were concrete and for all.

Christianity won, and wiped out all trace of Mithraism, so that no mention was made of it in any records for over a thousand years and it was unheard of until late in the fifteenth century. But it is clear that the early fathers dreaded its influence. They believed that the Devil, knowing that Christ was coming, had created in advance parallels to the Christian beliefs. Justin Martyr and Jerome complained that in the very spot, in the very cave-stable at Bethlehem where Christ was born, Adonis had been worshipped : Tertullian wrote, “ The devil imitated even the inner parts of our divine mysteries.”

But it seems that it was the Apostles and the early fathers themselves, often quite frankly, who introduced these ideas. Frequently they took the pagan faiths, furbished them up and used them wholesale. St. Paul was undoubtedly well versed in Mithraism ; he quotes the ritual and discusses the faith. It was Saul of Tarsus and not the Devil who introduced the Mithra ritual and faiths into Christianity.

But of the remains of the old faith in Tarsus there were only a few pieces of dull broken masonry.

As soon as I could I hurried on. The road, shut in by the curtains of heat haze, stretched ahead of us, flat, unending, a greyish-white quivering streak. Its surface was broken and decrepit, and the car bucked among its pot-holes and loose boulders and banged us this way and that as we sweated and gasped in the torrid, throat-grasping heat.

CHAPTER XXVII

ADANA

TOWARDS sunset we reached Adana. At two villages on the road we had been stopped and inspected by police, and now we were taken to the police-post. I felt like a criminal newly released and on ticket-of-leave. An official who was both polite and laboriously slow looked us over and examined us, in a bare office, crowded with people, so that it was musty and sweat-stinking in the heat. Its floor was moth-eaten and broken, and from a wall a big photograph of Mustapha Kemal glared fiercely down. Wiping the sweat frequently from his forehead, the official inspected our identity cards, our visas, our *permit de séjour*, and our permits to travel. Then he wrote at length with a squeaky quill pen in a huge book many details, including name of mother, employment of father and of grandfather. A hitch occurred when he refused to accept the well-known fact that my father's surname was the same as my own, for Turks have no surnames. At length I invented a new one on the spur of the moment, which he solemnly wrote in the big book. Presumably I had recorded that I was born on the wrong side of the blanket. Still, he seemed satisfied, and after taking three photographs from each traveller to complete his records, he let us go.

The hotel was a four-storied building that stood out gaunt and ugly above a huddle of small shops on the ruins of a bakery that had belonged to a deported Greek. It was a venture by the municipality and was jerry-built with thin concrete walls, and looked as if it might tumble down at any minute. The food was expensive and coarse,

but the accommodation was clean, and it was full of Government officials. Their pay was small and their expenses were large, so that I wondered how the miracle of making both ends meet was performed. The manager ran the hotel efficiently, except when the drink laid him up, which was about three times a week. He was a retired prisoner-of-war, and in fact all the lesser Government posts and the small businesses were in the hands of returned prisoners-of-war. The Turkish losses in manpower during the Great War and the Greek invasion of Anatolia had been so great that except for returned prisoners there were left no men between the ages of thirty and forty-five. As a result a traveller's comfort depended largely on the way these men had been treated in the British camps. Some of them were intensely hostile and bitter. The majority were moderately unfriendly, and rather contemptuous.

I slept the first night as well as the heat and the mosquitoes would let me. When I rose, the sun was already hot and glowing in the East, and the main street, which ran below my window, was crowded with people hurrying to finish the day's work before the heat of the midday. A hundred little shops were opening. They were mere hatchways filled with primitive goods—rock salt, cube sugar, dried peas, rough country rope. In each, as ordered by the law, was hung a picture of Ghazi Mustapha Kemal, the President, in his favourite pose of relentless autocrat, glaring fiercely into the distance.

The shopmen were taking down the wooden shutters, rolling up the quilts where they had slept in a corner, or drinking their morning coffee in long, tooth-sucking draws as they squatted on backless cane chairs beside their stalls.

Villagers, great hulking fellows with stupid heavy faces, were buying while their women held the donkeys which they had driven in laden with cotton. From the left came up the clamour of the blacksmiths and the

purple smoke from their furnaces. A line of camels swung by, their drivers with cloths drawn across their mouths. They had travelled all night from some distant village. For two days they would remain, bargaining for their loads and getting perhaps an equivalent to twelve or fifteen shillings. Then they would trek back again into their mountains, and so low was their standard of living that they would be satisfied at this price for several days' work.

Men cantered by on ponies and horses, clattering and slipping on the cobbles, the great-hearted stallions keeping at a jog-trot and the riders sitting loosely and gallantly. As yet the horse was still the main means of communication in Turkey.

Soon the dust began to rise as the city carts and a few broken motor-cars bumped and rattled up the rutty street. A water-seller ringing his tinkling bell and crying, "Water, cold as snow," went by, and a seller of sugar-cane took up his stand by a wall. Cutting the sticks, which were the colour of a bruise, into joints, he offered them to the boys on their way to school, with the cry, "Cane like honey." A party of wood-cutters in rags, with skin shoes laced on their feet, bought each a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese as their day's ration, and then set off for the forest. A few women on the pavement were picking over their children's hair and throwing away the lice with a flip of the forefinger and thumb.

I was on the third floor, and the town lay out below me, a huddle of hovels of mud, stone, wood, corrugated iron and sacking, with here and there a good house. Opposite was a *khan*, a native hotel. Below it were stables and sheds for carriages, ankle-deep in manure. A couple of frowsy women in their underclothes—in which they had slept, for all the world in Turkey sleeps in its underclothes—came out on a broken verandah and talked a little to a veiled Turkish woman who sat in a corner. She was a shapeless black bundle, hooded by a

thick veil and with only the full curve of a white breast which showed below her cloak as she suckled a child to indicate that she was human. The two women began some lewd banter with a chauffeur, who was combing his hair and curling his moustache below with the aid of a pocket mirror. A cab-driver, pulling on his coat, led out a pair of fine horses and joined in the battle, with a shrewd piece of verbal filth, whereupon, with shouts of laughter, the two women retired into their room and banged the door.

Above the town I could see the roof of the Jesuit school. The Jesuits had gone, unable to comply with the new Turkish educational and religious regulations, but their figure of the Virgin stood out supreme, like a landmark, high up over the town.

The Governor's office was in a sort of broken-down barracks, the floors full of holes, the stairs liable to give way, and every decrepit passage crowded with worried-looking peasants.

His own room was well furnished, and he was a slow, portly, heavily-built man, with pince-nez that were perched perilously near the end of his bulbous nose. He was a Turk of the old type, apparently ready to help me to the utmost, but in reality crafty in procrastination, and by his assiduous assistance he effectively hindered me. He hated all foreigners. He was not quite sure of his position or of the friendliness of the authorities to him. He had orders from Angora to help me, but was cautious. Turkey was divided into *vilayets* or counties, each with its own governor and each quite independent of the next, but rigidly centralised in the Government at Angora. No *Vali* or *vilayet* governor dared act without orders from Angora. But often he found it best, even after receiving orders, to hedge gently. The autocracy was very apt to change its mind rapidly, and to lay the blame on its inferiors; moreover, it was suspicious of its subordinates and watched them carefully, and listened greedily to every spy.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TURKS AND ARMENIANS

I WORKED in Adana for several weeks on the claims of Allied subjects for damages suffered in the war. It was difficult work, for time had destroyed much of the evidence and the claimants themselves were not over exact in their details. One, of Armenian extraction who lived in Cyprus, with a wealth of verbal evidence had proved to me a loss of £60,000 in rope and sacking. I found his shop in the Covered Bazaar. It was a sort of cavern-booth, the size of a coffee-stall, and I calculated that, to have suffered that loss, he would have had to have stored there some 1,100,000 odd sacks alone, without considering rope. Eventually he got £50.

"Oh," he said angrily, when he heard this, "I have not received enough. I should have had £60."

"But you asked £60,000."

"That is nothing," he replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, "my lawyer just added a few noughts."

Adana was an unhappy town. It was ugly, unpleasant and unhealthy; burnt up by the heat of the summer and shrivelled by the winter's cold. For two months the climate was reasonable, and even then the air and the land were tired and stale.

It had always done some trade, and the Turks had tried to make it into a great business centre, but they had failed. Trade, after a brief spurt in 1926, had died away again. The huge taxes, the monopolies in necessities and the innumerable restrictions in all Turkey had strangled commerce. A tin of petrol from the minute it left a

ship at Mersina to the moment it reached a car on shore doubled in price, and this did not include cartage or profits. There were monopolies in sugar, in tea, in tobacco and many other articles, and new ones were being created weekly.

Moreover, there was no capital, just as there was no capital in all Turkey.

"We need capital. With capital we can do all," a leading merchant kept repeating to me one evening.

"Well," I replied, "pay your national debts, give some sign that capital is safe here and you can get plenty."

"But," he continued, "we shall have to bear with the capitalists also. They will need guarantees, controls, shares of the profit. We had a good dose of them before the war, when we were tied down with the Capitulations. No! No! Better get on as best we can, as long as we're free." That was the general Turkish attitude.

I could only shrug my shoulders. No capitalist would give capital without some good security, and the Turks were afraid and unwilling to allow such terms as would give security. So the vicious circle was complete. Freedom meant freedom to go bankrupt, and starve.

Adana, like all Turkey, was full of potentialities, even of some promise, but little realisation. It was rapidly deteriorating from a picturesque old village into an unpleasant slum town.

I got help in my work from shopkeepers, traders, loungers, and even the police. Much of the property I was looking for had belonged to Armenians, who at one time or another had fled from the town and, living abroad, become British or French subjects. My helpers pointed out these properties. This they did often erroneously, but with the very best intentions of deceiving me as far as possible; for it was no business of theirs to help me locate property which in many cases they had themselves damaged, looted, or occupied.

Was Ahmed, the Turkish Seller of Sweetmeats, likely to help me to find out that the house in which he now lived was once the property of that money-lending Armenian scoundrel Bakalian, whose throat he had cut in 1915, and whose son had unfortunately got away to Cyprus, become a British subject and now claimed damages as his kin?

Ahmed, the Seller of Sweetmeats, was introduced to me in a coffee-house by a mutual friend, as one who knew the whole history of the town. We sat and drank black coffee and smoked placidly together in the cool of the evening on the roadway. A party of Germans from a factory on the west of the town clumped noisily home on the cobbles. Over the way the money-lender's shop was full of peasant women changing the paper money which they distrusted into the good gold they knew. To inspect and finger each piece of gold they awkwardly lifted their heavy veils, but took care to do so in such a way that no man should see their faces.

Ahmed Effendi was exceedingly attentive and polite to me—but had not Government ordered that I was to be safe he would gladly have chased me with a gun. I had searched all day in vain for the home of Bakalian. Ahmed knew where it was. His neighbours came independently as voluntary witnesses. They showed me an ownerless ruin, fifty yards further up the street, which had, they said, belonged to their poor friend Bakalian, who had died during the deplorable and much-to-be-regretted deportations ordered by those scoundrels Enver and Talaat Pasha.

Then, being satisfied that he had misled me, Ahmed returned home, hot and tired, to his wife, who had watched us through the lattice-work of her street room in the house that had once belonged to the late lamented Bakalian, and together they cursed the heat, the flies, the central Government, but, above all, Bakalian's son and myself.

Among my helpers was an Armenian, Nigergossian

by name, a seller of cloth, who lived in a cave-like shop in the dark Covered Bazaar at the gate to the Red Mosque. Adana had been the great centre of the Armenians before the war. They had owned the town, shops, houses, gardens, and every Turk was in their power through loans and mortgages. In 1897 Abdul Hamid, the Red Sultan, whose mother was an Armenian and who hated Armenians, murdered many of them as revolutionaries. In 1907, when the Red Sultan fell and a Constitution was declared, the Armenians revolted, and, aided by Russian money and encouraged by Russian promises, they seized Adana and declared a Republic. After a week's fighting they were defeated and killed by the thousand, and all Europe, with the exception of Germany, held up pious, weak hands of horror. By 1914 the Armenians were back and prospering again. In 1915 the great majority were deported. At the Armistice gradually many returned, and in 1919 they sided with the French when they occupied Adana, were armed and enlisted by the French, took their revenge on the Turks, and when the French were driven out the whole Armenian population went with them, lest a worse thing should befall them.

They had been the tradesmen, shopkeepers, bankers, retailers and artisans. The Turks were trying to replace them, but with no marked success. In the unaristocratic art of collecting money and turning it over at a profit the Turks have no natural ability. I found that both in Mersina and Adana most of the bigger shops and all the banking and finance were in the hands of foreigners, who were Syrians, Moslems, and Jews, instead of Armenians. Nigergossian was one of the few who had hung on desperately, like a limpet to its rock. The tide had gone out. He hoped it might return.

He was a little man, with a mouth full of dirty, untidy teeth and a suit in which he must have lived and slept for weeks; a paunch, and a roll of fat round his chin, restless black eyes and a 'sallow complexion. He was

full of quaking fear, of secrets and whispered advice given in the back of his shop among the rolls of cheap cloth. He warned me against many people. He indicated by description, and often correctly, where some of the property for which I was looking was to be found. I can see him now, telling me of his ill-treatment, of the bribes he had to pay to be left in peace, whispering always so that his garlic-laden breath was almost on my lips, cringing now as a policeman went by, and suave as a customer came into the shop; and on a wall he had hung a photograph of Mustapha Kemal, which glared down at him. Still, he helped me much, and I could but admire his persistence in staying when all his compatriots had been chased away.

The police were helpful also. They never believed that I was there for any good purpose, so that they gave me every assistance in order to find out what was my real object.

I was on my way to interview Djemal Bey, the Chief of the Police, one Saturday morning, when I caught a glimpse of my little Armenian slinking out of a side door of the police headquarters. After some conversation with Djemal Bey I drew a bow at a venture. "Now," I said, "you ought to be satisfied as to my work. Niger-gossian, the Cloth Merchant of the Covered Bazaar, has been cross-examining me for a month, and has no doubt repeated to you the details this morning."

Djemal Bey looked at me without surprise. The humour of it struck him.

"The *pess hiwan*, the dirty animal," was all he said, "he would sell his aunt's honour for a little gold." And we parted as the best of friends.

I have known many Armenians, both rich and poor. They are a strange race, about which it is hard to generalise. I have seen a crowd of three hundred men driven out to be massacred. They knew what was to be their fate. They were guarded by three sleepy gen-

darmes, and they went quietly, sheepishly, without making any resistance. Others, during the hideous deportations of 1915, told missionaries how, in order to get bread and keep untouched their little gold hoard, they had been forced to sell their children. This they said with no sense of humour. Others, on the other hand, in the hills above Van and in the Jebel Musa mountains fought like devils. In 1920 the Armenians of Aintab enlisted under the French, who promptly left them in the lurch. For months they defended the town alone. When it was in ruins and they were surrounded and starving, the last six hundred armed men killed what women and children remained, and cut their way out to the mountains.

As a whole they are unlovable people, over-nervous and over-clever and crafty. They work hard and persist, so that in two generations they will own a whole Turkish town and every Turk will be in their power through loans, and they will then put on the screw without mercy or good sense. They are like a nest of wasps, unlovable, ill-natured, and assiduous in collecting up any wealth, even if it is out of the filth. They have an unbreakable obstinacy, and though massacred again and again, they revived rapidly, until finally Mustapha Kemal ejected them wholesale in 1920 and 1921. It is difficult to love them, but one can admire their persistency.

I got some idea of their lives when I found that their dates were decided by massacres or wars or mass killings.

"That happened before the massacre of Abdul Hamid," would say one, meaning 1897, or "It was after the *Kartal* or killing in Adana," which would be 1908.

Perhaps their outstanding characteristic was their love of money. It was not quite like that of other peoples. Some love money for power, others for comfort, ease or pride, or for use in charitable work, and for a hundred other reasons; but the Armenians loved money for itself. A fat man would walk miles and do great physical labour for it. A coward would risk all tortures, even

death, for it, and the Armenian outlook was aptly illustrated by a subtle Turkish story :—

Once the Devil spent some months on the Bosphorus. He had three servants, and when he left he wished to reward them, and he called each in turn separately aside.

“ I want glory,” said the French servant, beating his breast.

“ I want money,” said the Greek servant.

“ I want knowledge,” said the Armenian.

Now this surprised the Devil, who knew his servants by heart. “ Knowledge,” he said to the Armenian, with the unctuousness of an ambassador, “ is a great thing, a fine thing, but there are many sorts. Do you want any in particular ? ”

“ Yes, Sire,” said the Armenian : “ just a little knowledge as to whom you gave the money.”

CHAPTER XXIX

TURKISH VILLAGE LIFE

SUMMER was coming to an end when I set out to visit the villages round Adana. The plain was now brown, hard as iron, burnt into great cracks, and the pools were flakes of caked mud. The air, the people, the under-sized cattle, and the land were tired, stale, thirsting for the first autumn rains. Everywhere I met with an almost incredible poverty—the village of Injerlik, once a prosperous place, was reduced to a few mud huts. The next, Gayirli, was no better.

It was a desolate little ruin, of one mud street of broken huts patched with reeds and sacking, and beyond it were the remains of what had been a rich farmhouse. A dozen men lounged in a café that was three mud walls and a roof of boughs and the furniture four chairs, some cups and a brazier on a broken table. A stray hen, which seemed to be half-plucked, scratched over the floor in the hope of finding some food. A few ragged children peered curiously at me, a couple of buffaloes rolled by, and a woman with a pitcher on her shoulder and a towel drawn across her face as a veil went by. A wolf-dog moved restlessly in the shade, as the great fleas played through his thick stiff coat.

The men acknowledged my greeting without moving, and showed little of the old courtesy of the days before the war. We talked of the vital things: of the weather, the coming of rain, the heat, and the water, and after a little I ventured a question:

“Once this village was larger and richer. Was it damaged when the French ruled here in 1920?”

For a second there was silence, and then each man became alive and the air electric. The café-keeper stood holding his coffee-pot as if it were a weapon, and his face blazed with anger.

"The French," he cried, and his voice rose, "the accursed French. God curse them! With their negroes and their Armenian helpers they burst into our homes, murdered the old men, violated the women and destroyed all they did not steal. May God blind them!" And in the face of each man flamed a fierce and intense hatred.

Then they quieted into listlessness again and the café-keeper filled my cup.

"Will you not rebuild the village?" I asked, after drinking the coffee and lighting a cigarette.

"*Ne yapalım?* What can I do?" replied a middle-aged man, acting as spokesman, and threw his hands out helplessly.

So it was in all the villages. These people could fight, they could rise to an occasion under the spur of patriotism or hatred and do great deeds, but of that plodding spirit needed to succeed in the drudgery of peace they had little. They gave me a sense of desolation and hopelessness, as they sat in their broken villages. Centuries of maladministration had impoverished them, continuous wars had decimated them, and finally the last fierce fighting between themselves and the French for possession of their homes had left them ruined.

To the north, on the Sihun River, that runs from the Taurus Mountains through Adana to the sea, I found a village more prosperous than the rest, which had escaped destruction by some chance, and kept its old life. There I stayed. Before the war the headman would have lodged me as an honoured guest. Now times had changed, and the traveller was not honoured, especially if he were a foreigner; so I hired a room at the inn.

It was a longish room with a low ceiling and dirty, whitewashed walls, and with no pictures. A divan ran

under the windows; the floor was made of planks that had become holey and warped, so that from the stable beneath came up the smell of manure mixed with that of the public latrine. The cattle moved restlessly in the stable, chewing the cud, rattling their chains and turning as the flies plagued them. At night the only light was from a tiny paraffin lamp. A mattress, which was rolled up in a corner with its coverlet during the day was laid on the floor as my bed. As soon as the lamp was out and I had laid down I was assaulted fiercely by an army of great brown bugs; mosquitoes filled the room with their drone and sand-flies pinched remorselessly at any part of me that was exposed, while the dank heat pressed down on me as stifling as a blanket over the head. I lit the lamp and went hunting. Such bugs as I could catch I dropped in the lamp. If once squeezed they had the acrid smell of lady-birds.

But the discomforts were more than repaid by the friends that I made. The *mukhtar*, the headman, was afraid to be more than polite, but the villagers came in to squat and talk, to smoke cigarettes and sip coffee, especially the *hodja*, the village priest. He was a little, sturdily built man, and very dignified, yet brisk. His face was like a ripe apple, bright-coloured and somewhat wrinkled, and each wrinkle was born of a joke or a chuckle. His face was full of laughter and his eyes twinkled while he jested, but he never laughed full mouth open, as we do, but just chuckled softly like a fat child being amused—an infectious, gurgling, rib-tickling laugh.

And yet he was no child. He had fought gallantly in three wars. He was renowned for his riding and hunting. I saw him more than once tie his black priest's gown in a knot behind his back, draw up the big sleeves, stick his slippered feet into the stirrups, and swinging into the saddle and pushing his fez and green turban down on his head burst straight into a gallop on to the ground where they played on Fridays the ancient

game of *jerrid*. It was a dangerous game, a sort of cross-tag on horseback, when all galloped at once and one had to hit the galloping quarry with a short cane. There were no rules, as in polo, to prevent crossing, and men and horses crashed together. Many were hurt and some killed. The *hodja* was at his best when he had taken some risk and had swung his horse and escaped the danger by an inch.

The Turks were natural horsemen, riding freely without fear. A Greek would keep the seat of his trousers glued to a café-chair as long as possible; an Armenian might use a donkey to carry him to his work; but the Turks rode for the joy of riding.

The *hodja* took me shooting many miles away into the low hills and lent me ponies. Only when we talked of Greeks and Armenians he grew stern and his eyes hard and dangerous.

"If one came back I would kill him with my own hands," he said. "I led the villagers out when we drove the *rayahs* down to the river and drowned them by the score. You are English. You work for your country. I have no quarrel with you, but these were traitors. Let us talk of other things."

He never spoke openly of it, but I sensed that he had a high contempt for the new irreligious rulers of Turkey, and a disbelief in their ability to improve the country.

When I left, the *hodja* came some of the way with me, riding a young stallion that bucked and curvetted in a way that filled his soul with delight. At Yilanli he drew rein. Before and during the war this place was miles of gardens and vineyards, and full of summer-houses to which the people of Adana came when the heat became too oppressive. It lay below us, ruined, the gardens and vineyards destroyed, the summer-houses fallen down or burnt, the whole in desolation.

"The French did all that," said the *hodja* fiercely, "as they ruined all this land. Why did they come? This is our country, our Turkey. Did they come to

show us how to rule? Can they rule better than we rule? See what they have done in Aleppo and when they destroyed Damascus! Our Sultans ruled an Empire when their kings were provincial governors. Did they come to protect the Armenians? They armed them, sent them to take their revenge on us and then they betrayed them.

"But they are gone," he continued, his voice rising with pride, "chased out by our men. You see that house between the trees. There we wiped out a whole company. Away there to the right where the ground dips I was with our cavalry when they came one night on to the enemy's flank and at dawn chased the French like sheep away back out of our Turkey."

"And now," I said, "Turkey will be happy, rich and prosperous?"

For a minute he looked at me shrewdly, then, with a little, cynical smile: "At least we are free."

I watched him gallop away, a gallant figure, fearless; a gay, good friend, as full of fun, as simple, and as cruel, as a child, and as I came back to Adana through the deserted vineyards I knew that great harm as the Turks had done, Europe had done little better.

It was late autumn before I was ready to go, and the first rains had come hissing down on dry earth, turning it to mud, and cooling the night air.

I went by the Yilanli road once more to the village on the river, and said good-bye to the *hodja*, and then returned by raft. The river was filling rapidly from rains in the hills, and the foresters were floating down their timber. The rafts were small, made of pine logs, and we spun and twisted as we were poled down the stream that was at one minute a fierce green current between steep banks, and the next broadened out into shallows. In the spring the whole river would turn into a raging torrent.

We stopped at a village to pick up a man and several

women. The women, with the exception of two who kept their veils thrown back over their heads, sat cross-legged, their black veils down, grouped in the centre of the raft, holding their children tightly, but showing little other interest. The man rolled and smoked innumerable cigarettes, while he swayed his body backwards and forwards and hummed to himself.

We swung round the last bend into an open, low-banked stretch, and Adana lay before us. To our right the red soil and the yellow-leaved trees, mixed with a few grey olives of the gardens of Yilanli, stretched away. To the left were mud flats where buffaloes wallowed. A flock of sheep and some cattle making homewards raised a rainbow-coloured cloud of dust against the sunset. Behind us the plain ran to the foothills. Beyond, there towered above us the Taurus Mountains, in shadow and sun, their peaks already covered with the first snow, and a cloud or two sailed across them.

Adana lay sprawled out, over a low hill, face downwards, a vulgar place, rump in air. A few factory chimneys showed where some Italians and Germans were still trying to make it into an industrial town.

The banks narrowed in lower down, and there were gardens along the side where some young men wailed the nasal Turkish music, and snapped their fingers like dancing-girls to the time of a gramophone. Seeing the women on our raft, they directed their songs to them, whereupon the two with uncovered faces dropped their veils, and they all stirred, whispered licentiously, and laughed slyly together.

I landed on the further shore and came back across the ancient shore bridge. On each side in its recesses sat beggars showing hideous sores, stumps of legs, or eyeless sockets, demanding alms as a right. A few loungers leant on the parapet watching the Persian water-wheels slowly turning in the stream below. The villagers were hurrying home before dark. Out of the sunset from the sea came a flight of duck, and was gone

under the purple shadow of the mountains. By the bridge edge below a telegraph pole crawled an old woman in rags, searching along the gutter, beast-like, horrible. Two girls in patched, coloured, pleated bloomers, and pleated and brocaded coats, their hair plaited down their backs, and baskets of fresh horse-dung on their heads, watched her. A crowd of loafers joined them. They watched the beast-like woman with interest, but unmoved, and quite callous. They were as unconscious of their cruelty as all the people of this country, who have little imagination, and no nerves. They were only interested to see if she would find a bit of bread the girls had purposely dropped ahead of her.

As I turned into the streets of the town my soul revolted against the depression of living continuously this ugly, unclean life, with its continuous contact with filth, evil faces, and brutality. At dawn the next day I gladly caught the train that comes up across the frontier from Aleppo on the renowned Bagdad-Berlin Railway on its way to Constantinople and Europe.

CHAPTER XXX

INTO THE INTERIOR

THE train carried us quickly across the plain, which was now yellow and pleasant in the mild November sun. It climbed the low hills which were tossed-up heaps of shale and rubble covered in patches with scrub, and so entered a narrow ravine. It laboured panting through long tunnels, where here and there a cutting showed us great precipices above and below, and that we were climbing steeply, worming our way right through the roots of the mountains.

I came this way as a prisoner-of-war in 1916. Then the tunnels were not built. We had been marched on foot from Bagdad to Tarsus, and then up the Cydnus River along the Conqueror's Way into the Cicilian Gates over the mountains, and the road was then crowded with Armenians being driven down into the Syrian desert, to deportation and massacres.

The tunnels had been built by British prisoners-of-war, and they recalled memories of despair, of the useless revolt against restraint, imprisonment and injustice, from which a prisoner has no appeal. Even to-day I am as glad as when I heard of it—of how a party of British prisoners, when ill-treated continuously by a German engineer, persuaded him to go to the cutting face in one of these tunnels to see some error, and then, in the dark, with a truck they crushed him against the rock.

In those days the Turks had just begun to fortify this point and station a few troops. Here the British should have struck, instead of sending the costly raids to Bagdad, Palestine and Gallipoli. It was a dominating strategical

position, cutting Turkey in half. Its capture would have forced her to capitulate early. It would have given the holders enormous prestige in all the Moslem world and the power to strike suddenly in many directions. It was neglected because French and British interests clashed, and the French were unwilling to allow any other troops in this area except their own, and they had no men to send from the Western Front. The rivalries between the Powers that had kept the Ottoman Empire alive once again prolonged its life, and at the Armistice saved the Turks from final destruction and let them revive.

We passed the station of Bilemedik, and then into more tunnels, and out again in the narrow gorge where Bozanti stands and the Conqueror's Way crossed the railway track. Once this was the great high road down which came all the conquering armies from west to east. Now it was a shored-up track; along its edge were the dead bodies of huts and shanties, the untidy litter and refuse of camps. It was deserted: occasionally there passed some donkeys, a few villagers and a caravan of camels.

Bozanti was much like a Swiss town, only in a broken-down condition. Below in the narrow gorge raced a stream, green with snow water and churned into white as it raced over the pebbles, and which must have betrayed this one way through these impassable mountains to the first men who came exploring and searching their way cautiously up from the plains. All round were mountains in snow, Ak Dagħ and Kizil Dagħ, some 5500 feet high; and to the north-east towered up to 9000 feet Karafil Dagħ.

"There is money to be made in all this country," said a stout man with whom I had made friends in the train, an Egyptian wood merchant, who had also got out of the train. "The mountains are full of forests of good timber and minerals that have not been touched. It all needs capital, but no one will lend to this country. I am going to Angora," he continued, drawing his fur coat close round him, for in the Bozanti gorge there

blows at all times an evil, hellish, mad wind, "to get a concession to work. I am a Moslem, a friend of Turkey, and yet they treat even me with the suspicion with which they treat all foreigners."

Once more we climbed steeply between great cliffs and through tunnels, until suddenly, as if out of a man-hole, we came out on to the Anatolian plateau, as if on to the top of the world.

Below in Adana it had been genial autumn, mellow and pleasant. Here in one step we were in black winter, brutal yet virile.

At Ulu Kishla I got out, for I had decided to go east to Kaesarea, and the train went north to Ismidt and Constantinople.

I was astonished at the efficiency with which this railway was run. The Turks have queer contrasts in their character. They are proverbial for slovenliness, slackness and inefficiency, yet this railway was far better than either that under French control between Mersina and Adana or that between Aleppo and Beyrouth. A Turkish office is usually slovenly, and yet, for example, the Ferry Service on the Bosphorus is excellent. Its organisation and the crews on its boats are Turkish; the course is difficult and the landing-places are awkward, and yet these steamers are never late, and rarely have an accident or a breakdown. A Turkish army will have no food, ammunition or clothing, and yet its commanders will issue crisp and efficient orders and win a battle. These efficiencies show strangely against the general procrastination and slackness, and the doing of almost incredible follies by the Turks, to their own personal injury, but they suggest that there may be unsuspected qualities in the Turks, if the right stimulus can be found.

Ulu Kishla was a dirty, bedraggled little place in a valley, like a shred of fouled rag thrown on one side. There I hired a Ford car. We took some time to start,

for both the driver, Hassan, and his car were wrecks. He was a scraggy, unshaven little man, and after he had collected numbers of bundles and tins of petrol, which he stuffed in on top of my baggage, had said good-bye to several friends whom I stoutly refused to let get into the car, pulled himself into a sheep-skin coat that was monstrous with grease and filth, and failed to crank up the engine, he summoned the whole village to give him a shove-off.

We started with much advice and shouting, a back-fire and a roar, and we progressed in the same manner. The car was tattered, the floor boards, the cushions and bonnet were gone, the side curtains and hood and mud-guards in shreds. We raced even on the level in low gear, and as the radiator cap was gone, we spurted steam like a geyser. Twice in the first five miles we punctured the treadless tires, and again at mile twenty, but except for a few curses Hassan was full of optimism. His knowledge of mechanics was rudimentary, but as long as the wheels went round—and in some fantastic Turkish way they did go round, though from the crashing and banging one might have thought they went egg-shaped—Hassan was happy, and at times burst into a loud nasal love-song, and at least his steering was marvellous, for the road was far from good.

It was a typical Turkish road, for as a rule they are bad. It had been built by the Romans, broad enough for soldiers to march four abreast. It had been repaired by a Sultan or two, patched by the Germans, and now was in ruins. It was a mass of holes. Even the foundations were out, and there remained only the centre stones that wound across the country like a snake's back. It was not of use so much to drive on as to indicate the general direction, and we ran along its edge as near as convenient. All the bridges were down, and at any ravine or river-bed we turned off into the country until we found a ford to pass, and then returned again to the roadside. Here and there we had to keep to the actual roadway, and the agony of

being bumped and thrown about as the engine roared and crashed below us was a thing not to be forgotten.

"How far is it to Kaesarea?" I asked.

"*Effendi*," said Hassan, breaking off politely in a song, with a high note well caught in the bridge of his nose, "four hours. With a road like this we can fly along birdlike," and he roared up the engine as he finished his song and lit a cigarette.

After seven hours we reached Nigde, which was not half-way, and as it was already evening, I decided to halt.

After we had knocked for some time, a boy opened the hotel door to us, and showed us up some broken stairs into a big room. Round a dying brazier sat four ill-natured men with their coats drawn round their shoulders, and eating noisily of a mess of beans out of a filthy dish. They scowled as a gust of bitter wind came in with us, and then one came reluctantly and gave me a room at the stair-head. Food he could not give, but there was a restaurant, a native "*locanta*," round the corner, to which I went after dumping my baggage.

It was a low cabin with benches along the walls behind wooden tables. The food consisted of some pieces of mutton roasted in their own fat and some rice kept hot on the brazier, round which several villagers crouched. The plates were tin and foul, the knives and forks cloyed with grease from old meals, and the food was as poor and unsavoury as could be imagined, and the prices asked were those of the Côte d'Azur in the season.

My room, as all the hotel, was unclean, the floor broken, the walls smeared with rain that had leaked in, the windows ill-fitting, the glass cracked and the holes patched with paper; the furniture consisted of a bed and a broken chair. There was a stove, which we lit, but it smoked so that, with streaming eyes, I put it out.

As we were going to bed the police called us. Once more we went through the ceremony of visas, permits to travel, name of mother, trade of father; but this time I was not going to be caught out by the name of my father,

and got it off pat. All this was written in a big book, and our passports and three photographs of each were taken. And all this was not because the Turks were suspicious of us. It was the ordinary routine; for there was no liberty of travel in Turkey. An army of secret agents were always on the watch. Each *vilayet* or country had its own frontiers, and to pass from one to the other a traveller had to have police visas. He must report his arrival, hand over his passport and a certain number of photographs of himself, obtain new visas to continue, and get all his papers back just before he set out. A journey across England or America under these conditions might take two weeks or a month, and this would depend on the willingness of the local officials.

When we returned to the hotel, Hassan and the hotel-keeper squatted along a wall and rolled cigarettes, and when I complained of the dirtiness of the hotel, Hassan replied:

“You have come too late.”

“Yes,” the hotel-keeper took up the story; “last month we had three dancing-girls and a gramophone and some *rakki*, and”—as a concession to my English tastes—“even whisky and a *ball* every evening.” And his pimpish eyes showed how he thought a hotel should be run.

After that Hassan turned up the collar of his coat, lay down on the planks, and putting an old blanket over his legs, went to sleep with his head on his arm.

I took the bed, with its unclean mattress and quilt, but I slept only fitfully. Now Hassan snored and grumped in his throat. Then the smell of the latrine that leaked through one wall, mixed with smells of Hassan and his sheepskin coat, caught me by the throat. Whether it was Hassan or his coat I don't know: perhaps it was both. I have marched among Sikh sepoy in the Indian sun after they have rubbed stale curdled cream in their hair, but that smell was a sweet savoury compared to this.

Then the intense cold woke me, and I paced up and down to keep warm. The thermometer was far below zero. From the window I could see the outline of the Taurus Mountains, covered with snow. The night was cold, black, hard and glittering like steel. My only satisfaction was that the cold had sent to ground the myriads of bugs whose marks were on every bit of woodwork.

With the morning came a feeble yellow sun that gave no warmth, but I was glad to see the day, as I was in a hurry to get on. Breakfast was some goat's milk and coarse bread, and I thought grimly of the people who were always talking of the virtues of a primitive life away from civilisation. One week of this squalid, dirty existence would cure them of that nonsense.

"How far is it to Kaesarea now?" I asked Hassan.

"Ah," he replied, brightening up, "we can go in four hours, for on such a road we can fly like birds."

For answer I sent him to hire me a horse and a mounted groom, and then to get the passports. He should come along two hours behind me, so that when I had had enough of the horse, I could pay it off and take the car.

He returned to say that he could not find a horse. Then the hotel-keeper asked a fabulous sum for the use of the room, and grew offensive in argument, and finally it had come to nine o'clock, and the police still replied that I could not go, as the Commandant had gone away for the night, and without his permission they could not give me back my papers. They were polite, but helpless. I recognised all the signs. I was being held up, but I was determined not to bribe my way on.

In a rage I went down to the Governor's office. As I was only passing through, I had just sent a card and not called on him before. He heard my story quietly, but he moved, and quickly. In two minutes I had my passport and the police Commandant was being rapped on the knuckles and every official was on the jump. Within

twenty minutes I had the horses, and the hotel-keeper had been paid reasonably and soundly cursed.

It may have been also that the Governor wished to see me but would not send for me direct. There are many complications in the Turkish mind. None the less throughout the whole of modern Turkey I found the same thing. The few who ruled were efficient, vigorous, decisive. The junior officials were as bad as under the Sultans.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ANATOLIAN PLATEAU

AS I mounted by the hotel, with the police now obsequiously attentive, a European came up and spoke to me. He was a German, a traveller in cheap iron goods. He was living the life of a Turk villager, travelling in the ordinary covered country springless wagons, sleeping in the country inns—searching out new markets with true German persistency and thoroughness and disregard of physical discomfort. After we had talked a little, he went back to a cart which he was sharing with a number of Turks, and I saw him no more.

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All that morning I rode steadily, perched up in the high country saddle, while the sturdy stallion beneath me ambled on and the groom on a pony followed behind. He was a lean, well-set-up fellow called Refik, who had black roving eyes, a fiercely-curved moustache, and wore an old gendarme uniform and high boots of soft black leather. He had been a corporal in the gendarmerie.

Free from the uproar of the car, I saw and heard again. We travelled in an immense silence. The plateau, grey as dead ashes, treeless except for a few naked poplars by the frozen pools, stretched away into the infinite distance, where the mist was a brutal purple like the colour of a bruise. Behind us and to our south ran the Taurus range, its lower slopes black with forests, and above them rolling masses of snow that seemed to lean in over and crush down on us. It was an immense,

brutal land, hemmed in by overpowering snows and held in a great silence, broken only by the click of our horses' shoes on stones and the occasional sough of the wings of a fleet of duck or a wedge of geese hurrying south to food and open water. Now towering up before us, now only a peak, as our road rose or fell, but always ahead of us, stood the great mountain of Erdjies Dag, at the foot of which was Kaesarea. It stood out like a beacon, so that travellers as far as the Black Sea and down to the Cilician Gates could see it day after day as they travelled.

The soil of this plateau seemed to be good, but little of it was cultivated. We passed dead villages, a broken Greek church, a deserted police post, an old well with ruins round it. There had been many Christians in this area before the deportations, but now the whole land was nearly empty.

We passed few people—a posse of gendarmes cantered up with rifles slung, talked with Refik and pushed off into the void. A couple of travellers trotted by; huge black stiff cloaks covered them from their chins down to the fetlocks of the horses; round their heads they had wound *bashlik* caps that covered their ears and chins, and only their eyes and black moustaches showed. They looked like Mongolian raiders out of past centuries.

The cold was intense. The sunlight, the colour of pale amber, gave no heat and threw no shadows. The ground was bound hard. There was no running water. The streams and the pools were black and frozen, and the springs were icicles that had ceased to drip.

As we reached the top of a slope the silence was broken by a distant roar which gathered in volume as each particle of electricity in the frozen world took it up and magnified it, and there burst into view below us Hassan and his car. I could see it leaping and bounding in the hard ruts, twisting and turning between boulders and spurting steam from the radiator. As it came near and rushed at the last slope with a super-roar, I heard

above the clatter and din the high notes of Hassan's wailing love-song. Had I been Don Quixote I must have put lance in rest and charged this monstrous beast in this wild land.

With a last crash it drew up beside our kicking ponies, and Hassan, sticking his unshaven, grubby, ridiculous face out of a tear in the side curtain, gave us a welcome. I told him I should ride another eight hours. He accepted the fact with a smile that expressed his belief in my madness to ride when I might travel comfortably in his car, and after making some arrangement with Refik as to meeting, he tore off singing, and disappeared with a rattle over the hills into the distance.

That night we slept in a room of a deserted police post where there had been a Christian village, and a stone church was the only building that remained. Refik bought some wood, which was almost as valuable as gold, some dried meat, a little sour milk, lit a huge fire, plugged some of the cracks in the walls with horse-dung, and after we had eaten we lay down to sleep, with the horses stabled in one corner of the room. Refik lent me his cloak, a heavy affair made of coarse wool beaten close so that it was as stiff and hard as felt. Curling up inside this in all my clothes, warmed by the fire and the horses, and with a haversack for a pillow, I slept without moving till morning, to wake foul-mouthed. But I was quickly refreshed by the cold air from outside.

That morning we rode steadily onward. Now and again we passed villages, incredibly poor, and which compared unfavourably even with those of Baluchistan and the Afghan border.

Once to our north we saw a village cut out of rock, and in some of the rooms a few gipsies were camped. On its further side was monstrous red rock that was split up in towers and pinnacles, and each of these had been cut out into rooms, with slits made for windows, and used as houses, so that it looked like a many-spired city.

Now and again country carts packed with recruits going to Ulu Kishla creaked past us. They were great, sturdy fellows, hard as iron, and so slow-witted that they did not feel cold and pain like ordinary human beings. Once we found the people of a village turned out to mend the road, the men unwilling, their hands and faces the grey purple of a dead body, which reminded me of the hands of the drowned tally-clerk on the quay at Mersina. Their women, closely veiled, were helping them.

Their village stood well back on a bare hillside up to which all water had to be carried laboriously, and their fields were in the valley below. No doubt this was a relic of the days when the country was full of brigands. Even as late as 1922 it was unsafe to wander without escort or arms. In those days Greek brigands were helped by Greek villages, and Turkish brigands by Turkish villages. Now all the Christians were gone, and any Turkish brigand had to be, not a local hero, but an unpleasant criminal who had to feed on his brother Turks. The Turkish police and gendarmeries have always been exceedingly efficient at catching criminals when they wish, and they very rapidly cleared up all Turkey. Moreover, the Turks are not naturally inclined to crime, and the crime statistics are very low. Hence I found it safe for a traveller alone and unarmed to travel all over Turkey, west of the Euphrates river, as long as he had the permission of the Government.

Towards the afternoon we topped the last slope of Arab Dagh. The hill fell away steeply, and below us was a great plain. Half of it looked like a lake, but was in reality covered with a cancerous soil and salt. On its further edge, straight up sheer from the plain, shot up the Erdjies Dagh in full majesty, dwarfing all the mountains round. Such is the general ignorance of Turkey that few people in Europe have ever heard of this mountain, though it is as high as Mont Blanc, and after Ararat is the highest mountain in this part of Asia.

CHAPTER XXXII

TURKISH PEASANTS

IN the plain below we found Hassan, and having paid off Refik with regret, I climbed into the car.

"How far is it to Kaesarea?" I asked incautiously, and could have bitten off my tongue, for I knew the inevitable answer that came disjointed over the roar of the engine.

"Ah, we can . . . in four hours . . . with a road like this we can fly birdlike," and the optimistic smile.

We skirted the plain and came to the village of Injer Su, where the road going three hundred miles north to Angora crossed ours, and here we halted for food and water for the car.

It was a village built inside a circle of cliffs. Once it had been very prosperous. It had been mainly Christian, but these had all gone and many of the houses were in ruins, and the fields and vineyards were uncultivated.

In the village square was a raised stone dais, round which, in the sun and out of the wind, squatted a number of old men and a crowd of recruits with skin bags tied to their backs in which they carried all their possessions. They were marching down to the railway, having been called up for service under the conscription laws. They were fine, well-set-up men, their faces unintelligent, mainly of the Tartar shape, but fatter. Their food was coarse, their lives were rough, but the magnificent air and water of this plateau made such men, and, as among the Nusairi, the law of the survival of the fittest was in full force, and no weakling could survive the strain.

A camel caravan came in. The drivers knelt their grumbling camels and saluted the villagers. A *hodja* came out of a mosque with great ceremony.

"*Hosh geldiniz*, You are welcome," he said to the camel-drivers.

"*Hosh bulduk*, We find ourselves welcome," they returned with equal courtesy and ceremony.

"*Ayi mi siniz*, I hope that you are well."

"*Ayi teshekur ederim*, *Elhamdullah*, We are well, thank you, praise be to God," they replied and called for water-pipers from the village café. A woman heavily veiled went by for water from the well by the mosque.

From the one shop, served by a lanky fellow in a Homburg hat, who looked like an Armenian but denied it fearfully with an oath, I bought bread and dried meat, and shared it with Hassan.

I watched the men round me. They were the same Turkish peasants I had known for years. By now I had got used to the novelty of the hat, and I saw that the men were unchanged. They were the same placid, obedient, polite, good-tempered people as under the Sultans, abnormally lacking in nerves and insensible to pain in themselves or in others. They lived in squalor and discomfort little better than the animals of the field. Their lives were hard and brutal in a brutal, hard country.

They had no more reserve against a bad day than the animals. Their one collection of clothes served them for all purposes of sleeping and waking. As soon as it grew dark they lay down to sleep, and got up with the sun, tousled and unkempt, to laze through the day, doing only as much work as absolute necessity demanded. They had no desire or urge to improve or be richer. Their food was coarse, eaten with bread clenched in one fist and cheese or olives in the other, and at times a noisy share in a bowl of soup. Beyond the primitive facts—to eat, to drink, to sleep, to be warmed by the sun or a fire, to catch lice when they became irritating, to beget and to die—they had no ideas. Like sheep,

they could be driven or led; like wolves, they could be roused brutally by a common danger or a common desire. To know and feel the joys of colour or music, to read, to think, to know even a little comfort, were not in their lives.

And Hassan, despite his car and his cap and his roughness, was a typical old type in his mental outlook. We had left Ulu Kishla and were close to Kaesarea, and both of us were tired of the lurching and bumping on the evil road, when suddenly in a valley I saw an aeroplane and German mechanics at work on it. I wanted to stop. Hassan refused.

I demanded to stop, and when he refused again, both being tired, we quarrelled, and after a while I called him every foul name that the Turkish and the Arabic languages—and they are prolific under this heading—could supply. To top it all I called him "*Adebsis*," which means no more than "without manners." He stopped the car at once with all his anger gone, and putting his hand on mine he said:

"You can stop and do what you like! It is not true, and I cannot let any foreigner think that I am unmannerly."

And I in return, wishing to be courteous, replied: "It is undoubtedly a word that I must have learnt from a Greek, and of course it cannot be applied to a Turk."

We were friends again. In all things he treated me as an equal with, I think, a sense of his own superiority, but a politeness that did not make this offensive.

CHAPTER XXXIII

KAESAREA

AS we crossed the last few miles of plain, the sun, which was now no more than a pale yellow gleam and without warmth, went down. In front of us heaved up, sheer out of the plateau, the immense mount of Erdjies Dag, its shoulders wrapped in rolling snows. From its peak far up, close below the first stars, was a storm-cloud blown out like a veil in the wind. Behind it the Taurus range, half over the edge of the world, was a faint background in pearl haze. At its foot, dwarfed into flatness, squatted the city of Kaesarea.

In the sunset the mountain turned from rose to bronze, paled to embers and died into grey ashes as the night swept up.

Hassan stopped the car beyond a great stone gateway. My baggage was carried by Kurdish porters through twisting, narrow, cobbled streets of tiny shops, where men sat cross-legged at work by the light of flares and candles. As we passed under the wall of an ancient fort and came up an alley-way to the inn, I got an intriguing flavour of mystery. I felt as if I had stepped back down the centuries into some mediæval town.

Morning did not destroy the illusion. Kaesarea was an old-world town, grouped round a turreted Seljuk Castle, its houses built of heavy blocks of grey stone, standing at every angle, with gargoyles on each corner.

The narrow streets, which twisted in all directions, were cobbled and without pavements, and ran down to a central gutter. They were full of the cries of hawkers and crowded with peasants, who pushed and jostled their way along regardless of each other, and only gave place

when a loaded pony or donkey shouldered its way obstinately forward under the blows of its driver.

The booth-shops that lined the streets had wooden shutters padlocked down at night, but during the day these were drawn up over the stalls as roofs, and nearly met across the roadway. Here and there were trellises covered with vines, and the streets were always in gloom.

Trades were grouped together. The long alley of the Shoemakers, where strings of red-leather shoes hung from the lintel of every shop, led into the Street of the Rope-makers. Beyond that was the Street of the Dyers by the Great Gate in the walls, where the dyers, their arms purple and red to the elbows, dipped the cloth in great vats. All work was done in the open, so that a customer might order his boots or coat and squat down and watch them being made.

Where there were dwelling-houses the lower stories were blind and windowless, just faceless walls of heavy stone with an iron-studded door. To gain entrance I had to pull on the bell, that clanged far away in the building. Then some one would shuffle up, inspect me carefully from a slit cut in a wall at an angle like an arrow window in a Norman castle, and, having satisfied himself, he would open the door with a rattle of chains and a creaking of keys in old locks. As soon as I was inside, the door would be heaved to with a dull clang. The windows in the floors above would be barred heavily or latticed, and gave promise of harems and beauties shut away. It was a city of the Arabian Nights, of Harun Rashid and the Khalifs, a town of past ages which knew little and cared little for the new world outside.

And the townspeople were as mediæval as the town. They have for centuries had a reputation for being fanatical and reactionary. They have always responded to the call for volunteers in any *jihad*, Holy War, against the Infidel, and in the days of the fez it was not safe for a foreigner in a hat to walk in the town.

And they had not changed greatly, for they had still the fierce, brutal, hard outlook of the Mediæval Ages. They were uncompromisingly religious. I heard the *muezzin* cry to prayer five times a day; the *hodjas* were respected and the mosques full with young men as well as old. Forced by the law, they wore European caps, but with the peaks drawn over one ear or slung round the back of the neck like a motor-cyclist, so that they could still touch their foreheads on the ground in prayer as ordered by the Koran.

They were courteous, dignified, placid people, like all Turks, a little self-conscious, and expecting ridicule for their European headgear, and they frankly disliked foreigners. They represented the elements that were opposed to the very advanced rulers who were tearing up wholesale all the conventions. But there was no question of any counter-revolution in Turkey. If the present rulers failed there would be no active reaction: Turkey would just slither quietly down and disappear.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE TURKISH RULING CASTE

I WAS not expected by the Governor, but I guessed that he had received orders about me, or I should never have reached Kaesarea, so I went down to his office unannounced.

Under the gateway leading into the Government Square was the entrance to the prison. A gendarme in his service grey uniform, with rifle slung on his shoulder, sat on duty. At the gate a crowd of veiled women were trying to pass food through the bars to a herd of prisoners beyond. Now and again the gendarme pushed them away, but as they came back as persistent as flies he shrugged his shoulders and drew his chair up again and began to hum contentedly to himself.

Turning by chance as I crossed the courtyard, I saw a man watching me, an evil, mean-looking brute in a German ready-made suit, cheap French cloth-topped boots, and with a new green Homburg hat on his head. He had been in the hotel the night before, and was undoubtedly a police agent following me. The sight of his red-lidded, bloodshot, crafty eyes and his pale, unshaven face filled me with a sudden nausea. I remembered the weary weeks I had spent in a Turkish prison herded with a crowd of poor devils like those beyond the barred gate under the archway; the great cell where we had moped away out of the sun, unclean, catching lice, watching cruelty dully, gradually losing hope and decency. A great fear came cold on me. I was alone, in the centre of this brutal country, unprotected among a people who hated all foreigners, and

especially the British, and with a Government which cared nothing for the threats or pressure of the European Powers. For a second I had an instinct to run and hide, and then I hurried on quickly into safety into the Government office, up the rickety stairs, and with the help of an orderly found the Governor's room.

A Turkish Governor's door is open to all comers. Those who go in unannounced take their chance of what they get. Often it is not what they expect; sometimes it is not pleasant.

I stepped into the room unannounced. The policeman on duty kept the door slightly open with his finger and watched me. The room was half full. By the window a woman in Turkish dress, but the veil thrown back over her head, sat placidly, and in a corner, hats in hand, and not quite sure what to do with their hats—for the fez was always worn before superiors as a mark of respect—stood some villagers ill at ease. I folded my hands in deference over my waistcoat, and waited. The Governor sat writing with a squeaking pen at a large desk under a huge photograph of Mustapha Kemal. He looked up to ring a hand-bell and, seeing me, asked me who I was. I told him my business.

"Have you the British Consul with you?" he asked.

"No," I replied, "I am alone."

"Come then," and he courteously offered me a chair, "let us see what we can do together." Producing a box of cigarettes out of a drawer, he picked out and gave me one, and rang a bell for a policeman to come and light it. In this he kept to the old etiquette, for had I been his senior he would have lighted the cigarette for me himself. But he gave me no coffee. Under the old régime, coffee was a *sine qua non* before beginning any business. Now the Government had decided that it was a waste of time; officials must get straight down to business without old-fashioned formalities, and coffee was forbidden.

The Governor gave me every assistance, but both in Kaesarea and throughout all Turkey I found it best to avoid the European consuls and diplomats. The Turks were quite definite in their instructions. Officials must treat foreign representatives with all due courtesy, but must see that in no way should they get a chance to recover any of the powers they had under the pre-war régime of the Capitulations. A traveller or business man had more chance of success if he did his own work direct. He would find the Turks polite, even helpful if he went direct and alone. If he got the assistance of a consul they would be polite, but far from helpful.

Police gendarmes and detectives were placed at my disposal. I was shown the Tapu Books, the records of ownership of property, but they were so confused and irregular that ownership of real property was hard to establish. Some of the records stopped thirty years before, others were scratched or torn out at random, and a new survey was as urgently needed as it was in Syria.

As I worked with the Governor I began to understand the position in modern Turkey. He was a well-set-up man, alive as an electric wire, capable and energetic, and he was driven almost to frenzy by the procrastination and inefficiency of his junior officials and the general sloth and backwardness of the mass of the people.

He was typical of the rulers of modern Turkey, who were a small body of men grouped round the mental, moral and physical dictatorship of the Ghazi Mustapha Kemal Pasha, and numbered not more than one in fifty thousand of the population. They were capable, energetic, fighting against great difficulties to cultivate a new, virile country, but forced to destroy almost down to the roots before they could cultivate any new growth. They had to tear up the social, religious and political life of the Ottoman Empire; to root out fiercely the dearest ideas, conventions and ways of thought of a people

naturally slow and intensely conservative, who had for centuries been trodden down and ruined by misrule. Their hardest task had been to cut the Turks away from the Turkish Empire, and they were still destroying wholesale.

The inn where I lodged was, as in Adana, subsidised by the Municipality and run by a returned prisoner-of-war, a rat of a man, who was more than usually resentful against the British. He had returned to Turkey in 1920 and been in at the death when the Greeks were chased out of Anatolia. He had lost three fingers from a bayonet wound at Gallipoli. He did not hate the British against whom he had fought in the Dardanelles, but he hated the British who at the Armistice had sent the accursed Greeks into Anatolia and he despised them because they had then failed to support them. In this he was typical of all Turks. I had to walk warily, for when the drink was on him he became dangerous and fanatical, and began to cross-question me angrily on my work in Kaesarea.

The inn was built as strong as a fort, with double-barred iron doors and a spy-hole on to the street; a stone staircase up to a large hall with a roof of carved wood; a floor of stone slabs and a monstrous, many-coloured chandelier holding a dim oil lamp. On to this opened the rooms. My own contained four beds, and I selfishly paid for all four and kept it to myself. To read or write or be alone in comfort there was no arrangement, nor did it come into the Turkish scheme of things. The sanitary and washing arrangements were very primitive, and, though not as evil-smelling as usual, which was due to the fact that they were frozen up, they were exceedingly uncomfortable.

Across the hall was the saloon and dining-room, where I went to get warm after a day out on a horse in the intense cold. One oil lamp high up in the ceiling threw a faint light. In a corner sat a German in a plus-four

suit and a high-necked jumper, writing a letter by the light of a dim oil wick. He was a technical expert from the new aeroplane factory built in one of the valleys above the town, and which was carefully guarded from all prying eyes. It was said that poison gas was being made there. A huge Bosnak, an overseer for the railway, that had just reached Kaesarea from Angora and was being extended by a Belgian company towards Sivas, stood by the window with his legs straddled wide apart and the barrel of a revolver showing below his wild-coloured sweater. He stared steadily out at the frozen earth and the frozen night and the huge snow-covered heave of Erdjies Dag in the moonlight.

The unshaven rat of an innkeeper was drinking *rakhi*, raw spirits of the country, and noisily sharing a dish of oily *hors d'œuvre* with a fat merchant from Erzerum. Now and again they talked with two unveiled women who sat by the tin stove that had become red-hot with a fire of dry pine logs. The women were fat and uncomely, harlots come in to see if there was any trade, and they wisely took no notice of myself or the German, for the Turkish men are as jealous as they were in the old days.

An Armenian woman-servant pushed in with an armful of wood and began an argument with the Jewish waiter who followed her. A cutting burst of cold wind came in at the open door. The temperature outside was far below zero. The Bosnak turned, crossed over and kicked the door noisily to, looked round the room haughtily, until I got the impression that he would have shot anyone there just for something to do, and walked back again to the window that ran round two sides of the room with a divan below it covered with a stiff cushion but naked of any curtains.

One of the chief engineers from the railway came in, a Turk trained in Paris, a quaint fellow in a bowler hat and horn-rimmed glasses. He took off and hung up his hat and fine fur-lined coat, showing that he was dressed

in a short bum-freezer of a coat, khaki riding trousers, light green stockings, and shoes that laced up the side like those of a bicycling enthusiast.

He greeted the room, nodded to the German, who took no notice, shook hands with the innkeeper, the Bosnak and the merchant, wiped his glasses, rubbed his hands together—with a noise as if they were covered with sand-paper—and through his hair, and he came over to the fire to warm himself with a quizzical, lewd look at the two women. He carried himself like a crab and his hands like claws, was short-sighted and nervous, and kept picking up and putting down things, but the room, with the exception of the German, treated him with great respect, and stood up until he asked them to be seated.

Having warmed himself, he sat down at a table and took out a pocket-book with the cover torn off and yellow pages—a cheap sort of thing sold in the bazaars. The innkeeper had a similar book for his accounts, only cleaner and tidier.

Calling for a lamp, the engineer brought his eye to within an inch of the book, for he was very short-sighted, turned over some pages and began to calculate figures. Suddenly he got up and announced that he had lost twenty-four metres of the railway line. The room looked at him. The Bosnak turned round.

“Is it possible that Your Excellency should lose so many metres?” asked the hotel-keeper.

“I have, anyway,” said the Chief Engineer snappishly.

The German went on with his writing. He did not understand Turkish and despised everyone in the room. The sheep-dog pup growled and whimpered in his sleep. The two women talked softly to each other. This was a man’s affair, and no business of theirs.

The Chief Engineer picked up his book, turned some more pages, looked at the sketches on the yellow, thick, dog-eared pages.

“By Allah, I tell you I have lost twenty-four metres.

It may be even twenty-five. They are gone," he exclaimed.

The merchant, now well in drink, came across, and taking a chair and drawing the book to him, looked at the figures. The Bosnak joined the group round the table. The women, seeing all the men engaged behind their backs, tried to catch the attention of the German. If a Turk saw them there would be trouble, perhaps murder. Even a Turkish harlot was far too good for a Christian.

The crowd increased. There came Ali Bey the Carpet Merchant with a carpet for me, two Government officials, four young Turks and a policeman, a couple of shopmen for their evening meal, and with each a gust of icy wind as the door opened. The Jewish waiter, who had an enormous and fearfully scarred nose, stopped laying a table and joined the group.

"Wonderful Allah, how wonderful," hiccuped the merchant, "are figures! They add up, and make more. They subtract and make less. They are dead things, but in the hands of His Excellency the Chief Engineer they grow into a railway."

The rest of the crowd gave useful help.

"I cannot believe it," said Ali Bey the Carpet Merchant, politely, "but perhaps there has been a misaddition."

"I remember getting some accounts miscalculated," said one of the shopmen, and began a long story of an affray with his uncle that landed him in the courts, but as no one listened he continued the story to the two women and the Jewish waiter.

At each remark the Chief Engineer eyed the speaker, and then returned to fumble through the book with his clawish hand action. Suddenly he stopped.

"Here," he cried triumphantly, "here, by Allah, we have it. There are two pages stuck together with the accursed honey I ate this morning. Two pages stuck together, and the twenty-four, perhaps twenty-five metres

stuck between them. Give us *rakhi* of Assaf Bey! oh! Master of the inn! *rakhi* at once! for the twenty-four metres are found."

But the merchant from Erzerum had gone to sleep, with his fat head on his fat arm and his paunch dropped between his thighs, and would not wake up even when the Chief Engineer slapped him joyously on his fat back and held a glass to his lips. The Bosnak shifted his revolver further on his hip and drank his *rakhi* at a gulp, after touching it with water to make it white. The German haughtily took no notice and waved an offered glass away, and then the rest hurried on to their evening meal.

And up the Sivas valley Belgians, under Turkish supervision, were trying to build a railway line that was to make Turkey prosperous. Some time later the Turkish Government and the Belgians disagreed and the contract was annulled.

There were many unforeseen difficulties in working in Turkey.

CHAPTER XXXV

ALI BEY THE CARPET MERCHANT

ALI BEY and I made friends. We had a mutual love of carpets, and so a common interest. He was a tall thin man with a quiet manner and a quick brain. Probably his mother was an Armenian, for there remained few pure-blooded Turks. He showed me his factory. There were rooms full of carpets, where, with lemon juice and glycerine, with sand-paper and burning with a blow-pipe and a hundred other devices, new carpets were made to look antique so as to catch the unwary. I had pictured the faking of carpets as essentially a trade of the European great cities, and not done away here in the wilds.

"But I wish to see the old, the real old silk carpets for which Kaesarea is renowned, Ali Bey," I said.

"There are no more," he replied. "I have two in my house which I will not sell. As for the rest, the dealers from Europe have been here knocking from door to door. Why! one of them was so persistent that when the women would not let him in he blindfolded his eyes so that he should not shock their modesty, and bought the carpets by feel alone. The people were poor. The dealers offered big prices. The East has no more carpets of value. You will find them in London, New York and Paris, but not here. Come, I will show the carpets we make, up to the number of seven thousand a year, for export to Europe and America."

In the next shed at a big table sat a dozen boys rapidly filling in designs on squared paper and then colouring them crudely with chalks. In a corner a man was

weighing out skeins of artificial Italian silk coloured with German aniline dyes.

"These are hardly the pure silk of Brusa and the good vegetable dyes, Ali Bey?" I said.

"What can I do?" he replied, throwing out his expressive hands. "The buyers want cheap carpets. The Austrians sell many thousands to the pilgrims in Damascus and Beyrouth. The Armenians and Greeks in Syria and Greece make them by the hundred thousand. We must do the same."

A number of Turkish women were waiting in a line. They wore thick, black veils drawn down, and shapeless dresses, consisting of cloaks to the wrists and skirts to the heels, and made of white and blue print with a heavy blue edge, which was characteristic of Kaesarea. I was told that in cold weather they wore all their wardrobe for warmth. The result was that they looked, in their bulging, shapeless dresses, their large *charchaff* cloaks, their black veils and india-rubber sided boots, like unwieldy perambulating portmanteaux. Sometimes they were enormous in size. On one occasion on a village road a family passed me. The man was driving a sturdy, big-bellied horse. On its back was roped a fair-sized table, turned upside down, and inside the table was his veiled wife. She filled the table: she overflowed even out between the legs—except into the corners beyond the knees of her crossed legs, where she had stuffed her two small children.

In Kaesarea the women were not unveiled. I never saw a Turkess unveiled unless she was no better than she ought to be.

One by one the women in the factory came forward, were given a card to show the patterns and a number of skeins of silk, while two *hodja* in fezzes and green turbans, and with account-books balanced on their knees—for *hodjas* never seem to use tables if they can avoid it—wrote laboriously the details. The women made the carpets in their own homes, helped by the whole family,

from the age of seven upwards, and were paid by the square foot at very poor rates. In another shed were a dozen looms—rough heavy wood structures hung with stones for weights—where a number of children and two women, cramped on to low benches before the looms, were knotting the pile on to the warp of large carpets, with amazing speed, concentration and dexterity. They worked from sunrise to sunset for a few pence only. Here was the beginning of the factory system, with all the problems of child labour.

I went with Ali Bey to his house. Though he had the key, he knocked at his door to warn his family that a stranger was coming. As it was opened by a boy I had a glimpse of a woman tidying up, then gone, and then there was the slamming of a door. Otherwise I saw no women.

We crossed a bare hall to a large room, which was without pictures or chairs. The ceiling was of crudely carved wood inlaid with even cruder colours, and from its centre hung a tawdry oil lamp. A window covered with lattice-work extended the length of one side of the room and was built out over the street. Below it was a stiff divan with a brocaded cushion, where the women could lie and watch the people passing below, which was their main amusement.

Slipping off our shoes at the door, we walked reverently over the carpets—reverently because Ali Bey was no mere merchant, but a connoisseur and a collector, and the floor was covered with real carpets of value, Ghiordes now unfindable, fine Ladiks which are made no more, and Kir Shehirs renowned for their reds and greens. Some bedding rolled inside a mattress showed that this was a guest-room. On the bare, colour-washed walls were hung two old silk Kaesarea rugs, together with a Persian.

We squatted on the divan and talked, while the boy crouched in a corner and watched us with wide eyes.

Once he went out to fetch some coffee. Ali Bey was learned in the signification of the colour and the maze of mystic symbolical signs which were woven into the old designs, and of all the closely guarded secrets of the dyers. Together we handled the silk rugs on the walls and marvelled at the exquisite knotting and at the blending and the shading of the colours.

"Some woman spent a life-time making that," said Ali Bey, touching a Persian carpet, "or perhaps her mother started it and she finished it as her dowry. It took many years to make and many more years of use to tone its colours. Now I can only pay for a few weeks work, and I must wash the carpets with sulphuric acid to soften them and chloride of lime to tone the colours. That will make them brittle, but you Europeans will not wait a life-time until use has made the carpets pliant and mellow. You want them ready and beautiful, and we must fake them."

It seemed strange to me that Asiatics, with their vulgar garish taste—the same people who could have made the crude painted ceiling under which we sat—should have so good an eye for the blending of colours. The Persian carpets and the rugs were masterpieces, and probably made by some ordinary woman with no particular training, but a fine artistic sense.

Ali Bey offered me food, but I had a guest invited to the hotel, so, leaving him with much ceremony, I walked home. I realised that what he had said was true. In all Anatolia there were no good carpets to be bought. A few remained in the houses. A Turk going bankrupt might send one out for sale, but otherwise they were not to be bought.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CHRISTIANS IN TURKEY

THE Governor had found me an old man who had once been *mukhtar* or headman of the Armenians of Kaesarea, and who knew all their property. Together we set out through the streets towards the Christian quarter. The town was bustling with work. Now and again we passed Germans, men and women, shopping and going to work, and over some of the shops were German signs such as "shaumaker."

From somewhere my spy had reappeared, and followed us with useless cleverness. These spies were everywhere, as in the days of Abdul Hamid and of the Young Turks. They were the curse of Turkey. Sometimes they were just listeners and watchers, at other times *agents provocateurs*. They were unreliable, lying, depending for their living on their ability to produce evidence and cases, and so concocting them until no man knew how his words and actions would be repeated. The hand of the police and the spy and the secret agent was still heavy on Turkey. We found the Christian quarter desolate, the houses in ruins; in many places even the foundations had been heaved out. A few gipsies and some Moslem refugees squatted among the ruins, and except for some pariah dogs and a child or two rummaging in the offal there was no life. A Greek orthodox church of stone stood lone and gaunt among the ruins. Its belfry was a skeleton with the bell still in place and a cross toppled over at a drunken angle. I questioned the old Armenian, but he was cautious and nervous. He looked often behind him as if afraid, for

he lived in Turkey only on sufferance, and he was taking no risks. He was a bent, twisted old man, with bleared eyes. Sometimes he pretended to be deaf and at other times stupid. He was frightened; he would have left when the other Armenians ran away, but he had been too old to care much for life, and so stayed on where he was rooted. From him I understood that there were some six hundred Armenians scattered throughout the bazaar, and that they were making a little money.

I found the same thing in all Anatolia. The Christians were gone, finally expelled by the Turkish Nationalists in 1921. Of Europeans there never were, except in Smyrna, more than a handful of traders and missionaries. Of Greeks, whether of Turkish nationality or not, none remained. I heard there were three in Smyrna and there was a consul in Mersina. A few Armenians lived in all the big towns, though none in the villages—in Kaesarea there were some six hundred, in Adana perhaps eight hundred and in Angora seven hundred, and these were practically all Catholics.

The expelled Christians had been the business section of the population, doing all the banking and the retailing. They had been the artisans and the shopkeepers, and I looked carefully to see how the Turks had replaced them, for on their success in carrying out the routine business depended the future of Turkey. It formed the life-blood of the State, and without it even the best heart could not function.

In Kaesarea they were succeeding, and the town was prospering, but it was only in Kaesarea that I saw this, and it was mainly due to the fact that the Turks of Kaesarea had always worked and traded. In fact they used to be called the *Shaitanli*, the Devilish, by other Turks because of their reputation for driving shrewd bargains, and there were many stories of their cunning and ability.

It is said that a Jew came to Kaesarea and, taking a Turkish boy of the town as his servant, he gave him five

piastres, telling him to buy food for them both, something to amuse them, and to get fodder for the horse, and that he might keep what was over for himself. The boy promptly bought a pink-bellied water-melon.

"There," he said, "the rind will do for the horse. With the pips you may play and amuse yourself, and we can share the inside of the melon," and he empouched four and a half piastres for himself. Since then no Jew had tried to set up house in Kaesarea.

Elsewhere in Turkey, however, the Turks had not been so successful. They had not shown either the ability or the enthusiasm to carry out the humdrum routine of business and the unaristocratic labour of turning money over at a profit. They were good police and gendarmes, but not good shopmen. In Mersina and Adana the banking, money-lending and finance had gone into the hands of Syrian Moslems and Jews, and the Turkish attempt to be traders and shopmen was a little pathetic.

I said good-bye to the old man, who was clearly relieved to see the last of me and made off for home as quickly as possible, his bowed back and his bowed legs and the huge seat of his trousers dangling down to his heels making a quaint picture, and then I took the road up the first slopes of the mountain. There in a cemetery, where the graves were tossed this way and that in aimless confusion, I rested. On one side the butchers had thrown their refuse, and pariah dogs, jackals, jackdaws and the foul, bald-headed vultures fought for the offal. On a shoulder of the hill was a queer-shaped building, half church and half mosque, with a heavy door plated with copper and full of bullet holes. In its surface were embedded some bullets, and the steps of the building were black with old blood. A *hodja* told me that the pilgrims for Mecca used to collect here to kill a goat and fire revolvers before they set out on their way. Another, with a look of glee, said that the Christians

had resisted and been driven here at the last deportation and been shot against this door. No one, however, appeared eager to talk about it, but eyed me suspiciously when I asked questions.

As I was looking at the mosque out of the corner of my eye, I saw my unpleasant spy slinking up behind a rock. I determined to teach him a lesson, and set off at a good round pace towards the inner valley, where the aeroplane factory was being built with much secrecy. I wore stout boots and gaiters. He was unused to walking, for he was a flabby, café-frequenting fellow, and his cloth-topped and thin-soled French boots were not the thing for this weather and the frozen ground. After a couple of miles I doubled back and got behind him and catching him up suddenly without his knowledge:

"It is not meet that you should walk behind me so much, *Effendi*," I said politely. "I am climbing the mountain. Let us walk together, side by side."

For a minute he eyed me sourly, and then limped back towards the town without a word, and in future left me more alone. Had I been a Turk I would not have dared to have taken such liberty, for with a word behind his hand to the Chief of the Police he would have sent me to some foul prison-cell, where I might have stayed as a suspect until forgotten and so have been left to rot.

From a high spur in the foothills I looked down. Behind me was the wall of the Taurus, and close behind my shoulder was Erdjies Dag, so that they did not, as from the opposite view, flatten down the town, which stood out boldly below me, with its turreted fortress, its minarets, and strong stone houses above the hovels of the bazaar.

The plateau stretched far into the distance, with rolling hills and valleys. To the west ran the road to Ulu Kishla and the railway down to Adana, Bagdad,

Egypt and all the East. To the north was a valley holding the new railway to Angora, and so to Constantinople and Europe, and to the east another valley ran far into the distance, in which was the beginning of the embankment for the railway which was to open up to Sivas and Erzerum, and so to lead on to Armenia, South Russia, Persia and Kurdistan, and all the zones at that moment forbidden to travellers. Close below me some German mechanics were tinkering with an aeroplane, and somewhere in a valley hidden behind the foot of the mountain there was the aeroplane factory.

This town of Kaesarea was typical of all Turkey. It had immense possibilities and untouched wealth lying all round it. The vigorous Government in Angora had planned a great future for it. It was to be a great junction on the railways that were to open up and connect all the country. It was to be a great industrial, commercial, military and air centre. And yet it was still a reactionary old-world town, untouched, perhaps untouchable. It had shown little signs of playing its new part, and yet there was a distinct promise of success—but as yet it was only the barest promise.

As I came back it was sunset and the *muezzins* were calling to prayer: the veiled women were hurrying home to prepare the evening meal; in the mosque courtyard men were washing their hands and feet before they went in to pray.

I had eaten my dinner in the hotel and was crouching beside the wood stove for warmth, when there broke out suddenly the sound of heavy rifle-fire. The Bosnak had his revolver ready in a minute, and was watching at the window. The fat merchant became a jelly and called loudly on "Allah." Some said a revolution, others a massacre, others brigands, others that the Kurds had come raiding. Each spoke in the terms of things to which he had been accustomed in this fierce country.

We streamed out into the street. It was the night of

the full moon, and a total eclipse was beginning. From every side came the sound of rifle and revolver shots and the whistle of bullets in the frozen, crisp air. The gendarmes in the post across the square were freely loosing off Government ammunition.

"What is it?" I asked tremulously.

"They are firing," said one, "to keep the Bear from eating the Moon. See, he has begun already," as the earth's shadow was half across the moon.

The eclipse over, the firing died down. The rest returned to the hotel, and I was left alone.

The streets were streaks of silver, and under the houses the shadows were clear-cut and black. The cold was intense and all the world bound hard in frost, but the air was vital and strength-giving. Erdjies Dagh was a tremendous heave of white above me, haughty and withdrawn, as are great mountains. The Taurus Mountains were vague outlines against the sky. I had heard that there was a mule-track by a ravine pass straight across them southwards down to Adana, and I promised myself to come back and explore some day.

The town was quiet now. A dog began to cry to the moon, and a hundred joined in, and then the uncanny clamour calmed down. Far out on the plain the jackals were crying like Rachel weeping for her children, and once from far away by the foot of the mountain came the baying of wolves as they hunted hungrily. Whereupon all the dogs began again in a ferocious uproar, and again the clamour died fitfully down.

CHAPTER XXXVII

KURDS

THE next day I prepared to take the road for Sivas and Erzerum and the great country to the east beyond the Euphrates. Almost at once I knew that I should never get far along that road. Not a word was said forbidding me: the Governor and all officials were as polite and apparently as helpful as ever, but a hundred little things went wrong: a horse went lame; a groom was sick; snow was reported to be blocking the road. Obstinate I set out; another horse went lame; we had to wait for something forgotten; the gendarme escort had gone to the wrong address in error; a village policeman, with infinite courtesy but firmly, took us back to Kaesarea because he had no orders to let us pass and no telephone to his headquarters.

Anyone not knowing the signs and not realising that the orders had been issued that he should not go further east would have been driven to fury by the apparent endless chain of small difficulties.

My obstinacy, however, was deliberate. I wanted to know whether the country beyond the Euphrates was quiet and safe—and for pride no Turk would ever have allowed that any part of Turkey was not as safe as Richmond Park.

I guessed that the Kurds were still not completely subdued. They had revolted in 1924, attacked the Turkish garrisons and nearly defeated them. Driven back, they had taken to guerrilla and bandit warfare, and protected by their barren pathless mountains they

remained unsubdued. The Turks believed that the British, to get their way in the dispute on the Mosul frontier, had instigated the revolt. In reality the facts were simple. The Kurds were a people as individualistic as the French, as resentful against all government as the Irish, and as tribal and hardy as the Pathans. They disliked the Turks, and, being fanatically religious and primitive, they resented the changes introduced by Mustapha Kemal. They hated his assaults on religion by the destruction of the Khalifate; his abolition of the Dervishes and the privileges of the priests; his introduction by force of the hat, and encouragement to women to unveil; and finally, his attempts to collect taxes and to conscript them for the army.

It had been simple for the rulers of Turkey to enforce their orders on the placid, obedient Turkish villagers, but quite another thing to do the same with the lawless Kurds. The Turks, with their faces turned to the West as they reorganised, had steadily walked backwards and eastwards until they had trodden on the Kurdish snake, which had promptly bitten them severely. Whereupon the Turks had laid the blame for their own stupidity on to the British.

Accepting the inevitable with a shrug of patience, I prepared to go north to Angora instead.

I was sorry to leave Kaesarea. It was full of interest. It is true that, except for a hurried sponge over, I had had no bath for seventeen days, and I sensed that when I did change there would be lice hiding in my vest. There was, however, a subtle attraction in living under mediæval conditions for a short time. The Kaesareans had a touch of the sturdy, indelicate humour of the Middle Ages and a greater relish for the coarse enjoyment of vigorous life than most Turks. They had treated me well. Even the Bosnak wished me a kindly farewell. Only the German engineer ignored us all.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ON THE ROAD TO ANGORA

THE train left at 4 a.m., but I got aboard early, in the hopes of getting a carriage to myself. The cutting wind that blew down from the mountains at that hour, as we cantered to the station in an open cart, would have ripped the hide off a crocodile.

Just as the train was starting I heard a guttural voice in broken Turkish demanding the opening of a locked door and the conductor refusing.

"Unlock this door, I say," said the guttural German voice angrily.

"I regret, but it is impossible. It is reserved for ladies," replied the conductor politely.

"But there are no ladies wanting it," said the German. "It is shameful, abominable! No civilised country would allow it," and a furious quarrel burst out in the corridor. It reminded me of the hundred quarrels between Germans and Turks that I had heard during the war, and the taunt about "uncivilised" that used to sting the Turks to the quick. But since the war this taunt had little of its sting left.

"We carry out the regulations as laid down by the German manager, *Effendi*," was the final word of the conductor, and the German, with a bad grace, came into my carriage. He was furiously angry, a typical Prussian whom I knew as one of the engineers in the aeroplane factory. His bull neck bulged with fat and anger.

"The swine dogs," he grumbled, and without noticing me made himself comfortable on the other seat and went sulkily to sleep and snored.

The train crept slowly along hour after hour in the light of the dying moon. At Faqat village the pale dawn had come, spilling a little weak sunlight over the world. The mountains and the snows had disappeared behind us over the earth's edge, and we were travelling across endless steppes, which were brown and dreary and held fast in black frost. The streams and pools were black with ice. There was hardly a sign of life except a distant village or two of low huts, or a minaret of a mosque, or the shallow scratching of some cultivation.

The crops in this area would be of little value, for the methods of cultivation were of the most primitive, and during the summer, when it became a bleak desert of heat, there was little water. The villagers had been ruined by two successive seasons of drought, and with some justification the Kaesareans had, at the opening of the railway, thanked the Government for the nice railway that would carry troops, but at the same time petitioned for some irrigation system and some corn seed to save them from starvation.

Sometimes we passed flocks of sheep grouped inside and round a stone fold and guarded by enormous wolf dogs that came snarling and baying at the train. They were monstrous brutes, as big and fierce as small lions, with stiff coats, ears cut short and black muzzles. They could stand up to a pack of wolves hunting, and they would attack and kill a man.

I had been many times attacked by them when I was a gendarme officer in the Skutari area. Without warning they would fly straight at the belly of a horse or the throat of a man. It was looked on as a punishable crime to shoot them, but if it was possible to stab them with the knife which each man carried, this was permissible, if he showed that he had been in real danger.

Among the flocks the shepherds were huddled, often between two sheep for warmth. They wore skin shoes, great wool cloaks such as that Husein had lent me on the road from Ulu Kishla to Kaesarea, and *bashliks*—

long-tailed caps—wound round their heads. Some were Turkish villagers; others were Yaruk nomads who grazed all this country from the Taurus slopes northwards.

But the Turks themselves, even to-day, as their raiding Tartar ancestors, are nomads. They have never really settled to houses and humdrum fixed life. It is this fact that explains many of the queer anomalies in their character. It is their fierce, hard, primitive life in which they thrive and show their best characteristics. Civilisation, education and cities tend to debase them and turn them into Levantines.

Beyond Faqat was a stream with a garden beside it and some open water. Duck that had never been shot at and hardly knew what a man was like, and tired with the long flight southwards from the Oxus came hurtling down on it.

We stopped at every station, which were platformless, low sheds in the emptiness, with usually no houses or villages in sight. At Yaz Kup a caravan of camels was loading up, grumbling and bubbling angrily as the loads were fitted by their Kurdish drivers, who shouted at them and each other in Persian.

Our engine began to whistle incessantly. Looking out, I saw a crowd of train and station officials and some passengers talking together excitedly and pointing into the distance. Round the spur of a hill came two country-carts, the horses all out at full gallop, the springless carts leaping and bumping on the broken ground over a rise, across ruts and holes, down a river bed and out again. The occupants, thrown this way and that, hung on grimly, and the drivers stood up, balancing themselves cleverly, one foot on the splashboard and the other on the pole, urging on the horses, cracking their whips and throwing taunts at each other.

"Ahmed wins," shouted our guard.

"No, Mehmed," cried the stoker, and the crowd bubbled with excitement and betted furiously, and the engine-driver whistled harder than ever. The four

horses, all out, raced into the goods-yard neck to neck, and drew up with a crash. The frightened camels began to heave up and throw their loads, until the Kurds beat them down to their knees again. The bruised occupants of the carts got gingerly out amid applause and laughter.

The train was scheduled to leave in ten minutes, and would have willingly waited a half-hour for a passenger, but it was just this sporting spirit that always made the individual Turk attractive to travellers. A galloping horse, the thrill of danger, gambling, the excitement of a race—these were the things that roused the Turks into men. The *hodja* playing *jerrid* outside Adana, the villagers riding into Mersina gallantly on their bucking stallions had the same spirit. Any two riders or drivers meeting would challenge each other. I have been suddenly raced in the dark on a mountain pass when the wheels of the two carts were often touching and with no more than two feet to a precipice and a three-hundred feet fall on one side. The Turks were like overgrown schoolboys, care-free, without sufficient imagination to fear accidents, roused to enthusiasm by risk. They were reckless and fearless of danger.

Together with this they had a dignity and a courtesy of manner, so that there arises the paradox that, even if he is trying to do a kindness, it is hard to like a Greek, an Armenian or a Syrian, whereas even if he is doing unpleasant things it is hard to dislike a Turk.

As we left Yaz Kup the Kurds were jabbing up the camels, and the caravan swung away across the brown, empty hills by a track that had become white with use. It wound away into the infinite distance, for these bare steppes stretch unbroken to the Persian frontier, leaving the delta of Iraq beneath them to their south, and so across Baluchistan until they drop suddenly into the rich mud flats of the Indian plains.

The noise of the race had wakened the German, who was still angry with Turks in general, and so more

inclined than usual to talk to me. He found it hard to work under and with the Turks. He wanted definite orders, rigid efficiency, the right tools and the right men for the right job, and all he got was a muddling along and general procrastination. Of money there seemed to be little, and what was voted for a specific object seemed to become absorbed before it got there, like water flowing over dry sand. He had not a good word for the junior officials, but he agreed with me that, if it was possible to get right to the big man, things got done with remarkable efficiency and speed. He found the Turks touchy, and still suspicious of and hating all foreigners.

"But," he said, "this is a mechanical age. The Turks have no mechanical sense, and any nation that has no mechanical sense to-day will soon be as helpless and out of date as the Dodo. The Turks are all the same—the chauffeur, the factory hand, the mechanic, the machine-gunner—give them a machine, show them how to run it, and they will carry on conscientiously exactly as shown. The minute it breaks down they can do nothing. They will let it lie and scrap it. Give me a Turk who can do mechanical repairs, and I'll give him treble wages."

To pass the time we fell to talking politics.

"This country is empty," he said, pointing out of the window, "and might be very rich. My country is over-full. You British are keeping great tracts of the world empty. You cannot go on doing it for ever. Germany must rise again and expand into the waste places."

In the early afternoon we passed the Halys River, and so crossed the frontier of the old Hittite State, which had its capital a little further north, and extended into an empire which came into conflict with the Assyrians. Of all ancient people, not excepting the Assyrians, the Hittites appear to have been the most ruthless and unpleasant. They also appear to have been the direct

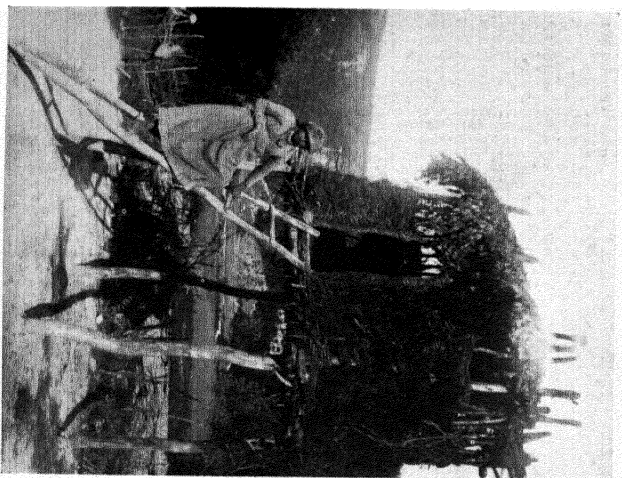
ancestors of the modern Armenians, with their heavy noses, run-away foreheads, and crinkly hair.

The Peace Conference of Paris in 1919 had wished to create an Armenian Empire, and the Armenian delegates claimed an immense tract of Anatolia, from the Caucasus and the Persian frontier down to Mersina and Adalia. The casual way in which these schemes were proposed and considered was aptly illustrated by an incident in the British War Office. There was a British official who received instructions to prepare a map of the proposed Armenia. In making the frontier he came at last to Lake Van—he had never been out of Europe and the maps at his disposal were exceedingly faulty.

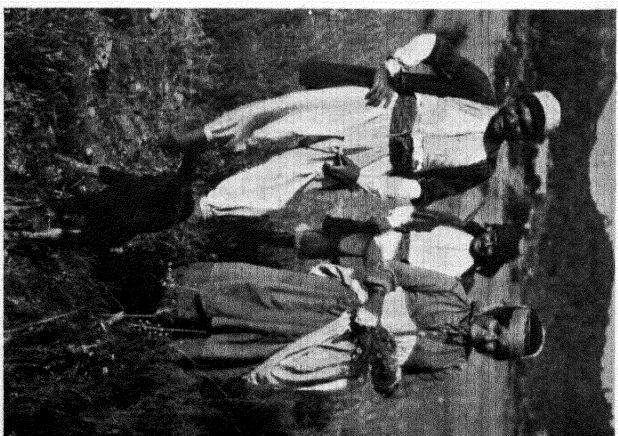
"Shall the frontier go to the east or the west shore of the lake?" he asked me, with pencil poised.

"Well," he continued, without listening to my reply "let us put the frontier right down the middle of the lake, and the details can be flogged out later by the boundary commission."

His map was printed and used in Paris by the Great Three, and some of it was incorporated in the abortive Treaty of Sèvres.



NUSAIRI GIRL GOING TO BED IN KHAM



NUSAIRI HARVESTING

CHAPTER XXXIX

FIRST IMPRESSION OF ANGORA

WE came to Angora through some scattered suburbs and so into the railway station. Here, at any rate, there was a difference from the one-rail affair I had seen in 1916. There was a network of lines. The platforms were broad and well roofed. There was a book-stall and a restaurant and a general air of bustle and hurry.

A crowd of *hamals*, porters, fought for my baggage and demanded a fantastic sum for carrying the three small bags, so I appealed to a station policeman. In 1916 the policeman would have gravely and justly decided between us. Now he shrugged his shoulders. Why should he help a foreigner against a Turk? Were not foreigners to be bled? Otherwise for what did they come to Angora? They were certainly not wanted except for their money. And, with a haughty gesture that implied all this, he left me to the mercies of the porters.

An equally rapacious taxi-driver with a well-appointed taxi drove me by a broad road with a good surface up the hill a mile into the town, past some fine new buildings, and then suddenly turned into a cobbled street and up a muddy alley to the hotel of Hassan Bey. There for fifteen shillings a day I was given a good room with a comfortable bed, electric light and the appointments almost *à la franca*. Later I found that there were many taxes and extra charges to be added to the fifteen shillings. The hotel was clean and the restaurant below good but very expensive. Below my window was a yard deep in

offal, where stood some decrepit lorries and a large number of country carts. The horses were stabled to one side, and the Anatolian carters, in tall boots and skin coats and with their long whips beside them, lounged and smoked and talked.

I found my way back to the broad station road and began to investigate. On each side of the road were the Government offices, well-built modest affairs that gave a sense of stability. The ten acres in which they stood gave me more hope for the future than all the rest of Turkey together. They contained the small piece of leaven that might raise the whole nation. I visited many offices. The officials were alert and pleasant. In them was concentrated all the Government of Turkey with a stern, undeviating centralisation that allowed little or no initiative to subordinates outside.

At the top of the road from the station stood a great statue. Before it were two figures of soldiers in battle. They were the work of an Austrian sculptor, and Austrian in all their details: at the back a Turkish village woman with a shell on her shoulder staggering into action to the help of her men. Above these was the statue of Mustapha Kemal on a horse, his fist clenched, his face stern and brutal, dominating as he dominated Turkey.

My inquiries made it abundantly clear that as Mussolini in Italy so Mustapha Kemal in Turkey stood out head and shoulders above his subordinates, a giant among pigmies. But whereas Mussolini ruled a nervy, dramatic people with dramatic gestures, Mustapha Kemal ruled the placid, obedient, almost animal Turks in their hard, brutal country in a brutal manner. He affected a threatening attitude in every photograph and statue, and with it he had successfully frightened his opponents and the foreign diplomats.

From Afghanistan to Spain had arisen a chain of dictators—broken only by the restless Greeks—Ahmed Riza of Persia, Mustapha Kemal of Turkey, Ahmed Zogu of Albania, Mussolini, Prima Vera; and further north

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there were dictators in Poland and Latvia and Serbia. Trotsky in 1919 said that at last man had grown up, and needed no more the guidance of God, man or institution. His error was clear, for the peoples in all these countries, like children, had gladly, almost with a sigh of relief, accepted the dictatorship of men who had shown themselves strong enough and big enough to shoulder the burdens and lead and direct them.

And Mustapha Kemal was perhaps the most absolute of them all; mentally, morally, as well as physically, he dominated the whole scene. There was no opposition. He had saved Turkey, held it together, challenged and driven off all who wished to interfere in it or control it, and proclaimed and established its right to live as a free and independent people. He was the supreme general *par excellence* of a fighting people. He was absolute ruler of a people accustomed to and wishing to be ruled absolutely. His prestige was immense. Patriotism had ceased to exist. No one shouted for the *Vatan*, the country. They shouted for Mustapha Kemal, the father and god of his people. Religion was dying, and Mustapha Kemal had become the venerated prophet; his words were treasured as truth and wisdom; his orders, even though revolutionary, obeyed without question. Turkey was Mustapha Kemal, and Mustapha Kemal was Turkey.

How far he was as great as his opportunity it was hard to tell. I sensed that his brutality of manner covered up many weaknesses. He never came out into the open nor allowed a meeting between himself and the great men of other countries who might have summed him up and judged him correctly. He had, however, immense drive, physical endurance, great power to inspire, and he had organising ability. He knew his own mind. His orders were always exact, and he enforced them. Publicly and privately he was utterly ruthless, without one piece of sentiment or pity in his composition to weaken his will.

And now were coming on him those twin diseases that seem to attack all dictators—jealousy and fear. He would have no one near him who even distantly could compare with him in ability or prestige. Jealous of others he had always been, ever since he had been a young lieutenant. Now he had begun to fear deposition and assassination, not by definite opponents or a rising in the country, but by his own immediate friends. He realised that it was a dictator's friends who would find it the easiest to replace him. One by one he had driven out or hanged not only those who had opposed him, but all the men who had stood by him in the black days before he had saved Turkey. His house was guarded by a triple line of sentries, and when he went out the roads were guarded along all the routes by troops and police and secret agents who watched the crowds. He was becoming savage-mannered, a solitary man with the fear of the revolver behind him and hardly a friend in whom to confide.

And as yet he had destroyed, and not created. He had torn and rooted the Turks out of the decrepit, putrescent Ottoman Empire, but he had not created them into a living nation. He had destroyed their fundamental loyalties and their religious belief, but given them nothing with which to replace these. The prophet as yet was without a message.

Round him were grouped a small number of adherents, men highly efficient, full of drive and energy, inspired by fine ideas, who formed the Government of the country—the Secretaries of State, and the Governors of Provinces.

There was, however, one enigmatic figure—that of Ismet Pasha, the Prime Minister. Of all his old friends he alone had weathered the storms of Mustapha Kemal's jealousy. He had fought with and under him throughout the Greek campaigns and stood beside him in the years that followed. He was a little man without distinction of manner or appearance, but kindly and pleasant. He had a way of insinuating his views, so that he

usually got what he wanted done without causing irritation or opposition. The more I heard, the more I was convinced that he was a steadying influence behind Mustapha Kemal, and that it was his clear, shrewd brain that calculated and planned what ought to be done.

As to the lesser officials, they were no more efficient than they used to be under the Sultans, and were quite uninspired by the high aims of their rulers. They had more expenses, life was dearer and they had very little more pay. They were as slovenly, slothful, procrastinating, and irritating with petty restrictions as before. Bribery, too, existed as before, but was far more difficult to handle. In the old days a traveller or merchant knew whom to bribe and approximately how much to give. Now it was impossible to bribe the big men with whom the final decision rested. But it was necessary to bribe all the chain of officials before them, and they were endless and rapacious, and all had to be done with great care and secrecy.

And below, the mass of the people were as yet untouched, unmoved; perhaps untouchable, unmovable; and this appeared to be the opinion of Mustapha Kemal, for he wasted very little time on the present generation. It had made its supreme effort and won liberty for Turkey from Europe and its Greek hireling. But from that effort it had slipped back, worn out, tired, nerveless, and was now more backward and poverty-stricken than before. All the Government energies were concentrated on the schools, where the children were taught advanced democratic ideas, new ideas, new conventions, the equality of the sexes and the love of freedom, the right and duty to think and decide each for himself.

Herein lay an interesting experiment. The Turks for centuries had shown themselves essentially a disciplined people who desired to be ruled by a dictator or an oligarchy. They had never ruled themselves. Should the new generation absorb the teaching of the schools set up by Mustapha Kemal they would in the

future have to take over the burden of government and rule themselves. There could be no more dictatorships. It remained to be seen how far Mustapha Kemal could change this fundamental characteristic of the Turkish nation.

The Government in form was parliamentary, but it was an empty form. There was no opposition, and all members were the nominees of Mustapha Kemal, but the form was being kept deliberately as an education and to be used by the next generation, who would have learned their powers and responsibilities. And herein Mustapha Kemal may have made a cardinal error, for just as Bolshevism has succeeded nowhere outside Russia, and Fascism nowhere outside Italy, so the parliamentary system seems to be essentially Anglo-Saxon, and to fail with other races.

But these were things that lay hidden in the future. As yet Turkey was just born, a babe in swaddling clothes and without distinctive characteristics, and no one could prophesy into what sort of man the child would grow.

CHAPTER XL

DEATH OF ISLAM

MUSTAPHA KEMAL'S statue stood facing the station, and, as was befitting, it had its back to the town, for it represented the new spirit, and as soon as I passed it I came into a mean Anatolian village with narrow streets and roadways of cobbles which were full of holes. I walked every yard of Angora, determined to see all. There were a few fine shops in one corner, and a co-operative store where Turkish officers did the family shopping, with their ragged orderlies behind them carrying baskets. But except for those and a café or two and a good restaurant run by a Russian, there was little else of value.

Angora was three parts an Anatolian township, and one part a rehash of Pera, the Christian quarter of Constantinople. All the majesty, the broad streets, the great buildings, the lines of trees, all the background of great empire and its pomp, the splendid vistas of the seas, the grandeur of the mosques, the mystery of the cemeteries with their cypress trees that make the charm, the lure, and the appeal of Stambul, were gone. And Pera, which once had been the old Jewish Ghetto and then the residence of the Levantines and Christians of Turkey, Pera, noisy with aimless bustle, its dirt and crude slum aspects, its Levantine looks and its unhealthy, unpleasant life, had, on a meaner scale, been brought to Angora. The valiant attempt to make a capital city of Angora had in contrast made it more of a scrubby, unshaven Anatolian country town.

On the fourth day there came rain, with sleet and snow. The climate of Angora in summer was very evil,

so that all who could—including Mustapha Kemal—went to the Bosphorus to escape its pestilential, dusty heat. In the rain and snow, with its rutty streets, its mud and cobbles and cranky, hovelish houses, it was incredibly filthy and uncomfortable. The narrow pavements were crowded with elbowing foot passengers. Cars and carriages splashed past and squirted mud and water in all directions. Rarely was there a place so foul for walking.

As I climbed up the hills on which the town stood I saw for the first time in the street the emancipated Turkish women. Perhaps fifty per cent. of the women I passed were uncovered and dressed as Europeans, and I was frankly disappointed in them. From their old seclusion they had swept to the other extreme. They had become more European than the European, more extravagant in dress, in talking, in outlook. They were even a burlesque of the European: they were more *infidélés* than the Infidel, as a Frenchman remarked.

Physically they were disappointing. For four hundred years the world had heard of their beauty, and for four hundred years the world had been defrauded. The beauty of the Turkish women appeared to be in the inverse ratio to the thickness of their veils. Here and there, but very rarely, I saw a girl of Circassian blood exquisitely beautiful, slim and lithe, white-skinned and black-eyed, but as a whole the rest were unlovely. Their ancestors had mixed their blood with every race in the Ottoman Empire: Arabs, Egyptians, Syrians, Armenians, Greeks, Circassians, Albanians, Jews. They admired fat women. The results had been ungainly figures, podgy legs, and sallow complexions.

They wore French shoes with high heels, but they walked as if they were used to loose slippers. Their skirts, despite the cold, were often so short that the flesh showed above their rolled stockings and ungainly legs. The *charchaff*, the old Turkish headdress, had been complimentary even to a plain woman, but European

hats suited them not at all, and some wore the Russian bandeau with a curl brought down on the forehead, which looked as vulgar as that of a maidservant out on a Sunday afternoon. They had lost all their old distinctive character. Their taste in dress was poor, and they seemed to me very self-conscious and demanding much attention, of which they got much less from the men than in the old days when they were veiled or semi-veiled.

Climbing up further, I came to the quarter that was burning when I was last there in 1916. It was the old Christian quarter. It had not been rebuilt, but lay a black scar on the steep hillside. Here and there among the ruins—and making the ruins more dreary by comparison—had been run up a jerry-built house or two of thin concrete walls, with often two or even three sides unsurfaced.

This quarter ran up close under the old fortress walls of the original town of Angora. Passing through the squalid bazaar, I entered the fortress by an ancient gate with a Greek inscription over the doorway. Inside was a town as retrograde and primitive as Kaesarea. In the narrow, twisting, cobbled alleys of streets the houses were locked and silent and the windows thickly latticed. Now and again veiled women in formless dresses came out on some errand, closing the doors carefully behind them, and passed like featureless black ghosts. Junior officials from the Government offices came home with a bag for paper under an arm, india-rubber sided boots and umbrellas. Except for their hats they were the same clerks as used to live in Stambul until the end of the war. Old Turkey remained here in the centre of the new capital, unchanged, resentful of change, with its same old life, its bazaar, its oriental outlook, and its impecunious Government clerks shuffling home to their veiled women.

Only the mosques were empty and derelict, and no *muezzins* called to prayer. On the unswept steps of one mosque children played marbles, shouted and quarrelled

foully, cursing each other filthily. The minaret of the mosque was cracked and the Crescent sign hung as drunkenly and unrespected as the Cross had hung on the orthodox church belfry in the ruined Christian quarter of Kaesarea.

For centuries the political and social life of Turkey, its laws, its land tenure, its methods of work, its family life, its loyalties and its whole outlook had been based on and grouped round the Sultan and Khalif. There had grown up a vast, unwieldy structure of mosques and priests, *hodjas*, dervishes, mendicant orders, monasteries, *imams*, *muezzins*, religious courts and great properties owned by religious bodies. This had weighed down heavily on the people of Turkey.

Mustapha Kemal had set out early to destroy them. The only opposition that he had feared politically might have come from the religious bodies. He and the Turkish leaders, as the Young Turks before him, had no religious convictions, but it was traditional that the Turkish peasantry were fundamentally religious, even fanatical, and would resist change.

Therefore in the early days of the revolution Mustapha Kemal had moved slowly. First the prestige of the Sultan had been undermined; he was a traitor in the hands of the English, a supporter of the Greeks, and as such he must be expelled from Turkey. Next the Khalifate was abolished, and even this produced no general resentment. After that Mustapha Kemal moved faster: the religious property was confiscated to the State; the Dervishes and mendicant orders were driven out; many mosques and shrines were closed; the fez, the distinctive religious headdress, was discarded; Islam ceased to be the State religion; the schools gave the children no religious teaching, and by implication rather than by direct statement destroyed the sanctity of the old beliefs, and Turkey became a secular republic.

And to strike even deeper, though it was not forbidden to go to the mosque or to pray, the impression was

broadcast that religion was one of the things that "was not done," it was "not good form," and to pray was to show that one was retrograde, stupid, and even to be suspected. At the same time, the whole position and prestige of the priests and *imams* was attacked; they were sneered at, discredited as ignorant and uncouth; they were reduced in number, and only a few allowed to practise and preach by licence. Very soon, though the old men and the women still prayed, the younger generation ceased to do so altogether. Religion required effort. This fundamental slothfulness was far stronger than their religious convictions, and the Turks ceased to be religious.

At the same time, Mustapha Kemal considered that religion had a certain political value. It was to be treated as "a social institution." A Faculty of Theology was appointed, under the Minister of Public Instruction, to prepare its complete reform. Religion was to be treated not as something created by God and filled with divine inspiration and dealing with the things of the spirit: it was to be a part of the tangible social structure, on a par with medicine, hygiene or art. It was to be "reformed by means of scientific procedure and by the art of reason"—to quote the terms of the instructions to the Faculty of Religion. Mustapha Kemal was not even sure that it was necessary to keep it at all, but was prepared to be convinced, and so to give it a trial. Religion on such terms ceased to be religion, and yet experience has shown that for ordinary men and women, and for a nation if it is to live, some religion is a vital necessity.

I found that the Turkish people, so far from resisting, had gladly shed their religion, like an unpleasant load. Except for the old men and women, who went still to the mosques, it had ceased to be a part of their lives. It had gone out of the consciousness, but there was nothing, no new belief, no new faith or inspiration, to replace it. Once more in great sweeps Mustapha Kemal had destroyed, but he had created nothing to fill the void he had made.

CHAPTER XLI

OLD ANGORA

I EXPLORED through the twisting, cobbled streets of the town within the fortress until I came to a high place, where there was a stout inner fort which commanded the whole position. There I sat down to rest a little, for the hills were very steep. On the fort walls were flags painted in red and green with the Star and Crescent. They had been done in honour of some Sultan, but the paint was almost gone. At my feet was a huddle of cheap timber which had fallen down, and which had been a flaming electric sign to celebrate Mustapha Kemal's destruction in 1922 of the Greek invading army and the defeat of the European Allies who had sent it. To my right the fort wall edged a sheer precipice, and a thousand feet below a stream, like a black snake, crawled through the valley, which was powdered with a little snow. At this point the Romans used to throw down the criminals condemned to death. Across the valley was the mast of a most up-to-date and powerful wireless station. Behind me, where the slopes were easier, the Genoese engineers had built bastions cunningly arranged to outflank any attack from every point.

Angora was a very ancient town, and the Turks had built their walls from the débris of temples and churches. One bastion was constructed with great blocks from the triumphal arch of a Roman Emperor. In another was a Byzantine cross beside a Greek capital with a grape frieze. In another I saw a marble statue of Bacchus built in upside down. There were white marble pillars, grey granite pillars, a slab with a Roman inscription of the

reign of Augustus, a bull's head from a Phœnician shrine—all jumbled indiscriminately into the structure.

I sat perched up high on the fort wall looking down over all Angora, as the Gargoyle Devil of Notre Dame looks down over Paris, absorbed with interest, yet still detached and unaffected, and a little critical and cynical.

The scene was symbolical. Directly beneath me within the stone walls of the ancient fortress was the Turkish village, unchanged, its life embedded in the Ottoman Empire, but with its conventions and beliefs dying under it and rotting its foundations. The Christian quarter was a black scar of burnt houses not repaired or rebuilt. The Christians were gone, and with them their wealth, and the Turks had as yet not replaced them. Below that was the main town, and the attempt to modernise it had only imposed some of the tawdriness of Pera on to the Anatolian village. Beyond that were the neat offices of the Government, where a few capable men strove to build a new country. The statue of Mustapha Kemal, the broad road and the new railway station were their work, but as yet they had had little effect in the village, in the fortress, or the Anatolian town, nor had they even begun to re-create the loss of wealth symbolised by the black scar of the burnt Christian quarters.

A gendarme officer came out of the inner fort and stood leaning on a wall beside me, and we fell into conversation. He was a short fat man, with his uniform collar undone for comfort, a week's stubble on his chin, and wearing his peaked hat uncomfortably on the back of his head.

"*Pees*," he said suddenly, spitting accurately and effectively into the ravine. "*Pees bir eyr*—a filthy place this! I am of Kadi Keuy on the Bosphorus. I was brought up in Stambul and trained there, and now I have to live in this hole," and he jerked his head at Angora.

"Then why not all go back to Constantinople?" I asked.

"The Government will stay here," he replied; and with pride, "I have my orders."

And I saw that the Turks who had made Angora into this capital city had put little heart into it. They were homesick for Constantinople and the Bosphorus, for the pleasantness of Stambul and the night life of Pera. And still they would not go back. They realised that to make Constantinople the capital of this struggling republic was to make it vulnerable, to place it in the hands of its enemies, the Great Powers and the financiers. In Angora they might be uncomfortable, but they could snap their fingers in freedom at the world. On the Bosphorus they would be strangled and swallowed up.

They were wise also, for Constantinople with her embraces has debased all who have come to her. She rotted the moral fibre of the Romans and Greeks, of the Byzantines, Seljuks, and the Ottomans, and even of the Allied troops in their few months stay during the Armistice. She had been the harlot of the world.

I found the Turks a proud people--and even if it was to their disadvantage, pride and hatred of the foreigner would keep them in Angora. Journalists and others who know them very superficially had written a great deal on their desire to become Western, because they had carried out certain Western reforms. But they were Turks and proud of being Turks, sure beyond any arguments that Turks were the cream of creation and the rest of the world only the sour remnants. Behind them were centuries of Empire, and this had given them a dignity of their own. They believed themselves to be, morally and mentally, the superiors of the West. They hated the Western peoples. They had an instinctive dislike of all foreigners, and the strangle-hold of the Capitulations, the agony of the Great War, the bitterness of the Greek invasion of 1919 had intensified this dislike into a fierce, proud resentment. Especially they hated the British, who,

they knew, from the Treaty of Sèvres and all the policy of Mr. Lloyd George, had set out at the Armistice to destroy them utterly.

Yet they hankered after the material advantages of the West—its cars, and wireless, its organisation and the power and the leisure that wealth could give. Only often they adopted the outward forms of progress without the effort and the spirit which were the driving force behind them.

At the same time, they remained an Eastern people. They were proud of being Eastern. They claimed to be the champions of the East and guides to those who sit in darkness. And in reality as I travelled I realised again, as I had in Damascus, that though they had abolished the Khalifate, become a secular republic, and though they jested at the morals and teachings of the Prophet and discouraged the young from religion, still they remained the natural leaders of Islam. In India, in Egypt, in Aleppo, and even in North Africa the Moslems looked to Mustapha Kemal as the champion who had bent Europe to his will. In Central Asia a Turk, even if only a common soldier, was treated as a hero. The Amir of Afghanistan, after visiting all the great countries, asked Turkey for "experts judicial, scientific and military, to assist in the progress and development" of his country. That afterwards he failed in his schemes was due to his own folly, and not to his Turkish advisers. Persia too had sought an alliance with Turkey.

The victory of the Turks over the French, the Greeks and the Italians, their success at Chanak and at the Lausanne Conference had begotten a new hope throughout the whole East, that the Western and colonial Powers could be defeated. From that unborn child, only just stirring in the Womb of History, will grow a man to shake the world.

As I sat on the fort wall I set my mind searching back through what I had seen as I travelled, to find what the

rulers of Turkey had created or achieved. They had fine schemes—they had replaced the old, jumbled, weird laws of the Sheriat with the Swiss Civil and the Italian penal codes. They planned roads, railways, factory towns, centres of commerce, prosperity, education. The thirteen millions of Turks, unadulterated by Christians and independent of all foreign interference, were to become a compact, free, joyous people, striving to develop to some great end.

As yet, however, I could see little of these things, only the barest hope of them coming. Materially the country was tired and beggared beyond description. Nor could I find a new spirit. To talk to Russians was to realise that out of all the agony of their revolution there had been born a faith, a drive, a new spirit, an inspiration and, whether it be good or bad, there would come out of Russia something new and virile.

Here, as I brooded high on Angora with the discontented gendarme officer beside me, I could not find the same thing; there was no change of heart, no urge, no faith, no new spiritual drive among the Turks, and without those all material progress was a dead thing. The small group of rulers had not as yet inspired the people. Perhaps at heart they were too materialistic to be able to inspire them.

I took the road back down into the town. The children were still quarrelling filthily on the steps of the dead mosque. The bazaar was full of villagers buying their primitive necessities, and arguing incessantly over the prices. And so I came down to the big new restaurant of Tash Han. It was a fine show, with good food, and run by a Russian—and in Angora most of the things that were good were run by foreigners.

The restaurant, and a night club and cabaret next door—also run by Russians—were fabulously expensive and crowded with Germans. The streets, too, were full of Germans, and in fact there were Germans in every place

to which I went in Turkey. In Mersina and Adana they were in the factories. I had seen them in Kaesarea, where they were building the aeroplane sheds and working on the railway-line construction. On every road I met German travellers living the hard, primitive life of the Turkish peasant, nosing into every village, smelling out methodically every little bit of business. They had got as far east as Sivas and Erzerum and Merzifun, and south to Aintab and Marash, and west to Adalia and Smyrna. They ran the ammunition and rifle factories. In the one newspaper shop in Angora I found a Waverley novel which was the only example of English, two French newspapers a month apart, but only to be sold together, while the rest of the shop was filled equally with German and Turkish newspapers. These both sold well, which showed the number of Germans there were in the area. Moreover, they were not, as during the war, the superior beings come to organise and direct, but were working loyally and efficiently under the Turks.

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It was evening when I left Angora to go westwards. I stepped out of the station to have one last look. The central hill stood out pale against a snowy sunset. The fortress was a black silhouette. In the main town, hidden in the shadow of the hills, a light or two came out.

I was disappointed, not because New Turkey could show so little material progress, for I realised the immense difficulties, the need of wholesale destruction and demolition before any construction of the national life could be begun, but because I could not find signs of the awakening of a new spirit to inspire the people to success.

Turkey, like Angora before me, lay in the shadow. Here and there a lamp glimmered out of the shadow and gave a little vague light and hope.

CHAPTER XLII

FROM ANGORA TO STAMBUL

IN Angora I had been treated well; allowed to wander and investigate freely without agents following me. Officials great and small had been exceedingly courteous and helpful. Only when I came to leave, the police demanded eight photographs for their records. So insistent were they for my ancestral details that I was afraid they would want the name and trade of my great-grandfather also.

Angora had been an oasis in the Anatolian desert. An oasis, not of gardens and vineyards and shady trees—for it was as barren and rocky a place as could well be imagined—but an oasis of street lamps, of cafés and a hotel with a clean bed, a restaurant with good food, a cabaret and night club, warmth, taste of wine, women and soft clothes.

I have travelled for days in deserts without thought or emotion until suddenly a grove of palms and a few feet of grass by a spring recall green lawns and flowers and soft streams winding between fields of rich-scented hay, and suddenly I hate the dust and the parching sun and the dry, tired glare, and yearn to be stretched out in peace in some English meadow. So Angora in this bleak, primitive country made me long for home and civilised places.

We went westwards by railway out into the same great desolation as that which lay to the east and south of Angora, and in all its wide space there was hardly a tree. In 1916 and in 1919 I had seen it rich with corn, but in 1921, when retreating after their big drive at Angora,

the Greeks had systematically and viciously and without justification, military or otherwise, devastated it, burning the villages, cutting down the trees, rooting up the railway. And what the Greeks had left the Turks had squandered.

We passed a few mud-hut villages, a flock of sheep grazing beside a fold and guarded by the black-muzzled wolf-dogs. Now and again a mud road wound out of the purple distance from one side and wound away again into the purple distance on the other towards the faint outline of mountains. Beyond these we saw little life: a few wild duck and a brace or two of magpies. An immense silence brooded heavily over all.

A short way out we crossed the Sakkaria River, a narrow, winding stream across which the Greeks and Turks fought the decisive battle of 1921 and where the Greeks were forced back into retreat. Beyond this we came to low hills, and on a spur within a low wall stood the white Tomb of the Turkish Unknown Warrior. It was a tawdry, cheap monument, and standing there looking over the Sakkaria battle-field, with the empty plateau stretching endless on every side, it seemed very lonely and desolate in the pale amber sunlight of the winter's day.

As we passed the Tomb the train halted suddenly with a grating of brakes, a vicious jolt and the engine whistling shrilly. People began to shout. The passengers rushed to the windows. There had been an accident. We had run into a cart with a pair of horses. The cart was matchwood. One horse was cut to pieces; the other screamed twice terribly and then died, and lay grinning and monstrous in a patch of pale sunlight. It died mercifully, for the Turks will not kill animals, and it would have laid for hours in agony. Beyond the cart two carters were sitting up dazed. The officials, such passengers as had got out, and a train policeman were round them cursing them and asking them obvious questions. Then everyone argued fiercely together, and

the *chef-de-train* failed to make up his mind, but at last decided to telephone to Angora; last time there had been an accident it had been followed by a long law-suit, and the Company had lost; he must take no risks. To connect with the telegraph and get contact took an hour and a great deal of talk and general advice-giving. The whole of this, in its aimless talk and uproar, was essentially Greek or Armenian or Levantine, but not the solid Turkish manner as I had known it in the past.

From some village hidden behind the hills people came by ones and twos, strangely incurious and unexcited—perhaps afraid of being involved in some way. They wandered aimlessly, looking at the cart and the horses, and crowded round the carters. One of these rocked himself and moaned; the other looked half-hero and half-patient. A relative came up, embraced the latter, knelt by him, and they wept loudly together, until it appeared that he had been walking behind the cart, could never have been hurt and had just flung himself down in terror; whereupon he looked foolish before the rest, who by now were squatted round him on their heels.

I watched that crowd. Except for a couple of shopmen from the second class and an officer, they were villagers and third-class passengers. They had heavy, stupid faces, mostly Mongolian in cast, and unseeing eyes like those of a water-buffalo. They were poor beyond despair; their clothes in rags or patched fantastically; their feet in broken shoes or just socks full of holes, and which were no protection against the snow and the frozen ground. From the carriage windows their women looked on stolidly. They were formless bundles of clothes, with their cloaks drawn across their faces to hide all but their black eyes.

The owner of the horses arrived. He was the important man of the village, and the villagers moved restlessly as he looked round and cursed them all, from the carters down to a small boy who was playing with the offal of

one of the dead horses. His loss was complete, for there would be no insurance to cover him.

We waited two hours, and the occupants of my carriage had lost interest. A Rumanian cursed with caustic fluency all Turkish methods, and then was suddenly silent as he realised that a Turk in the passage knew French—a foreigner had to be careful what he said. A doctor and a merchant were in the opposite corners. The doctor had shown no interest at all. He had looked out of the window once. The wind was bitter, so he wrapped his coat round his shoulders without putting his arms into the sleeves and came back. He had not asked, nor had anyone else, whether the carters were hurt, nor had he made any attempt to help.

Nothing portrayed the gap between the Turks and the Western so much as that doctor. He was one of the intellectuals, trained in Vienna and Paris, dressed in black coat, bowler, striped trousers, horn-rimmed glasses, patent-leather boots; the complete Western in clothes and general appearance. The seats of the carriage were made for Europeans, who dangle their legs, but he curled his up under him and rested his fat paunch on his thighs. The merchant did the same. They lit cigarettes. They talked unendingly the empty platitudes and the courtesies of Turkish conversation, which is the conversation of a people who never read or study. Now one would sing nasally, and then both would refer to the *jaheel* or the *haiwan*, the "brainless" or the "animal," by which they meant the villagers who were outside squatting by the line.

In the third hour the Procurator-General, four armed gendarmes and three policemen arrived by car from Angora, and with them came a sallow, bowler-hatted, morning-coated lawyer. They were typical minor officials of modern Turkey. They argued, talked, held a *procès-verbal*, wrote at length, swaggered under the knowledge that every eye was on them, and then, after the train, the mails, all the passengers, not to say the express from Constantinople, had been held up for five hours over

a matter that a London policeman would have noted in his book and cleared up in twenty minutes, they allowed us, with great formality, to go. Only they arrested the carters, presumably in order to protect the interests of the State-owned railway, for there seemed no other reason. The carters would be kept for weeks in some evil, lousy cell, among the accused and the criminals—for in Turkey accused, condemned and witness often all get shut up together, and beaten also—and their families would have to come the long journey from the village to bring them food, or they would be half starved. I was surprised no more at the caution and apparent lack of interest shown by their fellow-villagers.

As I looked down on that crowd—the heavy villagers, the Procurator-General, the unpleasant lawyer, the doctor and the merchant in my carriage—and then up at the Tomb of the Turkish Unknown Warrior, I saw that it was an example of how the Turks again and again had borrowed the good things of the West and either left out or perverted their spirit, not knowing that without the driving spirit within them the material things were valueless.

The conception of the Unknown Soldier was essentially English, born in an English brain, and produced by the nation with its characteristic hard-headed emotionalism. The spiritual inspiration behind it was a personal tribute of honour and praise for each of the Glorious Dead. The idea caught the world-imagination, and each nation adjusted it to its own ideals.

But this monument on the Anatolian hillside had another meaning. To the average Turk, to the peasants by the line, it meant nothing. I asked many, but mostly they were vague even as to its existence. But Mustapha Kemal had seen that every Western nation had a Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, so Turkey must have one too. There was, however, no personal tribute of honour or praise. It was the symbol of Turkish victory over the

Greeks and their allies. It was the sign of a clenched fist that faced and threatened each traveller coming from the West, a warning that the Ottoman Empire was dead and no outside interference would be allowed. The spiritual significance of the Tomb in the great quiet of Westminster Abbey had been perverted into this symbol of aggression looking out over the Sakkaria battlefield.

We travelled on through the same great plateau. To describe it more than once would be to produce the same weariness as travelling through its wilderness.

Once before Eski-Shehir I saw a little child, dressed as a peasant woman, her hands folded in her lap, a wise-faced, grave child, sitting beside the line watching the train. There was no village, and the only other sign of life was a campment of black goat-hair tents of some Yaruk shepherds pitched in a distant valley. Beside her, its teeth bared and threatening the train, stood a huge wolf-dog. The little child sitting alone exaggerated the immensity and the silence of the empty land, and the huge wolf-dog, which threatened us, was a symbol of the hard, fierce country.

And it was a very empty land. It might have contained at that moment at the maximum some ten million Turks, though the Government claimed four million more. There were little signs of an increase of population. Malaria, venereal diseases, a natural tendency to epidemics, poor food and decimating wars, together with the high rate of infant mortality—for only the healthiest could survive the conditions of life—had kept down any increase. During the Greek invasion, in a spasm of loyalty, the Turkish women swore to have a male child a year until the country was full of men to drive out the foreigners. In 1922 a member of the Angora Parliament proposed a law forcing each man to maintain four wives and four concubines for the same reason. The Turkish women had not carried out this threat: the good deputy's law was rejected; and the country was as empty as ever.

At the same time it was potentially very rich. It had once produced half the minerals and the food of the Ancient World. Now it was producing very little. Since the French had devastated the area round Aintab and the Greeks this area, and the expulsion of the Christians had sent away most of the artisans and labourers, the crops had been poor. In 1927, for lack of water they had been thirty per cent. lower than the average. During the winter fodder had run short and the cattle had died. Later I saw a great drought wipe out whole districts, and the Government was forced to import corn, and there was little or nothing except some tobacco, figs and raisins to export in payment, so that eventually it was inevitable that the country would go bankrupt. In whole districts the villages were deserted, the villagers starving, and famine stood at the gate.

It was clear that a country potentially so rich and capable of holding sixty million settlers, yet almost empty and sparsely cultivated, could not remain empty for ever. The climate was hardy, the air and the water were good. It was ideal for colonisation by a European Power, and in Europe there were countries filled to overflowing. Revived Germany was increasing rapidly. Italy was pregnant with surplus children and swollen with pride and with dreams of empire. Mussolini was boasting of empire and domination of the Mediterranean. If he annexed South Anatolia it would give him both. It would absorb his surplus population, yet keep the settlers Italian subjects. It could produce finer and stronger Italians than north Italy itself. For the minute Italy was busy in Albania protecting her left flank, but she had kept the islands of Rhodes, Leros and Castellorizo off the Turkish coast and made them into fortified *points d'appui*. In no distant future she might try her fortune. Anatolia would once again be a prize for which the nations would fight, and it would remain to be seen whether the republic had sapped the

fighting qualities of the Turks and whether Mussolini had made fighting men and soldiers of the Italians.

We came to Eski-Shehir, where the line branched south back to Ulu Kishla and so by Adana and Aleppo towards Bagdad, and the other branch went west to Constantinople.

I did not stop there long. Half the town was burnt, and the ruins of the Christian quarter were inhabited by Moslem refugees.

Then we travelled through a military zone on towards Constantinople, ran along the shore of the Gulf of Ismidt, with its smug villages, its villas and rich gardens and vineyards; and so came to Haidar Pasha, the terminus of the railway on the Asiatic shore.

CHAPTER XLIII

STAMBUL TO-DAY

THE well-run ferry carried us out of the port of Haida Pasha, past Leander's Town, across the mile of swift current where the Bosphorus swirls down to Seraglio Point below Santa Sophia, and so we came to the European side and the landing-stage at Galata Bridge.

Round us lay the city of Constantinople. To our left was Stambul, covering low hills—Stambul majestic in its broad streets and open squares, its terraces and gardens and its great buildings. Among its picturesque streets showed a mighty aqueduct; above the skyline stood out the slender minarets and the massive domes of the mosques of Suleiman the Magnificent and Fateh the Conqueror; behind the old Palace of the Seraglio crouched Santa Sophia, squat and heavy. To our right was Pera, tier on tier of ugly houses huddled on cliff-sides and topped by the massive tower, from where the watchman watched for fires and from which flew the flag of the republic. Dividing Turkish Stambul from Levantine Pera, the Golden Horn, half hidden in a pearl mist, wound away between the low hills.

A car took me up the steep Galata Hill, past the banks and the Pera Palace, to a house in the Rue Ali Mejid, where I was to lodge.

Pera was little changed. After the intense cold of the Anatolian plateau the air seemed soft, a little stale, even noisome. The streets were cleaner than in the days of the Allied occupation, but there were few new buildings or new roads. Many shops had changed hands, and

more had closed down. The same crowds of every nationality under the sun jostled each other on the narrow pavements, while the squealing, clanging trams and the noisy cars tore recklessly down the streets. Pera was no more Turkish than it had been five years before. It was Levantine. It was the capital of Levantinia and full of Levantines, with their sallow, unhealthy faces and their sallow, unhealthy lives. And now hats and caps had taken away the dignity of the Turks and made them as sallow-looking as Levantines.

Stambul was the same outwardly, but only outwardly. The offices of the Ministries and of the Sublime Porte were there, but they were dead, for their souls had gone to Angora, and only their shrivelled skins remained. In the courtyard of the Ministry of War soldiers were practising the goose-step, but the Ministry building had been turned into some sort of school. The Red Prison above the Golden Horn, where I had been imprisoned, was empty and in ruins, but the other prisons were guarded and full of prisoners, living the same beast life that we had lived.

In the Covered Bazaar the same carpet and curio dealers pestered me to buy their faked goods. The same seller of *muhalebe* and *sutlu ilaj* and Turkish sweets served me with his old dignity in the raised shop opposite the taps where the faithful came to wash before prayer; and the old seller of gold-inscribed Korans slyly showed me, in a corner of his shop, the same astoundingly indecent pictures in his ancient Persian manuscripts. Life had changed little. Except for the hats there might never have been a revolution.

Five years I had been away, and now I was caught again by the lure of the great city. I filled my eyes with the beauty of Stambul, the majesty of its setting on its hills, with the Golden Horn curving at its feet and the Marmora stretching away to the Islands of the Princes and, beyond them, the mountain of Olympus towering to the sky.

Once again I feasted myself on the beauty of its mosques and its wide vistas, followed its broad roadways between trees, and then dived into its twisting alleys, where the squalor of its life and the clammy weight of its atmosphere made my soul writhe.

Once again, unresisting, content to be dragged down, I let the city twine her insidious fingers round my heart.

The next day I took a boat across to the Asiatic shore and stopped at Skutari, the town where I had lived for two years as Supervisor of the Gendarmerie. The wind had turned to the south, churned up the Bosphorus into waves, and made the air damp, hot and slackening.

All the old officials were gone to Angora, otherwise the sleepy, old-world town had not lifted an eye since I left it. The village women, with their veils down, sat gossiping on the steps of the Yeni Mosque. In a mean shanty which was the only restaurant I shared a table with a Greek priest. He was an unclean old man, his chimney-pot hat rusty with age, his beard very foul and his gown and waistcoat slimed with stale food. Together with a dozen customers we ate a *pitaff* cooked in lugubrious sheep-tail fat. It was full of bits of bone and small stones, but the rest of the customers seemed to enjoy it, and sucked it up off their spoons with great gusto and much suction.

On the hill above the town the gendarmes and soldiers in their ruined barracks were as bedraggled. They wore torn and fantastically patched uniforms and broken boots, and were as ill-looking-after as they had been under the régime of the Sultans.

It was a Friday, and in the great cemetery behind the barracks a commemoration service was in progress. On a cypress tree was hung a photograph of a girl. Round her grave, marked by a white stone with a white cloth tied round it, were grouped a number of men in frock-coats and lounge suits, some unveiled women, a gendarme or two, and some soldiers looking on curiously. With

them were a crowd of villagers and a host of children dressed in their best clothes, which, being European and out of date, mostly made them look as if they belonged to the reign of Queen Victoria.

On the headstones, topped with turbans of the ancient dead buried here, were hung the straw hats, the bowlers and the top hats of the mourners.

Beyond the edge of the cemetery, at open windows, were women watching, dressed in white, and their veils drawn across their faces. Some, even stricter, watched behind the lattice-work of the windows.

I sat down on a grave-top. In the heavy air the cemetery stretched dreary on three sides. Dust lay on everything and the cypresses were dusty and tired. The gravestones were thrown this way and that in disorder. Beyond the cemetery was a glimpse of the Bosphorus, blue and majestic below us, and Stambul shining in the afternoon sun.

Innumerable children got up and recited, with remarkable fluency, the virtues of the dead girl. Then a paid musician sang in a high pure tenor as he sat at a table and beat time with his fingers. A bedraggled priest chanted some prayers. More children recited. The crowd moved restlessly. Another paid singer burst into a nasal wail, and the crowd sighed and moaned round me as if in pain. The village women drew their veils if a man looked their way and whispered excitedly and softly together. An old gendarme called suddenly on Allah, and wiped away a tear, and a huge bearded grave-digger, dressed as in the old days except for a cloth cap, handed out water and sherbet.

Then we all turned to Mecca, and, while the priest led, the crowd, like some wild animal, grunted its replies to his prayers. After we had prayed with hands turned upwards, they gave us sweets and perfumed water, and then we wandered away into the cemetery, where the pigeons and the doves were feeding among the tombs of the renowned dead. As yet Mustapha Kemal had not

rooted out this old life, and he had much still to destroy before he could begin to create.

On the road back I went by Bulbul Déré, the Valley of the Nightingale, the Harlots' Quarter. Squalid women looked out at me expectantly, and then, recognising that I was a European, shut their doors quickly for fear of the police, for to-day, as ever, even a harlot, if she is a Turk, is for the Turks too good for a foreigner.

At a sweetmeat shop near the Yeni Mosque I sat down to eat *muhalebe*, the dish of ground rice and fine shredded chickens' breast, dusted with sugar and made fragrant with rose-water. Two Turkish girls, unveiled, wearing smart European clothes and bandeaux wound round their heads, came in. Completely self-possessed, they inspected the counter, ordered what they wanted, ate it at a table, paid the bill and walked out again. The shopman took no particular notice of them, nor were they accosted.

Here at least was a great change. In 1914-1920 two such girls veiled, or with their veils thrown back, would have been followed by perhaps an officer, a cadet or two, and some young bloods, who would have hung about outside to catch their eye. All life was sex-ridden in those days. But now no one had taken much notice of the two, even the loungers in the cafés had not turned to be ribald at their expense. The girls, however, gave me the impression that they would have liked some one to have taken notice of them, follow them, even worry them with attentions. In fact I found that in Constantinople with the going of the veil the men seemed to have largely lost interest in the women, but the women were very self-conscious. They preened and posed. They were consumed with sex. They demanded attention, and they got very little of it.

A steamer took me up the Bosphorus, between its steep, hilly shores covered with gardens and white chalets, with quaint villages and palaces. The first dolphins coming north dived and played round the ship.

At Yeni Keuy I visited old friends; heaved on the handle of a bell until a wire creaked across a big garden and in the distance a bell rang. A veiled woman opened the door carefully, and then went with my message, and after a while I was admitted.

The garden was a jungle. The old palace and the terrace on the water's edge, where the gulls wheeled and settled and quarrelled, were broken and dishevelled.

Here I had walked with a Turkish woman and lived and planned a novel. From the terrace I had rowed and talked softly under the warm, dark night with veiled women when that was forbidden—ten years before, when the Armistice was young, and we dreamed dreams of a New World.

My friends were as courteous as of old. One was a huge man, a major renowned for his courage, and who had fought in the Tripoli and Balkan wars. His wife was a fierce old dowager who had held up a platoon of British soldiers who came to search her house in 1920, with an ancient sword. The older women were veiled. The younger wore the Russian bandeau and were uncovered.

With infinite dignity we performed all the old courtesies. We drank coffee with due ceremony, and talked of the weather and of non-controversial subjects.

These people were living the old, shut-away, aristocratic life of the days before the war, but their world was breaking down under them as the palace in which they lived and the terrace were slipping gradually from their foundations into the swift Bosphorus current. Yet there was a peace and a dignity as we sat in that old-world garden in the late sun, and a nightingale began to sing in a bush, and the first lilacs were scenting the air, which made me sad as I took the road back to Pera; but I knew that all this life was dead and must be shovelled aside.

A little later I visited Ayub, at the head of the Golden

Horn ; the great shrine was deserted ; the graveyard was unkempt, with the graves broken up and the headstones strewn at every angle—and it is said in the East that a people may be judged by their graveyards. Inside the Mosque it was silent except for the whispering of an old man who read the Koran to himself in a corner.

Squatting on a fine Ispahan carpet below the *Kiblah*, I drank in the soothing calm and peace. Now and again the sweep of pigeons' wings sounded in the courtyard beyond. From a window I could see a coffin laid out on trestles. It was for a woman, and covered with a blue cloth. Two old men, the peaks of their cloth caps pulled over one ear, prayed before it, prostrated themselves and stood again with hands folded on their breasts. Then together they looked left and called, "Allah," lest the devil should be lying in wait behind their shoulders ; then looked right and cried "Allah" again, picked up some work tools they had laid on a slab and were gone.

Beside the coffin squatted an old woman who bargained with the carriers of coffins and the guardian of the mosque for the burial fees, and cursed them fluently for their avarice.

In the paved courtyard surrounded by high stone walls, under a huge plane tree, was a seller of trifles, an aristocratic old man who showed his wares with a dignified wave of his hand—beads, bottles of cheap scent, cinnamon, packets of herbs and roots for medicines, pencils, paper, Korans, relics: a jumble laid out on two tables. A *hodja* came out of the mosque, and we fell into conversation, and, after a long-winded exchange of courtesies :

"Few come to the mosque," I said. "I remember only a little time ago that the people came regularly."

The *hodja* looked at me for a minute, and then burst into a fierce tirade. He was pent up with hatred—the shrines and mosques had been shut, religion was being killed by the Government, who were *dinsiz*, without any religion ; they had taken the religious money, starved

the mosque officials and chased away the religious orders ; the people wanted to come and pray, but were afraid.

The Seller of Trifles tried to interrupt, to check the flow of acid hatred of the Government, and at last succeeded ; a policeman was passing one of the gateways of the courtyard. A look of fear came into their eyes—the same fear that I had seen in the eyes of Christians in the old days when they told me in hushed whispers of their troubles, fear whether they had been overheard by spies or agents, a fear of the prison and rope.

The priest gathered up his gown and hurried away. The Seller of Trifles, who had taken no part in the discussion, and did not wish to be involved in politics, was as courteous as ever, but he was relieved when I went.

As I came home, a soft evening mist was on the Bosphorus, hiding what was squalid, softening the shores and turning the water to the colour of ashes.

At Galata Bridge it was dark. I stood where I had stood five years ago, when New Turkey was just created, and wondered how far she had progressed. I could not see clearly the future. A few lights showed in the houses of Stambul, but otherwise it was already black and silent, a silhouette against the last olive of the sunset, for the people there went early to bed. The houses of Galata crowded down to the shore, and above them Pera was a blaze of lights, as its coarse night life began.

Below the Bridge in the Golden Horn the native *mahallas* lay moored together, a forest of masts against the dying sky. On board, the boatmen, singing softly and talking in every language of the East, were cooking their evening meals on braziers, which shone as soft glows in the darkness under the shadow of Stambul and its silent houses. The mist began to curl up from the black water. In every bay and inlet were the bodies of dead boats, steamers, tugs and old destroyers.

A watchman called from below Pera in the village behind the Admiralty, and along the shores other watch-

men replied, beating on the stones with their clubs to show that all was well.

The anchorage by Leander's Town, and the wharves and quays beside Serkedji station and Galata were empty. Only an odd ship or two lay out in the stream. Constantinople, the thriving, bustling port of the past, with its cargoes for the Crimea, Russia, the Caucasus and Bulgaria, was empty and desolate. Trade was dead, killed by restrictions and the poverty of the country. Taxes and monopolies lay heavy on all business. The port itself was a monopoly, the stevedoring bad, and the Customs inefficient and harassing. Salonika and the Piraeus had stolen the trade, and thrived, with their ports crowded with shipping. But in Turkey a furious nationalism had led to a Protective System gone mad. America, almost self-supporting, prospered with a high tariff wall. Turkey, ruined and penniless, had built a high wall round an empty waste and starved proudly inside it.

The wealth of the country had been inherited, and as yet the Turks were spending, but not creating, nor attracting more to them. The retail shopmen without knowledge, and with little instruction, and the big traders, eager to get rich quick, were ruining such trade as there was. A fierce xenophobia made the Turks hostile to all foreign enterprise. They had failed to meet their national debts, and capital was afraid to trust itself into their hands. Year by year imports vastly exceeded exports—even corn and flour were being imported—so that such wealth as remained was slowly oozing away to meet necessities.

And the Government had set out to ruin the city. Its people had opposed the transfer of the capital to Angora; it was full of officials and merchants who were impoverished and disgruntled by the new order of things. Its sympathies were against the Government. Angry at its attitude, the present rulers had determined to ruin Constantinople, the great port, the main source of income,

even though its ruin meant the bankruptcy of all Turkey. Its importance was reduced, its trade deliberately made difficult.

I took ship for Smyrna, and as we slid past Seraglio Point I looked back. I saw that the city could not be killed, even though it could for a while be tied down and gagged. It was still *Der Saadet*, the Gate of Happiness. Long after the Turkish Republic would have disappeared into the mists of history it would still sit here majestically on its hills, a Pearl of Beauty, a Royal City, with the sea round its feet, and the wealth of all the countries filling its harbours.

At the moment its spirit was damped down and it lay helpless and desolate.

CHAPTER XLIV

SMYRNA

IT was late when we left Galata Bridge, and we had to hurry out of the Golden Horn, past Seraglio Point, across the Sea of Marmora and down between the barren, ill-natured shores of the Dardanelles so as to be through the controls and the Narrows and into the open sea before dark. At dawn we had rounded the last headland and were steaming up the Gulf of Smyrna and close to the city.

I had seen the city twice before. Once when as a prisoner under escort I had been brought there to be exchanged in 1918. Then it was still rich. The corn, the wine, the carpets, the opium, the tobacco and the cotton of the Interior, together with the mohair and nuts, were being brought down to its market. Behind it were valleys rich with vineyards and fragrant with gardens. Its foreign population, despite the war, were still rich, gay, chic in dress, wicked and enticing. They lived their own life with their own customs and their own ways of speech, so that even to-day it is easy to recognise a Smyrniote by the drawling sing-song in the intonation. After the interior, with its coarse food, its broken houses, and its brutal prison life, I had found Smyrna as luxurious and enticing as Paradise and its *houris* to a Moslem fanatic.

Since then history had dealt tragically with the city. Perhaps God had cursed it for its wickedness. At the Armistice the Allies had occupied it and handed it over to the Hellenic Greeks, who made it into a colony. This the Turks refused to accept, and Greeks and Turks had fought over it, ruined all the fair land in the valleys beyond

the city, and finally at the driving out of the Greeks and all the Christians its rich and business quarters were burnt to the ground.

I saw it last in the autumn of 1922 from the deck of a battleship lying at anchor in the gulf. Then it was a raging, piled-up agony of fire and sweeping columns of smoke under the night. The harbour was red with the flames. The quays were crowded with refugees, and up against the glare as silhouettes were men amongst them, hacking, stabbing, killing, hurling into the water until the port was full of corpses and the sea of boatloads of terrified people pulling madly for the Allied battleships that lay off shore watching helplessly.

Now the ruins, desolate masses of twisted iron and debris, came down to the edge of the quay. A great church stood out solitary, blackened, and cracked and scarred, the cross on its cupola hanging drunkenly to one side. Near it the massive arches of a Turkish bath lay split open by the fire. Already the paths on which we walked between the ruins were on a level with the second storey of Smyrna before the fire.

Six years had passed, and except where on the quay an enterprising firm or two had rebuilt a flimsy office, the burnt-out quarter of Smyrna lay untouched.

Beyond the ruins was the Turkish quarter, which had escaped the fire. Except that some fifty per cent. of the women were unveiled or carried their veils thrown back over their heads there was little other change. In the boothlike shops the men did business sleepily and without diligence, except for an occasional Jew or Syrian, persistent and noisy, who prospered vigorously on the negligence of the Turks and their contempt of business. On the narrow pavements, under the trees, and in the squares the men loafed and drank coffee, smoked and lounged and mooned away the sunny days as they had done in the days before the Republic was declared and the Christians were driven out. The houses generally were more unkempt and battered than they had been ten

years before. An earthquake had split many and thrown down the minarets of the mosques, which no one had troubled to repair. The people were poorer generally.

I slipped off my shoes in the doorway of the Great Mosque and went in. The carpets that used to be there were gone except for one or two *kizil ghiordes*. The rest had been replaced by imitations of flaming colours and coarse material such as the villagers were making. The expelled Christians had taken with them the art of carpet-making and started again in Cyprus, Syria and Greece.

A few men were at prayer. They were mostly old men, shorn of their dignity and made a little ridiculous by their cloth caps.

On going out I squatted by the door to replace my shoes by the matting that had been polished shiny by the passing of thousands of feet of the Faithful. An old man spoke to me :

"It is good, *Effendi*," he said, "to see one interested in our mosque. Few worshippers come now. Even the priests grow lazy and the *muezzins* only call if they please. There is no more honour left in the priesthood."

A young man beside cut in : "Yes ! few come to the mosque. It is sad, but what can we do ? From the age of seven upwards I prayed regularly five times a day and kept Ramazan strictly, so that I hardly dared swallow my spittle between sunrise and sunset lest I broke the fast. Now I am thirty-five. I come rarely except for the great festivals, or as to-day because I have trouble at home and my child is ill."

"Ay," said the old man, squatting again, "the devil and Abdul Rahman draw all the young men away, and those in authority encourage them not to come to the mosque."

"But I have no desire to pray," replied the young man. "The desire is gone out of me. The faith is dead ! I am empty, not knowing what to believe or if there is any truth. *Sheitan*, the Devil, draws us all away, and what

can we do?" and he threw out his hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"Strive," said the old man as he leant sternly towards the other, "strive only for forty days. Pray at the five times of prayer with all due ceremony. Read the Koran, and assuredly the Devil will leave you. After that you will once more know the truth and be at peace. The Government too has been led astray and . . ."

Both stopped, looked cautiously round and then suspiciously at me, for the country was full of informers and spies, and ever and again some odd word said had been taken as the proof of a plot against Mustapha Kemal. With a brief salutation they hurried away in different directions. There was in their eyes the same look of fear that I had seen in the eyes of the *hodja* and the Seller of Trifles in the courtyard of the Ayub mosque on the Golden Horn.

We left Smyrna in the sunset. The burnt-out quarter, the old Christian and business quarter where had been made the wealth of the city, filled with its ruins the level ground at the head of the gulf. The once richest city in Turkey lay unkempt and desolate. To the south-west, up low hills, climbed the houses and the twisting streets of the Turkish quarter, and higher still the gardens and trees amongst which had stood the villas of the once rich merchants. A line of cypress trees stood out as a black background. Behind towered great mountains, and here and there black shadows showed the passes through which used to come down the camel caravans, bringing the wealth of Anatolia to the bustling port.

As the sun set, for a minute it turned all the windows of Smyrna to blood. A haze as of gold dust lay over the city. The sky flamed into fierce colours, then softened as suddenly to rose and dappled grey, and the sea flushed, turned to blue and so into fathomless purple. As we steamed away towards Mitylene night settled down over the city—the city that had once been the joy city of the

Levant, a pearl set in the ring of its fair hills. Now it had become a wilderness and a solitary place.

The steep hills of the shore of the gulf became black against the sky. Only here and there showed the villages like handfuls of sparks in the darkness, and under the tremendous sweep of the stars the water shone sable as we cleared for the open sea and Rhodes.

CHAPTER XLV

BEDIA MOWAHID

MORNING found us going south, threading our way through the barren Greek islands that were scattered along this coast as if the gods at play had flung handfuls of white stones into the sea. Chios, Icara and Samos we left behind us, and we passed Rhodes so close that we could see the new splendid casino and hotel built by the Italians to attract tourists. Beyond that were forts with the muzzles of great guns showing black above their earthworks, for as long as Italy boasted and aspired to empire and to dominion in the Mediterranean, Rhodes would be a threat and a *point d'appui* against Turkey.

On board the ship was a company of Turkish actors. They were travelling round Turkey and into countries where there were Turks and Moslems, and they were subsidised by the municipality of Constantinople for propaganda purposes. Where they were trained I do not know, but both men and women were Turks, and when I had seen them in Smyrna on a crazy stage do the plays of Molière and Shakespeare, together with the old Turkish comedies and the Arab dramas, I was astonished at their ability. Except in choosing places from where they could watch the view, I had hitherto never discovered any artistic sense in the Turks, but these actors were real artists. The leading lady, Bedia Mowahid, had genius.

Off the stage she was a mad-cat, wild little devil, black-eyed, and her black hair tousled round her head. She cared not at all for Good or Evil, Right or Wrong. Every second she changed: now she would play like a child, croon over or caress a dog or a man; next she

would be depressed or sad or passionate or vicious or spiteful. At times she was as wilful and mischievous as a monkey. And the Turkish men in the company, for all this boasting of the new liberty of their women and their breaking away from the old conventions and ideas, hated to see Bedia talk with a European and a Christian.

An American girl on board had made friends also with the company, and we sat all together chatting in the second-class saloon.

Bedia had found a new game. She was teasing a Roman Catholic priest who was trying to read his breviary in a corner. She hated all priests, spat over the back of her hand as they passed to avoid bad luck, but this was a youngish man and not ill to look on. She would watch him steadily until bit by bit his breviary was lowered and he met her eyes, when she would give him a look so licentious that he hastily hid again behind the breviary and only his priest's gown and india-rubber-sided boots and his skull-cap showed. Whereupon she would concentrate again and force him to meet her eyes. By then her pose would be alluring, and in her face the yearning of wicked love, and once more the priest would take cover behind his breviary; yet he was too fascinated to get up and go, and no doubt he would later do many penances for his thoughts.

The American and the Turkish girl had nothing in common. They could not understand each other. The Turkess, newly released from centuries of bondage, lived wildly, kicking high over the traces, passionate, red-blooded, crazy. And the American cold and set, half bored with life, careful and precise in her liberty as she drawled and patronised the rest.

"Whall, I just cannot stay at home. So father gave me an allowance, and I travel all round more or less alone. . . . No! I don't mind going alone. You see, a man will get into trouble just where I will, and I'm as good as any man to get out of trouble. . . ."

"And who then," asked Bedia, "will look after all the children you will have?" And tired of the priest, she dragged me away by the hand on to the deck, while the Turks glared at us, jealous that I should talk to one of their women.

At last we passed Castellorizo and rounded the headland beyond Finicia and came into Adalia bay, which is shut in by precipitous mountains capped with snow, and is open only to the south wind.

The picturesque town set among gardens stood at the head of the bay above broken cliffs of granite, where trees grew bravely in the crevices. At their feet was a diminutive harbour with an old sea wall in ruins, and above this an ancient fort dominated the position.

As I spoke Turkish, the Controller of Passports allowed me ashore without difficulty, but he was at a loss with some of the names of the other European passengers who wished to get off for an hour to see the town. After trying to decipher the Roman characters for some time, he gave it up, and sternly announced that new regulations had been issued by which no one was allowed ashore unless they meant to stay at least one night, which would have meant staying a week, as no other steamer came near the place for seven days. One night in an Adalia hotel would have cured any ordinary tourist of wandering outside the guide-book; a week would have driven him mad.

Not to be outdone in stern efficiency—and also because the Controller of Passports and the Chief of the Quay Police were watching him—and in Turkey all officials suspiciously watch each other—the Controller of Customs searched my luggage carefully. He was an oldish man in a grubby grey uniform, and with a few weeks' growth of grey beard to make him more unscrubbed. My argument that diplomatic visas entitled me to freedom from inspection left him unmoved. What did he know or care for diplomatic privileges! At last he found my

tin box of official papers, and squatting down comfortably on his heels he began to look them through.

By now a crowd had collected in the dingy, dirty-windowed, rotten-planked Custom office, and his importance had increased, outvying that of the Controller of Passports. Picking out a claim form, he read it carefully, following the print closely across the page from right to left with a black-nailed forefinger.

"Excuse me," I said politely, "that is only a dull document. Five below it you will find a love-letter from a charming lady. Read it out aloud. It will please us all. Only, *Effendi*," I continued, "ours—that is the Roman characters—are written from left to right, and not from right to left as in Arabic"—imitating the movement the way of his forefinger in the opposite direction. "Try it that way. It will read easier."

The crowd began to laugh. The old man, seeing that I was pulling his leg and, like all Turks at the minute, being very touchy and sensitive, rose with great dignity.

"Your luggage is passed," he said with ceremony, and left me to collect the litter he had made of my effects.

"Ah," said the Controller of Passports sententiously, and taking the opportunity both to get back to the limelight and to apply a salutary lesson, "you see now how wise, foreseeing and good are the orders of the Ghazi Mustapha Kemal. Had you studied as I have the new script, Ahmed Bey, you would have read these documents easily." And I stood silent and said nothing of how he had asked me to decipher some of the names on the passports.

Orders to prepare to adopt the new alphabet in the Roman script had just been issued. Hitherto the Turks had used the Arabic script; and except for numbers they read and wrote from right to left.

That the Arabic script and language ever grew out of a nation's mentality I have never been able to believe. I

imagine that one cantankerous professor with a jigsaw puzzle of a mind went into the desert for twenty years and there worked out its rules and complications and then planted the crazy results on to the poor Arabs. Still it appealed to the Arab mentality, but not to the Turkish, which is essentially simple. Moreover, while Arabic is harsh and vowelless, Turkish is soft and vowelled. Many words in Turkish were sounded in a way that gave them little connection with the letters used—thus the word *sonra*, meaning “after,” was written *skr*.

In every way the change was good, and moreover it destroyed the corner in learning held by the *hodjas* and the priests, who were the only opponents of the Government. Not ten per cent. of the population could read or write. Letters were written mainly by *ajuhaldjis* or professional letter-writers. To send the whole nation back to school with one stroke of the pen had a certain dramatic force which appealed to Mustapha Kemal. He ordered that from a certain date the Roman script alone should be used. It was as if in England only the King and the Cabinet with a dozen University professors were able to read and write, and the whole nation was suddenly made illiterate.

Then Mustapha Kemal urged them all to start on the same footing—villager, porter, shepherd, schoolmaster, priest, shopman and politician—and learn to read and write. He threatened loss of nationality and even expulsion to anyone who could not read by a certain date, and promised prizes and work to those who were quick at it. It was even suggested that no prisoner should be released from prison, even if he had finished his sentence, until he knew how to read and write.

The idea caught the fancy of the nation. Often I was asked for help in the streets by some puzzled shopman with perhaps a large “B” or “C” printed on to a sheet of paper; and I saw both young and old men sitting in the corners of the mosques, in the cafés, and

in the squares with slate and pencil or a piece of chalk on a slab of stone, scrawling great *A*'s and *B*'s, mouthing at the sounds and discussing them gravely. The idea had gone forth that a door to new things was opening for them, and they were learning with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XLVI

AHMED BEY OF ADALIA

A STEEP road zigzagged up the cliff from the harbour, and half-way up was a fine new factory for grinding corn organised and run by Germans. A little further on was another for cutting timber into planks, and again the technical staff were Germans. Except for these and an Italian communist who acted as a shipping agent and cursed Benito Mussolini beneath his breath, because he could not go back to Brindisi, there was not a European in the place, and practically none ever came.

Of all the places I have lived in or visited, Adalia gave me more the sense of being shut away and cut off from the world than any other. On three sides mountains, fierce twisted masses of rock torn up from the roots by some tremendous upheaval, shut it in. The coast roads were only mule passes; the road up the valley into the interior was little used except by a few carts, some camel caravans and horsemen, and an odd car or two. Once a week a coasting steamer looked in, and occasionally, if it had cargo, a boat from one of the Italian lines. For the rest Adalia lived its own life with complete detachment from the outside, and this was the typical Turkish attitude to life: each house cut off, blind and deaf to its neighbours; each family isolated and its women veiled.

On the crest of the cliff stood an ancient fortress, with Roman foundations. On these the Byzantines had built and the Genoese enlarged, but as it stood it was the work of Le Roi Pierre le I^{er} de Lusignan, styled sonor-

ously King of Cyprus and Jerusalem and Overlord of Armenia, who had conquered all this coast in the middle of the fourteenth century.

I stood in the straggling public garden that ran up to the fortress walls and looked over the harbour and bay where sat a few veiled Turkish women, and I was conscious of the history of the land. It was dead, forgotten history, hard even to find in musty libraries. Knights who had marched down against the Saracens with Crusades had established kingdoms and dukedoms along this shore. Famagusta and Adalia and Anamour, now only names, had been rich ports, and all this sea had been alive with sails of galleons and merchant vessels trading. For a hundred years this corner of the Mediterranean had been great and rich, and then at the coming of the Turks its life had withered. Now the sea was empty of ships—for days I saw no more than a fishing-smack or two—and the ports were dead.

The fortress of Adalia covered a large area running for a quarter of a mile along the cliff top, with massive walls of granite with turrets and bastions and keeps broken down in a few places. Outside the walls was the country bazaar of innumerable booths of shops tightly packed down the sides of the narrow, cobbled streets. Adalia was a town, but in Anatolia a town is only an enlarged village. It may be a military or civil centre. It may grow in area, but there will be no finer streets and the houses and shops will be no larger or richer than in the village; only there will be more booths and huts crowded together.

Adalia was a sleepy, kindly little town. I found there none of that fierce resentment against foreigners, and especially against the British, which was so marked further north. The Greek invaders, with their burning, killing and rape, had never got as far south as this; and the French had not imposed the imperious, rigid dictatorship of the Republic nor burnt the villages where the

people refused to submit, as they had round Adana. The Italians, when in occupation in 1919, had been mild-mannered; and, moreover, they had left behind them much ammunition and rifles, which had been useful against the Greeks.

It was a town where one could sit and talk and idle away the pleasant day. I sat often in the bazaar, especially in front of the café under a great plane tree in the smallest square that had ever grown into existence. On one side were the blacksmiths; on the other the rope-makers. At one end a mosque and at the other were the skin-merchants.

The café was run by a little man with a mouth full of irregular black teeth. The others sneered at him and called him *Yahoudi*, the Jew, but this did not disturb him nor prevent his making money. Arab Ahmed, the chief skin-merchant, was always making a butt of him, and the Jew gladly let him succeed in repartee. It brought him good money.

Arab Ahmed was a huge-paunched mountain of a man who squatted mostly on the floor of his raised shop, his belly resting comfortably on his fat thighs. He drank innumerable cups of black coffee, smoked handfuls of cigarettes and bawled a ready jest at any one who came into the square. Though a Turk, one of his ancestors had been an Arab of the desert, and he was swarthy-skinned.

We became good friends. He had defrauded me over a couple of mountain-bear skins, a dozen stone-martens and a white fox, and was happy; and I found his friendship cheap at the price. Often we sat talking with a crowd round us, and in Adalia the people talked more freely than elsewhere. There seemed to be fewer spies about and more freedom.

"So, Arab Ahmed *Effendi*," I said, "there is not a Christian left in all this Anatolia; but surely they have taken much wealth with them. They were your slaves to do your dirty work, the workers who made the riches."

"That is so, *Effendi*," he replied. "But we are learning the trades they left. At the minute we are poor, but at least we are free and all Turks and Moslems are happy together here, *Elhamdulillah*, praise be to God."

"Yes," the crowd agreed without dissent, "we are free and content. Better freedom and poverty than the old things."

From a balcony above the mosque a *muezzin* began the call to mid-day prayer. An old man or two washed at the fountain and went into the mosque. Arab Ahmed and the men round took no notice. They did not pray any more, and yet I sensed that if I had told them that they were not Moslems or if I had insulted Islam they would have blazed up into righteous anger.

I looked at the people round me, the villagers buying at the shops, old bearded men and lusty young men, strong and tough as well-tanned leather, mostly in rags. They wore skin shoes tied with string, white stockings of goat hair, big-seated trousers of sack-like material, short brocaded coats, huge leather belts round their middles, and the ridiculous hats and caps. Their veiled women came behind them leading their animals. They had little of the Mongol cast of face, with the flat faces and slit eyes and high cheek-bones which I had found so common round Angora and Kaesarea. They were whiter and more European.

They had not changed from the old days. They were a little more proud and sensitive, but they had a dignity and an independence of their own. I found them courteous, with much courage, and though often dull, yet with a charm of manner and that sporting instinct for which I could forgive them much. They were curiously democratic. No man as an individual was respected, but if a man held an office he was respected for his office. They would come before a Governor or General with salaams, and only sit down at his invitation. Then they would all talk as equals, and the lowest would politely correct and contradict the highest. But if the

Governor or General quoted his office and gave an opinion or order it would be respectfully listened to or obeyed. They were like children, lacking in imagination, often cruel, haphazard, roused easily to enthusiasm, loyal and fond of easy schoolboy jokes. New paper money had just been issued, and concealed in it and showing only if held up to the light was a picture of Mustapha Kemal. The villagers would collect in crowds to hold up a paper lira, and then chuckle with delight when they found the picture.

I wondered how the changes that Angora was forcing on them would affect them. All the old roots of their lives were being sapped away; religion was dying, slowly killed by their rulers. For centuries they had been governed by autocrats. Mustapha Kemal ruled them as absolutely as any of the sultans. The discipline and the obedience of the Turks had been their outstanding qualities, making them a magnificent machine, used and controlled by the rulers and often abused in use, for none have suffered more from the Turkish Government than the Turks. Now each part of the machine, each member of the new generation was being taught to think separately and to despise the old beliefs and conventions. Would this destroy the old qualities, and produce new ones—or would it leave the Turks with nothing to hold by in time of strain?

One day Ahmed invited me to his house, and closing his shop by letting down the wood shutter, we set out together down the Street of the Bootmakers, where there must have been more red-leather slippers and more big country boots with stiff soles than there were feet in all the district. Beyond that was the Street of the Butchers, where billions of flies fed and the dogs fought foully for the offal. Then we picked our way across the moat, under a heavy stone arching with a Greek capital on one side and a head of a lion of Venice over the door-

way, and so into the fortress. Inside this was a town, mediæval, quaint and as unsanitary as it must have been when King Pierre—sonorously styled King of Jerusalem and Cyprus and Overlord of Armenia—was ruling in Adalia. The streets were narrow and twisted and the houses jutted out until their upper stories almost met overhead. Refuse was piled in every corner. The lower stories of the houses were bare stone walls, and the upper windows were latticed and barred.

A few people moved in the alley-ways. Some cattle were coming home, and we met a country cart drawn by bullocks which were finding it difficult to get round the narrow corners, while its driver shouted and prodded the animals with a sharp stick. Once we had to take refuge in a doorway to let a line of camels swing by, led by a man on a donkey.

We passed a monastery turned into barracks. In an open space before it a cock and a turkey fought, while a crowd of ragged soldiers squatted round and betted, until a harridan with a broom rushed out of a house, her cloak half held across her face as a veil. She beat off the turkey and cursed the soldiers with an evil tongue; and the big, hulking village lads slunk off. It was a picture that Hogarth could have sketched.

Beyond that was a church, turned into a stable. A mule fed off the high altar. Between the arches were stalls and gendarmes' horses, and from the roof in a richly coloured medallion Christ looked down on the scene. And I wondered why the British would go to such extremes to protect the sanctity of Moslem shrines when the Moslems dealt so with churches.

As we came to the house it was growing dusk. An ancient man, infinitely polite to all he met, was lighting the flickering oil lamps, which were far apart and gave only a faint glimmer in the streets.

Arab Ahmed pulled on an ancient bell handle, which creaked, and a cracked bell sounded somewhere hollow in the building. The latch of the door was lifted with

a string by someone from above. Ahmed pushed open the great iron-studded gate, and we went in.

Inside was a floored hall, and beyond a tangled garden with a pool that shone white in the dying light. We climbed a rickety staircase into an even more rickety passage beyond, and so into a room where there were carpets on the floor, and no other furniture except a wooden dais under the window.

There we spent such an evening as I had often spent in old Turkey before the Republic was proclaimed. We performed the hundred and one ceremonies in lighting cigarettes, in drinking, in salaaming and contra-salaaming, as each new guest arrived and squatted on the floor; in rising and in sitting down. After a while dinner was served on a great brass tray—first *hors d'œuvres* in oil and potent heady *rakhi*; then a dozen dishes each to be eaten if the host was not to be insulted: oily rich soup, eggs and pungent country cheese cooked in sheeptail fat, a whole calf stuffed with chestnuts and rice, chicken called *cherkez tarwuk*, done with a delicious sauce, and then Turkish sweets more cloying and sickly to the palate than honey in spoonfuls. Eaten full to the gullet, belching to show our pleasure, we sat back to smoke and sip the black coffee that cleared the mouth of clinging grease. And all the time we saw no women, only heard them as they came to the door carrying the food or whispering outside, nor did we speak of women.

After that came the dancers—the musicians with drum and violin and complicated instruments—and they danced not the licentious dances of the Arabs with suggestive sway and roll of breasts and hips, but the *Zabek*, the Dance of the Mountaineers, wild and mad as the Caucasian. They started slowly, stepping this way and that, snapping fingers and doing complicated steps. Then as the music worked them up and the strong drink went to their heads, with a sword in each hand and daggers in their mouths, they leapt and twirled and shouted until the whole room rocked and the guests

joined in and the room was a haze of dust and wood and cigarette smoke and the grunts and shouts of excited men.

It was dawn before I left. I had been back in the old Turkey which I had known and loved, and which was still untouched by the revolution.

The Governor received me kindly. He also was more at ease and prepared to be friendly than in other places. He helped me all he could, but we could find neither the property for which I looked nor any Christians to help us in the search. There had never been any Armenians in Adalia, and all the Greeks had left for Cyprus, Thrace or Athens. The Christian quarters were in such ruin that even the names of the districts had been forgotten.

"I want to go to the *Kederlik*," I said to the Governor. Police, gendarmes, old men, café-keepers, barbers—all who store this sort of knowledge—were questioned without result. At last an ancient cabman remembered. We found it a heap of ruins in the further corner of the fortress over the sea front. Even the outlines of the streets were indistinguishable.

"And here," said the cabman, "was the quarter of the rich merchants before the war."

As I became friends with the Governor, I realised his difficulties were the same as those of the Governor of Caesarea. Like nearly all the governors I had met, he was energetic, capable, high-spirited, but dragged back by the inefficiency of his subordinates and the massed stupidity of the people. Moreover, he was ordered to dress well, to give dinners, to dress his wife in the toilets of a European lady, and his pay was a pittance which might not be increased as in the old days by a little financial assistance from supplicants, for he was closely watched by spies and agents.

We talked of Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq and Syria.

"Ah," he laughed, "we are free of them all, of the

restless, dissatisfied traitors, especially the Greeks! A Greek will always think in terms of Greece. You have taken on our troubles, and so left us free to work out our own salvation. I wish you luck of the Greeks and Armenians."

"Yes," I replied, as I had to Arab Ahmed, "but with the going of the Christians has gone most of your wealth and those who made it."

"True," he said, without great bitterness, for by now the Turks have become less sensitive to criticism of the massacres and deportation of Christians—and then he struck an attitude; "but even if we are poor, we are free both of the constant menace of traitors from within and from outside interference. We are free to fulfil our destiny."

CHAPTER XLVII

THE MOSQUE OF MAHMUD PASHA

INSIDE Adalia town I could move freely, but outside I was watched and spied on, forbidden to take photographs or to go far without permission. The authorities were distinctly nervous. In the district were stationed a large number of troops, and various points were strongly fortified. The Turks still suspected the Italians. And though Mussolini had stated that he had no intentions on Anatolia, yet his soft words of peace and friendship did not carry complete conviction as long as Italy was overflowing with potential colonists and no place for them to go, and the Italians held and fortified the islands of Rhodes and Castellorizo.

Everywhere I saw soldiers, conscripts, fine lusty fellows, with stupid yokel faces, dressed usually in the ragged remains of the American uniforms, which had been bought in 1920. They had frayed putties and gaiters and decrepit boots, but splendid new peaked hats to show how the Republic had improved things. In reality the hat repeated the ostrich habit of burying its head. The soldiers were as neglected, the food was as poor, the pay as late and insufficient, and the officers as bad "man-masters" as in the old days. And still the soldiers respected and obeyed the officers with traditional Turkish discipline.

On the outskirts of the town on the road to the north was an old mosque and a shrine to Mahmud Pasha. I went there often to loaf and dream. At first the police agents watched me closely—then, seeing I had no ulterior

motive, they left me in peace. It was indeed a place in which to dream and to laze a little; to sleep in the sun, to think of God, and to plan great things to be done, but always to be done in the future, and so to avoid realities and be happy. Had I lived there long, I must have become a devout Moslem.

I had gone there towards sunset one evening, after a day of weary trudging through the town to find the burnt and ruined properties of my claimants. The old mosque stood in a ruined graveyard, where a stream fled away between the graves and out under a wall into a garden beyond. The gravestones, ten feet high and topped with the turbans and the insignia of the offices which had been held by the great ones who lay buried below them, were thrown this way and that in confusion under the dusty firs. The lime trees were just showing their first soft transparent leaves, for the spring was at hand. Purple and white flags and irises were strewn among the graves and round the shrine, on the windows of which the villagers had tied strips of cloth as votive offerings.

I tried to get into the mosque, but the door was locked by the order of the Government. The priest eyed me carefully, suspecting that I was a spy sent to lay a trap for him, for the Angora Government treated all priests with the suspicion with which Queen Elizabeth would have treated a Jesuit, and the scorn and mockery with which the courtiers of Charles II would have sneered at a Puritan.

The mosque consisted of a central building of old granite covered with moss and creepers, and before the door was a raised marble dais, with a three-cupola roof, from one of which shot up the slender tower of the minaret. I looked through the dusty windows, heavily barred with iron. The floor inside was covered with carpets. One or two of them made my fingers itch, for there was a rare old Turkish Ghiordes and a Persian Ispahan beyond it.

Tired of looking at them, I sat down on a marble grave-top. A stork, newly arrived, was picking over his last year's nest in one corner of the mosque. Now and again he cracked his beak and stretched his legs carefully in turn.

At the hour of prayer an *imam* in fez and turban and flowing robes came by a public path, which ran from the town across the graveyard. He was followed by half a dozen old men with the peaks of their cloth caps pulled over their left ears. They washed in the stream, doing all the correct ablutions. In the old days, when the people were religious, the stream had run into a marble tank, which had been set with taps at which the faithful could wash; now the tank was broken down and no one had repaired it. Then, shoes in hand, they climbed up the steps on to the dais, and there before the closed door of the mosque, with the *imam* leading, they prayed in unison.

In an open space some children were playing with exceptional cleverness a game like a complicated edition of cricket with a stick, wicket and a ball. Every two minutes they disagreed and quarrelled, using the foulest language.

"*Wallah*, by God, I will play no more," shouted a boy of nine, wiping his dusty hands on a girl's hair. "You pimp, you bastard, you . . . you cheated and counted six for four!" Then he turned with the rest to chase off a herd of goats that came grazing across their pitch.

The old men prayed steadily, doing all the genuflexions as ordered, and their chanting mixed strangely with the lewd oaths of the playing children. Men coming from work in the town crossed the graveyard by a path on their way home, and hardly glanced at those who prayed. A camel caravan on its way to a village in the mountains halted. The drivers made the grumbling camels kneel; the old men joined those who prayed in the porch of the mosque before the locked door—locked by the orders of the Government—but the younger

men squatted placidly beside the camels in the roadway and lit cigarettes.

The old men seemed to be praying almost defiantly. A girl with a child's face came out of a house and watched me curiously with her olive eyes. She caught mine and hastily drew her veil across her face and slammed the door viciously at me, seeing that I was a foreign man.

The shadows were falling fast. The slopes of the mountains in deep shadow had turned to purple; the snow on the peaks still stood out clear and white as a great star came out above the sunset. An owl inside the mosque hooted in the hollow, resounding cupola, and his mate replied from a tree overhead. One by one the men who prayed turned their hands palms upwards, made a last obeisance, collected their shoes, and were gone, and the camel caravan swung away into the country beyond towards the mountains.

As I went home by the path between the mighty tombstones of the illustrious dead, and down the winding alley-ways of the town, I knew that Old Turkey was dead, its foundations gone. Above all, its religion had died, and without a struggle.

Islam had failed to hold the men, and yet it was essentially a man-made religion, for men. It had none of the human appeal of the Virgin Mary or of Mary Magdalene, and it would not hold the women as soon as they gained a little liberty. At one stroke it had disappeared. It had gone out of the national consciousness as if it had never existed, and so quickly had the change occurred that I was tempted to believe that the Turks had never been religious, but being by nature a military obedient people desiring to be led and ruled, Islam, with its autocratic Khalif, its fighting creed, its prayers and observances like drills, had appealed to them.

Islam was dead: the young men and women had no more faith in it; a few old men held defiantly by its dead body. I could not see what lay ahead. Would something

new be created to replace the old faith? Could a people live without religion and its stabilising power and its contentments? I doubted it. Could Christianity in any of its forms fill the gap? Would the old pagan gods, who still lurked in the mountains, come creeping back into the pagan hearts of the people? As yet there was no sign to show the future. There was no new belief, no reviving inspiration. And when I spoke of these things in the bazaar I saw from the eyes of my audience that they meant nothing to them.

Adalia gave me a sense of imprisonment. It was unutterably lonely with never a European to meet. The evenings I spent in a café under a great plane tree by the fortress moat close to the cliff, for in the hotel, with its primitive wick lamps, it was useless to try to read or write. Moreover, it was at night that the latrines seemed to smell the strongest and the bugs grew most active.

It was in the café that a queer thing happened. I was drinking coffee when I heard my name mentioned. I looked cautiously out of the corner of my eye and saw two men talking. For a minute I put them down as police spies. Then I saw that they were of a better class than that. They were poring over a newspaper, the *Waqf* or Times of Turkey, and, getting a look over their shoulders, I saw a picture of myself. They were reading a translation of a book named "Turkey in Travail," which I had written five years before, and this was the first instalment. It had been translated without reference to me and without my knowledge.

From then onwards each day I bought a copy of the *Waqf* as the chapters of my book came out in the translation and carried them with me. Many a time they served me well when travelling in the villages along the coast. I would arrive in a village. The police, gendarme or Government official would hold me up. I would present my passport with its diplomatic visas.

"That is all right, *Effendi*," the police would say politely. "But we must ask from headquarters if this is all in order"—for he would be afraid to take even the smallest responsibility.

"How long will that take?" I would ask.

"A week or two perhaps."

"Must I wait here until then?"

"Yes! *Effendi*; though I fear that there is no hotel."

Then I would produce permits and passes, letters of recommendation, letters from the last Governor of the province to the next. Each would be taken politely, read carefully without intelligence, and the same conversation would result—they would have to be checked and proved good by higher authority.

Finally I would produce the last copy of the *Waqf*.

"Have you read the Constantinople papers lately?" I would ask.

"No," would be the surprised reply, or perhaps "Yes."

"Well, this is one, and here am I writing about Turkey in it," I would say, pointing to my picture in the paper.

"Oh!" they would say after a pause and a good look. "Is that you? Is that Harvold Armestronge? And you have written a book about our Turkey? That it all right! *Hayde bekalim!* Come along! you may go where and as you please, but first you must come and drink a coffee with us."

For a time this was amusing, but as it was indefinitely repeated, it grew tedious.

At last my work was done and I took a last walk round the town, down the moat on to the cliffs beyond the fort. Already the winter was gone. Below me lay the bay, calm and green with depth, and stretching away to the feet of the twisted, tossed-up mountains on the opposite shore. Gardens came down to the cliffs, where children were stringing the first marigolds in chains, and the women sat on the cliff-edge talking softly

together and looked at me licentiously before they drew their veils—as long as no Turk was watching them, for they were always afraid of the jealousy of their own men. A stork wheeled out of the distance, and the jackass birds were passing on their way to Egypt. As evening came, a nightingale in an alder thicket tuned itself, preparing for its first song. An orange tree had flowered early and filled the air with its soft fragrance. On a square a platoon of troops were drilling, and the stale stench of their sweat-drenched clothes, unclean and coarse, mixed with the orange scent and fouled the evening air with rank bitter-sweet.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE SOUTH COAST

HIRING a horse, I left Adalia before dawn with a mounted groom and a mule for my boxes behind me. We clattered out over the cobbles of the sleeping town, while Orion still swung above us with his sword at his belt, and the stars had not yet begun to pale in the false dawn, and so we took the coast road eastwards for Alayia.

The air was cold. A caravan of camels swayed by us. A driver or two, muffled up to the eyes, walked. The rest slept across the swaying animals, belly down over the hump, their feet in one saddle-bag and their head and arms hanging down on the other side. They looked like dead men slung across the camels' backs, and they slept in this grotesque position as soundly as the dead, while the conceited, swaying camels paced steadily on into the darkness.

At one place villagers were repairing the road by the light of brushwood fires. By doing this they avoided paying certain taxes, and they worked at night so as not to interfere with their ordinary day's work.

As dawn came, red and hot, we reached the foothills. They were disordered masses of rocks, which had been pinched in some stupendous earth pressure, so that they had turned right over, and their roots, now uppermost, had been split into steep cliffs and ravines. They were almost barren, except for a little scrub, a few firs, some stunted olives, arbutes and carob-trees.

The road became a path, a mule track, which now climbed upwards into the precipitous mountains on our

left, where the horses picked their way with care. Then it ran along the edges of cliffs and through passes down again to the sea shore, where, in bay after bay, under the cliffs, the lazy, tideless sea sighed on the sand beaches that stretched away, as far as the eye could see, into purple headlands. It was a wild and magnificent country, primitive and unconquered.

Every mile or two there were streams; the bridges, usually several centuries old and built by dead Sultans in the days of the Ottoman Empire, were broken down. Luckily as yet the snows had not melted, so that the streams were shallow and babbling over the stones, and we could easily ford them.

Now and again, when a ravine broadened into a valley, there would be between the mountains and the sea some fields and a village of tumble-down huts, with a few store-houses. The whole would be very poverty-stricken, and often close to a marsh where the stunted cattle grazed with a stray camel or two. There was game in abundance, teal, francolin, duck, snipe, woodcock and plover, which had never been shot.

The people came out to stare at us, for they had not seen a European for years—the women peering with one eye as they held their coarse black veils across their faces, and the children crowding round until some old grey-beard drove them away and cursed them fluently for their lack of manners in pestering travellers. Many of the men were Mongol-looking, with flat faces, high cheekbones and slit eyes. In these villages the police were more officious and obstructive than anywhere else, and many a time the production of the *Waqf* newspaper and the translation of my latest chapter was the only way I persuaded them to let me go on.

It was a wild, primitive, untouched country. Great eagle owls, four feet high, watched us go by, with yellow eyes, or hunted with the falcons and the hawks over the marshes by the sea-shore. Many times jackals came out of scrub to look at us. More than once we roused

a covey of red-legged hill partridges, and once a big wolf crossed our path, at which the horses shied and for a while would not go on.

So we came to Alayia. In the Middle Ages it had been a great military and commercial centre, grouped round a fortress built by the Byzantines, improved by the Genoese, and strengthened by the Seljuk Sultans. Now it was only a village, and the fortress in ruins. Above the village was the skeleton of a fort, which had been the headquarters of the pirates when Diordore Tryphon, the renowned buccaneer, had plundered all comers on the high seas.

That night I stopped in Alayia in a ruined house. In the old days the headman would have put me up or given me a guest-room and fed me as a prince, as was his duty towards all travellers. Now he was too poor, and such hospitality was discouraged, and, moreover, he was afraid to befriend a foreigner, for even here there were many spies and agents of the Government.

Before morning the wind had swung to the south, and out of Egypt the *hamseen* began to blow. The walls of the house streamed with damp and the air became warm, slack and enervating. The temperature leapt up 20 degrees. The snows began to melt, and every valley was full of the sound of rising water heralding the spring. The streams had become in a night unfordable torrents, so that I gave up all idea of riding further, and made arrangements with one Arslan Captan to go as passenger in his sailing vessel, a stout-built brig which was making along the coast and then for Cyprus.

We travelled slowly along the shore, tacking continuously, with the damp south wind on our starboard side. We threaded our way between islands of barren rock and along a coast which was the same rugged, tossed-up confusion of mountains, which rose sheer from the water's edge in cliffs, and up precipitously 10,000 feet above to peaks covered with snows.

And I lay forward, sprawled out on the high poop,

stripped naked and wallowing in the sun, lazing in the sleepy, heavy air, and while the sails bellied and heaved and the cordage cracked and strained above me and the water sang below as the ship drove her way along, I dreamt of the dead history of this land : of the Phœnician traders and the Romans and the Crusaders and the Venetians and the Kings of Armenia and Cyprus, and then of the Moslems driving them back, and the Seljuk and the Osmanli Sultans ruling.

Between the feet of the mountains were bays with sandy beaches and coves, where I could see the ruins of dead towns, and every headland and point of vantage was topped with an old castle.

At Anamour we landed with difficulty, for it was only an open roadstead with a rickety jetty, and the wind was beginning to rouse the sea. Above the red-roofed village was a fort built by Alexander the Great and held by the Crusaders for two centuries, but now ruins where the wild pig rooted and the jackals searched for offal.

At Kilindria we got some shelter, for once it had been a port, which the Phœnicians had built and the Romans rebuilt. The Venetians had captured it, and then it had come into the hands of Knights of Rhodes. But I had only a few hours' work here, and we hurried on to Selefkia, and there we were forced to stay, for Cyprus lay to the due south, and we could not sail straight into the teeth of the wind.

Selefkia, like all this coast, held the relics of dead history. It had been founded three centuries before Christ by Seleucius-Nikator, the first of the Seleucides Dynasty. Out of the remains of a Byzantine castle the Kings of Armenia had built a fortress above it and the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem had acquired it in the twelfth century A.D. Through the village ran the Calycadmus river, in which the Emperor Barbarossa was drowned. Now the town had become an ordinary squalid, poverty-stricken Anatolian village. To its

north were the Crusader ruins of Ayach. On the east road to Mersina was the Château de Porgos, a fortified island, called by the Turks *Kiz-Kale*, or the House of the Maiden. When Cicero was Roman Governor of this district, it was a place of importance, and under the Kings of Armenia it had stood many sieges against the advancing hordes of Moslems. Now it was used by a smuggler or two; on the walls fishermen were drying their nets, and the sailors told us that the ruins were infested by snakes.

Beyond Porgos for many miles along the shore was a dead city. Temples and stone houses stood whole and unbroken on their rock foundations. It was uninhabited except where a few gipsies had rigged up their black-hair tents, and a flock of goats grazed among the arbute trees and the weeds.

In Selefkia the police were more suspicious than ever. I think they suspected Arslan Captan of smuggling, for they searched his ship and cross-questioned me closely.

The only inn was a square building, round an open courtyard, with stables below and the sleeping rooms above. At one end was a bare room with a stage where a couple of painted, tired-eyed dancing-girls sat drinking and playing *tric-trac* with a herd of men.

The innkeeper was a giant with immense baggy trousers, which he kept hitching up round his bulging belly, an evil face with bloodshot eyes, and hands as big and puffed as boxing gloves. He spat luxuriously into the courtyard below out of a mouth of filthy teeth each time before he spoke.

It was evening already when we arrived, so that as soon as I had eaten some coarse food I lay down to sleep without undressing on a dirty mattress on a broken bed. The lamps were dim flickers, impossible to read by, and the crowd in the casino room did not please me. They were a rough crowd, getting quarrelsome as they gambled.

I was roused two hours before dawn by a one-eyed

waiter who smelt of garlic, and the room was saturated with the bitter reek of onions and the stench of cattle, which came up from the stable below through the cracks in the broken floor.

I paid an extortionate bill. In the Casino room the men were still gambling at *tric-trac*, though the dancing-girls were gone. The crack of the pieces as they jerked them across the table, the hoarse grunts of the players, the rattle of dice and the oaths came thick and lurid in the leaden hour before dawn. Once a quarrel began, and the innkeeper hurried away to settle it, and a dirty fellow lurched out past me, cursing to himself. Below in the courtyard the one-eyed waiter had my bag, and far overhead I could see the clear stars of a moonless night. An ass began to bray, and a dozen followed him, and some geese began to gabble. At the edge of the town there was a whistle, and a patrol stopped us to see our passes, and then let us go; and we followed a river that runs by the town down to the quay.

The wind had dropped. The sea was white in the dead calm. Over the horizon was a dying moon that crept up through the low sea mist and climbed into the sky to die in the daylight.

As the first grey of dawn began to show the crew began warping the ship out with a row-boat. Then one began a sea-chantie, and the brig began to move through the oily calm water, which was steel-still. From the mountains the morning breeze slid down to ruffle and crinkle the water. It became a steady breeze, so that the sails bellied out and the ship slid forward, and under her nose the water laughed and gurgled.

I sat in the stern watching the land disappear, and I was torn by many feelings. I had a sense of escaping, a sense of relief from the ever-watching eyes of the spies and the police, from the uncertainty and the brutality and the squalor of primitive life, and yet that land kept calling me back, for I had learnt to love it and its people.

Already we were far out at sea, and the great mountains of the plateau of Anatolia were fading into grey masses behind the light sea mist.

The formless overwhelming mass of the Ottoman Empire was gone. All round were countries newly born, struggling into life—Cyprus ahead, Turkey to the north, Syria to the east, and beyond that Iraq and Palestine and Egypt. I wondered how each would develop and to what end.

A handful of spray flung by the wind in my face roused me from dreaming. Softly I drew to and turned the key in the Gate of Departure: for a minute I held to its iron bars, peering through. That which lay beyond changed rapidly: a cool Syrian mosque with lazy fountain and pigeons love-making; a slum street fœtid and clamorous with native life; a desert red and fiery with flying dust.

The desert turned to a garden—the Garden of the Past, filled with sunshine and shadows: sunshine of golden memories; shadows which softened that which had been evil. In the half light under its great trees moved vaguely those I had known: a dead sultan and a pasha in his thread-bare uniform; priests in long robes; the apple-faced *hodja* and Silenus, fat and laughing. A hill-partridge called shrilly as one had called for liberty and the spring out of the darkening Damascus alley. Somewhere in the shadow a girl, a dancing-girl of Aleppo, was crying to herself.

Resolutely I flung the Gate-key far into the Garden, for I knew that no more should I come this way. Here I must leave behind my heart and the golden years of my youth. Then I turned down the Street of the Future, which led by Cyprus to Europe and England, and into the blinding clamour of great cities.

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