

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

August 22.

MEMORIES OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

From Old Rome to New Rome is only a week or so by sea, but the interval means stepping out of one world into another. On landing at the quay at Constantinople the traveller finds himself among a motley multitude composed of all the peoples of the Orient—Armenians, Turks, Persians, Arabs, Levantines—Asiatics of all kinds, who jostle with French, Italian, Bulgars, Greeks, with all that intensity in pursuit of gain which characterises the Eastern temperament. Truly, when Constantine the Great besieged and took Byzantium in 323 and, renaming it 'New Rome,' transferred from the Tiber to the Bosphorus the seat of Imperial government, he succeeded in leaving to this day a marvellous capital which continues to be the object of the envy of nations. Standing on the Golden Horn some seven years ago and looking from Europe to Asia, this writer passed in mental review the great emperors and sultans who in turn bent the neck of the coveted city to their wills.

THE WHIRLING DERVISHES.

But it is not to go into dry facts I have come to Constantinople. It is rather to see the strange, the interesting. For as the good French priest, who met me at the quay and made my stay so pleasant, reminded me 'a vacation means a combination of rest and scene.' And so my dragoman's suggestion as to a visit to the whirling dervishes, the most noted of the mystical sects of Islam, met with favor. As one approaches the building in which the whirling dervishes are about to perform their dance on a Friday after mid-day prayer, he prepares himself to suppress the laughter which he fears the coming scene will bring on. He has heard ludicrous descriptions of this sect's dance and beliefs. But no sooner have the grave-looking bearded men and youths taken their places in the human circle and commenced the slow-whirling motion that grows gradually quicker, than one is filled with a sense of deep pity. Round and round on their toes to the sound of the drum and the flute twirl that circle of men as if turning to the God that is all round them. One hand is held with the palm turned upwards to catch blessings falling from heaven, the other is extended with the palm downwards to distribute those favors to men.

They are now whirling for an hour and a-half, their long colored garments lightly swishing. Feelings of profound pity fill one's soul at the degradation of those men of fine intellectual appearance, pious and recollected. In another half hour, my dragoman tells me, they will one by one fall to the ground, exhausted and frothing at the mouth. But I will not wait for such a scene, so I leave the place. 'Would I not now go to see the howling dervishes?' asks my dragoman. No, indeed, I shall not, as I have had enough of pity and disgust for one day.

A PROCESSION.

On Friday afternoon, when the Sultan with his Court drove in state to pray in the mosque of Shah Zadeh in celebration of the Mahometan Sabbath, I went to see the cortege. The revolution and the counter-revolution of 1909 had recently ended; the Young Turkish party had just finished hanging the reactionaries on the old wooden bridge over the Golden Horn between Pera and Stamboul, so an extra display of military power had to be made by the victorious party. Abdul Hamid was now a prisoner in a beautiful villa at Salonica, and Mahomet V. held the throne. From the palace to the mosque stood a double line of soldiers on each side of the road to guard and to honor their new sovereign. A request to the commander and the production of my papers obtained for me a seat within an enclosure whence an excellent view of the Sultan could be obtained. A long line of princes, government ministers, the ladies of the Royal harem drove by, in gorgeous carriages. In the last, an open

carriage which was drawn by two magnificent milk-white Arab stallions, sat alone the 'Commander of the Faithful'—a stoutly built man of sixty with that indolent appearance begot of the many years his brother Abdul Hamid had left him a prisoner in his (Mahomet's) own palace on the Bosphorus. As the carriage approached I took a snapshot of the occupant (for which I had obtained permission), and my salute was returned by the Sultan in military fashion.

THE TURK AND CATHOLICITY.

It was truly a proud display as well as a public avowal of faith in God. Whatever may be said of 'the unspeakable Turk,' it cannot be said he lacks piety or a willingness to display his religious sentiments even in the most public places. The Moslem's respect for the Blessed Virgin is profound, but it is of course for one who was mother of a Great Prophet and nothing more. And those of them who become acquainted with the priest look up to him as a strong man of honor and virtue *par excellence*. So much is this the case that I found in Bethlehem the Moslems usually submit their differences to the arbitration of the parish priest of the town. His finding is rarely departed from by followers of the Prophet.

Conversions, however, are like angels' visits—few and far between. In Jerusalem, I was informed, an occasional Moslem receives on his death bed the Sacrament of Baptism which he feared to receive whilst in health. The vengeance of the devotees of the Koran is too great for his courage. But, nevertheless, in Constantinople a better feeling exists between the Catholics and the Moslems than that between the Catholics and the Schismatic Greeks. 'It is the Greek, not the Turk who gives the trouble here,' explained one of the Catholic clergy in Constantinople to the writer. The priest meant the follower of the Schismatic 'Orthodox' Church, which has always tried to grind to dust the Catholic Church by fair or foul means. The Turk despises petty persecution. He is rather too high-minded for that. When occasion arises he does not hesitate in showing himself to be now as of old 'the turbaned and malignant Turk.' But he is too warlike to descend to petty cunning, or to satisfy a desire of overreaching his fellows in trade.

SYMPATHY.

If there is one person who deserves sympathy it is surely he who suffers from chronic colds. A sudden change in the weather or going out into the night air from a heated room, is quite enough to bring on the trouble. Usually the tendency to catch cold is due to a generally run-down condition, and the treatment should take the form of a tonic like BAXTER'S LUNG PRESERVER. It is pleasant to take, gives sure results, and is quite harmless; for children and adults you cannot find a better cough or cold remedy. 1/10 a bottle from all chemists and stores, or by post direct. —J. BAXTER & Co., CHRISTCHURCH.—

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