

We found an excellent lunch awaiting all who wanted it at a station with an unpronounceable name about 12 noon, and felt refreshed and more able to contend with the trials of heat and the slowness of the journey after partaking thereof.

Much of the scenery was very fine and always interesting; the oxen, treading out the corn, teaching us the primitive life of the East, as it was thousands of years ago. Crossing a fine wide plain with green patches here and there marking the little villages in it, we ran into a well-watered area—a sudden scream of delight from the other side of the carriage, and a little half-laughing apology for it, making us all smile, at the wonderful sight of a waterfall and torrent. For the rest of the journey we had this rushing, gladsome stream tearing along with us, trembling over little breakwaters, rushing through woods, then along the rail side—such a volume of water, it was a perfect joy. To those at home, this may sound strange. The cloud shadows are so heavy to bear there; but picture a long, hot summer in the near East without rain for three, four, and often five months. Then, perhaps, only a shower, and drought again for another long spell, and then you can imagine what the sight of water meant to us.

Coming to Baalbek—how often have we read accounts of this place, its temples, wonderful acropolis, the magnitude and magnificence of the colossal columns—dare I say I was a little bit disappointed with it? The ruinous condition of what once had been so beautiful oppresses me with a great sense of loss. I think of Phylæ, Thebes, Karnak, and wish I had not seen them first.

We go to the hotel there and make up our minds to rise early and visit it all again; and so, driven out by a pest of sandflies that made sleep impossible (the mosquito curtains being somewhat antique), we venture out at 2 a.m., and by the glorious light of an August moon see beauties we have surely passed over, such a big, grand ruin of what was once almost beyond compare greeting us. The moonlight has done for it what the blazing sun denied. And so we leave it all to proceed on our way to Damascus.

We passed a most wonderful sight about ten miles before reaching our destination. Straying over miles of a flat tract of land were huge droves of camels, brought in for sale from the interior of Arabia. We were told there were quite 10,000, and their wild-looking owners and rude tents all made a sight seldom seen.

Arriving in Damascus, we were met by various porters extolling in loud tones the virtues of their respective hotels. We found most comfortable quarters at the Hotel D'Orient for 6 fcs. a day each. The proprietor was an Arab, and a more attentive, kindly little man it would be difficult to find.

From the large balcony of our hotel we saw a stream of native life from early morn till dusk, and the River Damar. All kinds of curious native costumes caught our eye, and the usual Eastern scene of camels, donkeys, goats, and sheep.

We saw the domes and minarets of Sultan Selim's mosque and its fine gateway facing the river; on

the other side, the little dome of a kiosk among the Turkish houses was quaint.

That evening we drove through the swell Turkish quarter, seeing the beautiful houses, all with their curiously-shaped little kiosks on the roof (a place of vantage to watch the sun set), and getting peeps through open but guarded doorways of handsome courtyards with lovely flowers and fine fountains, for water was abundant everywhere. Got a magnificent view of the city from the hills to the west, saw the Governor's house lately built there, and drove back by the new road through a lane of walls enclosing fine gardens; and at the luncheon and dinner table we had examples of the fruit that Damascus is so famous for. Delicious little red-cheeked peaches, apples, pears, plums, red, black, and white grapes, green and black figs, all in abundance daily. How we enjoyed them, and, to tempt us all still more, we would find sometimes a little dish of large green olives near our plates; but, alas! we loved them not, much to our host's distress.

After dinner we could sit on the balcony and watch the people in the large café opposite. Under the shade of pretty little acacia trees long, comfortably-cushioned divans were placed, and when the huge lanterns were lighted at night the effect of the quaint Eastern dress, long silken galbeah and turban more or less elaborately embroidered, the pose of the figures smoking their margilehs, the attendants quick and noiselessly responding to the quiet call of their customers, all made a picture to be found nowhere else.

The smart Turkish officers, the wealthy merchants, and the numberless others of high and low degree, and last, but by no means least, the ever-to-be-found beggar.

No one ever seemed to be in a hurry; they sat on, one, two, three hours; time seemed no object, and we found nearly the same in the bazaars. The wealthy merchant sat cross-legged on a divan near the entrance to his shop, and often when one entered never moved, but merely bowed and waved you to an attendant, and one wandered around and hunted out curios, and just bought as one felt inclined. One was never pressed and haunted by followers, as in Cairo. All seemed dreamy, self-complaisant, and well-fed. They amused us. I longed to speak to them. Needless to say, we spent hours there every day, and never tired. The saddlery was worth a long visit, the trappings were so handsome—saddles covered with tiger or leopard skins, bridles embroidered with beads of all colours and sizes, everything picturesque; all kinds of "kourbash" (a whip used by the Turks), from a tiny silver-mounted trifle to a thick hippo hide.

Then the useful little rush fans so cleverly made; the embroidered cloths and brightly-coloured curtains were all charming in their way, but then were we not in the mood to enjoy and appreciate everything, even a hard bargain, for we revelled in the bazaars, and brought away with us a Dervish's begging bowl, a Bedouin coffee-pot (an old chased copper one of a most artistic shape), a lovely inlaid silver and enamel mirror (Persian, very old), and several other quaint and beautiful trifles. F.H.D.

(To be concluded.)

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