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 Turks, in 1836: Volume 1  
 Julia Pardoe  
 Excerpt  
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THE  
 CITY OF THE SULTAN.

CHAPTER I.

The Golden Horn—Stamboul in Snow—The Seraï Bournou—Scutari  
 —Galata—First View of Constantinople—St. Sophia and Solimaniè  
 —Pera—Domestication of Aquatic Birds—Sounds at Sea—Caïques  
 —Oriental Grouping—Armenian Costume—Reforms of Sultan Mah-  
 moud—Dervishes—Eastern Jews—Evening—Illuminated Minarets  
 —Romance *versus* Reason—Pain at Parting—Custom House of  
 Galata—The East *versus* the West—Reminiscences of Marseillois  
 Functionaries—The British Consul at Marseilles—The Light-house  
 at Syra—The Frank Quarter—Diplomatic Atmosphere—Straw Huts  
 —Care of the 'Turks for Animals—A Scene from Shakspeare.

It was on the 30th of December, 1835, that we anchored in the Golden Horn ; my long-indulged hopes were at length realized, and the Queen of Cities was before me, throned on her peopled hills, with the silver Bosphorus, garlanded with palaces, flowing at her feet!

It was with difficulty that I could drag myself upon deck after the night of intense suffering which I had passed in the sea of Marmora, and, when I did succeed in doing so, the vessel

was already under the walls of the Seraglio garden, and advancing rapidly towards her anchorage. The atmosphere was laden with snow, and I beheld Stamboul for the first time clad in the ermine mantle of the sternest of seasons. Yet, even thus, the most powerful feeling that unravelled itself from the chaos of sensations which thronged upon me was one of unalloyed delight. How could it be otherwise? I seemed to look on fairy-land — to behold the embodiment of my wildest visions — to be the denizen of a new world.

Queenly Stamboul! the myriad sounds of her streets came to us mellowed by the distance; and, as we swept along, the whole glory of her princely port burst upon our view! The gilded palace of Mahmoud, with its glittering gate and overtopping cypresses, among which may be distinguished the buildings of the Serai, were soon passed; behind us, in the distance, was Scutari, looking down in beauty on the channel, whose waves reflected the graceful outline of its tapering minarets, and shrouded themselves for an instant in the dark shadows of its funereal grove. Galata was beside us, with its mouldering walls and warlike memories; and the vessel trembled as the chain fell heavily into the water, and we anchored in the midst of the crowd of shipping that already thronged the harbour. On the opposite shore clustered the painted dwell-

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## VIEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

3

lings of Constantinople, the party-coloured garment of the “seven hills” — the tall cypresses that overshadowed her houses, and the stately plane trees, which more than rivalled them in beauty, bent their haughty heads beneath the weight of accumulated snows. Here and there, a cluster of graceful minarets cut sharply against the sky; while the ample dome of the mosque to which they belonged, and the roofs of the dwellings that nestled at their base, lay steeped in the same chill livery. Eagerly did I seek to distinguish those of St. Sophia, and the smaller but far more elegant Solimaniè, the shrine of the Prophet’s Beard, with its four minarets, and its cloistered courts; and it was not without reluctance that I turned away, to mark where the thronging houses of Pera clomb with magnificent profusion the amphitheatre of hills which dominate the treasure-laden port.

As my gaze wandered along the shore, and, passing by the extensive grove of cypresses that wave above the burying-ground, once more followed the course of the Bosphorus, I watched the waves as they washed the very foundation of the dwellings that skirt it, until I saw them chafing and struggling at the base of the barrack of Topp-hannè, and at intervals flinging themselves high into the air above its very roof.

To an European eye, the scene, independently of its surpassing beauty and utter novelty, pos-

B 2

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essed two features peculiarly striking ; the extreme vicinity of the houses to the sea, which in many instances they positively overhang ; and the vast number of aquatic fowl that throng the harbour. Seagulls were flying past us in clouds, and sporting like domestic birds about the vessel, while many of the adjoining roofs were clustered with them ; the wild-duck and the water-hen were diving under our very stern in search of food ; and shoals of porpoises were every moment rolling by, turning up their white bellies to the light, and revelling in safety amid the sounds and sights of a mighty city, as though unconscious of the vicinity of danger. How long, I involuntarily asked myself, would this extraordinary confidence in man be repaid by impunity in an English port ? and the answer was by no means pleasing to my national pride.

As I looked round upon the shipping, the language of many lands came on the wind. Here the deep “Brig a-hoy !” of the British seaman boomed along the ripple ; there, the shrill cry of the Greek mariner rang through the air : at intervals, the full rich strain of the dark-eyed Italian relieved the wild monotonous chant of the Turk ; while the cry of the sea-boy from the rigging was answered by the stern brief tones of the weather-beaten sailor on the deck.

Every instant a graceful caique, with its long sharp prow and gilded ornaments, shot past the

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ship: now freighted with a bearded and turbaned Turk, squatted upon his carpet at the bottom of the boat, pipe in hand, and muffled closely in his furred pelisse, the very personification of luxurious idleness; and attended by his red-capped and blue-coated domestic, who was sometimes a thick-lipped negro, but more frequently a keen-eyed and mustachioed musselmaun—now tenanted by a group of women, huddled closely together, and wearing the *yashmac*, or veil of white muslin, which covers all the face except the eyes and nose, and gives to the wearer the appearance of an animated corpse; some of them, as they passed, languidly breathing out their harmonious Turkish, which in a female mouth is almost music.

Then came a third, gliding along like a nautilus, with its small white sail; and bearing a bevy of Greeks, whose large flashing eyes gleamed out beneath the unbecoming *fèz*, or cap of red cloth, with its purple silk tassel, and ornament of cut paper, bound round the head among the lower classes, by a thick black shawl, tightly twisted. This was followed by a fourth, impelled by two lusty rowers, wherein the round hats and angular costume of a party of Franks forced your thoughts back upon the country that you had left, only to be recalled the next instant by a freight of Armenian merchants returning from the Charshees of Con-

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stantinople to their dwellings at Galata and Pera. As I looked on the fine countenances, the noble figures, and the animated expression of the party, how did I deprecate their shaven heads, and the use of the frightful *calpac*, which I cannot more appropriately describe than by comparing it to the iron pots used in English kitchens, inverted! The graceful pelisse, however, almost makes amends for the monstrous head-gear, as its costly garniture of sable or marten-skin falls back, and reveals the robe of rich silk, and the cachemire shawl folded about the waist. Altogether, I was more struck with the Armenian than the Turkish costume; and there is a refinement and *tenue* about the wearers singularly attractive. Their well-trimmed mustachioes, their stained and carefully-shaped eyebrows, their exceeding cleanliness, in short, their whole appearance, interests the eye at once; nor must I pass over without remark their jewelled rings, and their pipes of almost countless cost, grasped by fingers so white and slender that they would grace a woman.

While I am on the subject of costume, I cannot forbear to record my regret as I beheld in every direction the hideous and unmeaning *fèz*, which has almost superseded the gorgeous turban of muslin and cachemire: indeed, I was nearly tempted in my woman wrath to consider all the admirable reforms, wrought by Sultan Mah-

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## DERVISH, OR DOMESTIC PRIEST.

7

mound in his capital, overbalanced by the frightful changes that he has made in the national costume, by introducing a mere caricature of that worst of all originals — the stiff, starch, angular European dress. The costly turban, that bound the brow like a diadem, and relieved by the richness of its tints the dark hue of the other garments, has now almost entirely disappeared from the streets; and a group of Turks look in the distance like a bed of poppies; the flowing robe of silk or of woollen has been flung aside for the ill-made and awkward surtout of blue cloth; and the waist, which was once girdled with a shawl of cachemire, is now compressed by two brass buttons!

The Dervish, or domestic priest, for such he may truly be called, whose holy profession, instead of rendering him a distinct individual, suffers him to mingle like his fellow-men in all the avocations, and to participate in all the socialities of life; which permits him to read his offices behind the counter of his shop, and to bring up his family to the cares and customs of every-day life; and who is bound only by his own voluntary act to a steady continuance in the self-imposed duties that he is at liberty to cast aside when they become irksome to him; the holy Dervish frequently passed us in his turn, seated at the bottom of the caïque, with an open volume on his knees, and distinguished from the lay-Turk by

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## 8

## ILLUMINATED MINARETS.

his *geulaf*, or high hat of grey felt. Then came a group of Jews, chattering and gesticulating ; with their ample cloaks, and small dingy-coloured caps, surrounded by a projecting band of brown and white cotton, whose singular pattern has misled a modern traveller so far as to induce him to state that it is “ a white handkerchief, inscribed with some Hebrew sentences from their law.”

Thus far, I could compare the port of Constantinople to nothing less delightful than poetry put into action. The novel character of the scenery — the ever-shifting, picturesque, and graceful groups—the constant flitting past of the fairy-like caiques—the strange tongues — the dark, wild eyes—all conspired to rivet me to the deck, despite the bitterness of the weather.

Evening came—and the spell deepened. We had arrived during the Turkish Ramazan, or Lent, and, as the twilight gathered about us, the minarets of all the mosques were brilliantly illuminated. Nothing could exceed the magical effect of the scene ; the darkness of the hour concealed the outline of the graceful shafts of these ethereal columns, while the circles of light which girdled them almost at their extreme height formed a triple crown of living diamonds. Below these depended (filling the intermediate space) shifting figures of fire, succeeding each other with wonderful rapidity and precision : now it was a house, now a group of cypresses, then a vessel,



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## ROMANCE VERSUS REASON.

9

or an anchor, or a spray of flowers ; and these changes were effected, as I afterwards discovered, in the most simple and inartificial manner. Cords are slung from minaret to minaret, from whence depend others, to which the lamps are attached ; and the raising or lowering of these cords, according to a previous design, produces the apparently magic transitions which render the illuminations of Stamboul unlike those of any European capital.

But I can scarcely forgive myself for thus accounting in so matter-of-fact a manner for the beautiful illusions that wrought so powerfully on my own fancy. I detest the spirit which reduces every thing to plain reason, and pleases itself by tracing effects to causes, where the only result of the research must be the utter annihilation of all romance, and the extinction of all wonder. The flowers that blossom by the wayside of life are less beautiful when we have torn them leaf by leaf asunder, to analyze their properties, and to determine their classes, than when we first inhale their perfume, and delight in their lovely tints, heedless of all save the enjoyment which they impart. The man of science may decry, and the philosopher may condemn, such a mode of reasoning ; but really, in these days of utilitarianism, when all things are reduced to rule, and laid bare by wisdom, it is desirable to reserve a niche or

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## 10

## PAIN AT PARTING

two unprofaned by “the schoolmaster,” where fancy may plume herself unhidden, despite the never-ending analysis of a theorising world!

My continued indisposition compelled my father and myself to remain another day on board; but I scarcely felt the necessity irksome. All was so novel and so full of interest around me, and my protracted voyage had so thoroughly inured me to privation and inconvenience, that I was enabled to enjoy the scene without one regret for land. The same shifting panorama, the same endless varieties of sight and sound, occupied the day; and the same magic illusions lent a brilliancy and a poetry to the night.

Smile, ye whose exclusiveness has girdled you with a fictitious and imaginary circle, beyond which ye have neither sympathies nor sensibilities—smile if ye will, as I declare that when the moment came in which I was to quit the good brig, that had borne us so bravely through storm and peril—the last tangible link between ourselves and the far land that we had loved and left—I almost regretted that I trod her snow-heaped and luggage-cumbered deck for the last time; and that, as the crew clustered round us, to secure a parting look and a parting word, a tear sprang to my eye. How impossible does it appear to me to forget, at such a time as this, those who have shared with you the perils and the protection of a long and arduous voyage!