TALES FROM TURKEY

COLLECTED AND DONE INTO ENGLISH
BY ALLAN RAMSAY AND FRANCIS MCCULLAGH

ILLUSTRATED BY THE RUSSIAN ARTIST
VERNIAIMIN PAVLOVICH BIÉLKIN

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PREFACE

All the tales in the present volume were collected by Mr. Allan Ramsay of Constantinople during a long residence in Turkey, where he was born, and during frequent journeys throughout Asia Minor and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. As one of the Directors of the great Tobacco Régie of Turkey, Mr. Ramsay has had to travel much, and has had to mix much on his travels with every class of the Ottoman population, from Pashas to porters.

I might here perhaps add that Mr. Ramsay is, as his name indicates, a Scot of the Scots. His father hailed from Aberdeen, and was employed by the Sultan Abdul-Medjid in the naval arsenal which that progressive monarch established on the Golden Horn. His mother's people were McGregors from the Hielands, and it is perhaps from them that Mr. Ramsay inherited his taste for folk-lore.

The tales were collected orally from the people themselves, whose language Mr. Ramsay understands; and, so far as I am aware, they now form, in the present volume, the largest printed collection of Turkish tales which exists in any language, even in Turkish. Exception must be made, however, of the fairy tales and folk-lore tales which have been translated from the Turkish by Dr. Ignác Kúnos, the Hungarian. To these, Professor Edward G. Browne has kindly called my attention, but I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing them. I understand, however, that, with a mistaken patriotism, Dr. Kúnos translated them all into
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Hungarian. Many of my readers will agree with Sir Charles Elliot (Odysseus), the author of "Turkey in Europe," that, so far as most of us are concerned, he might just as well have left them in the original Turkish. I have heard of some small pamphlets in the vernacular containing various tales about Khoja Nasr-ud-Din but these also I have never seen, and none of the tales here given are translations from printed books. The famous Mr. George Borrow published at Norwich, it is true, a small collection of tales about Khoja Nasr-ud-Din. That collection is very small, however, and is now out of print. Moreover, it is very incomplete and inaccurate, Borrow having apparently heard the tales told in Armenian and not in Turkish. As an instance of his inaccuracy I need only mention the fact that the word Khoja is spelt throughout as "Coja" whilst the name Nasr-ud-Din is never once given.

About half the tales in the present volume appeared originally in New York under the title of "Told in the Coffee-House. Turkish Tales, collected and done into English by Cyrus Adler, and Allan Ramsay. The Macmillan Company, 1898." My thanks are due to the Macmillan Company for allowing me to publish them in an altered form, also to that distinguished authority on the Semitic languages, Dr. Cyrus Adler, President of the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, Philadelphia, U.S.A. I might add that this American publication has long been out of print. With one exception, all the tales which it contained had been collected and translated by Mr. Ramsay. That one exception I have omitted from this collection.

I must also thank the Daily Mirror, as well as Messrs. Sébah and Joaillier of Constantinople for allowing me to use some of their photographs. I take other illustrations from a century-old book entitled "Fisher's Illustrations of Constantinople." and viii

from a series of coloured woodcuts bearing the imprint: "lished by R. Bowyer, 80 Pall Mall, 1809." As I shall more fully later on, this mixture of the new Turkey with the old in my illustrations suits my purpose, which is to show the same time the Turkey of which the stories speak, an Turkey whereof the stories are now narrated. "Fisher's Illustrations" are accompanied by explanatory letterpress the pen of a Rev. Mr. Walsh, chaplain to the British Em at Constantinople; and of this letterpress I have also use in my own explanations of the pictures which appear in this volume.

"What good purpose will it serve?" is the question sometimes asked about a new book. My answer to it regard to "Tales from Turkey" is that, even in the British Museum catalogue, there is a gap so far as Ottoman folk is concerned. The folk-lore of Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and most of the other countries in Europe dealt with in many publications, but, so far as I can ascertain Turkish folk-lore has hardly been touched upon at all. A study of it is not uninteresting. We learn from it that Turk is as great a humorist as the Irishman or the Jap. At various times during the past half-century, for diplomats at the Sublime Porte have been led, it is true to entertain a passing but horrible suspicion that the grave was all the time laughing at them in his capacious sleeve. any of those diplomats deign to read this book they may sure that such was the case. I should not be surprised, for if it turned out that, in private life, ex-Sultan Abd-ul-Ha was fond of practical joking. His successor certainly shawn himself the possessor of a rich though quiet fund of humor, by the way in which he seized, during the last Balkan War, most of the booty which had been taken from him by Bulgarians in the first campaign.
In the popular tales of Turkey we see the mind of the Turkish people as apart from that of their war-lords and mullahs. And we note with surprise that their disposition is peaceful and tolerant. The most militant people in the world astonish us by their love for homely anecdotes with absolutely no warlike flavour whatsoever. The most fanatical people on earth show a fondness for cracking jokes at their own clergy and their own religion, and they betray none of that violent hatred of other religions which their history would have led us to expect. In short it all comes to this, that the plain man everywhere is generally a peaceful individual, interested in births, marriages, deaths, money, land, domestic animals, and such like fundamental things, and losing less sleep over the contemplation of great kings, heroes, and conquerors than those mighty personages are sometimes inclined, perhaps, to imagine. But to me, at any rate, it was at first, I must confess, something of a shock to find the Turkish “man in the street” as quiet and humdrum a citizen as any Christian or Buddhist occupying the same humble position. As I have already remarked, the plain man everywhere is, as a rule, “not a bad sort” at all.

It is certainly curious that such a reputedly devout people as the Turks should have as their typical funny man an elder of their ain kirk, a personage corresponding to “the Meenister” in Scotland, the Rural Dean in the Church of England, or the Parish Priest in Ireland. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that those fanatical theologians and hair-splitters, the Arabs, should, as I point out elsewhere, regard the phlegmatic and materialistic Osmanli as being themselves little better than Infidels. In their spirit of religious compromise they resemble, indeed, the English, only that they have never been so intolerant as the latter were until about a century ago. When they captured Constantinople, they permitted the Greek population, the Greek aristocracy, and all the hierarchy of the Greek Church to remain. They placed a magnific church at the disposal of the Patriarch, and they emp Greeks almost exclusively as their architects, ambassadors Colonial Governors. The Greeks had for a long time practical monopoly of the two most important offices: Dragoman of the Porte and of the Fleet, as well as those Hospodarships of Moldavia and Wallachia. In Roum the whole administration was in Greek hands; and, even in the capital itself, the Patriarch had jurisdiction in civil as well as in religious matters over the members of his own church. Of course this toleration was largely due to the laziness of the inferior civilization of the Turks (admitting for the sake of argument that the Turks had any civilization at all); nevertheless, credit, when it is deserved, should not be without even from the Unmentionable Ones of Mr. W. E. Gladstenarios. Imagine Cromwell permitting the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland to remain in his Palace at Armagh exercising civil and religious jurisdiction over all Catholics!* (Note: This is an excerpt from a book, not a complete text.)

* “The Turkish instinct,” says Mr. Sidney Whitman in his recently put “Turkish Memories,” “does not run to intolerance, and far less to intolerance. There is much kindness in the Ottoman’s nature, as shown alike in domestic life and by his treatment of the lower animals.” And most of all does Mr. Whitman reject the imputation of religious fanaticism:

“The Christian population in Asiatic and European Turkey was so and enabled to prosper in days when no European public opinion could possibly intervened on its behalf. While the Turk was thus practising religious tolerance, Jews were burnt at the stake in Christian Spain; the most intolerant portion of the inhabitants of France, the Huguenots, were being persecuted in their faith and driven from their homes by Louis XIV, and in England the penalty of death awaited the priest who dared to say Mass.”

From an educated Moslem Mr. Whitman quotes the boast that there is
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In other respects, however, and especially in the extraordinary natural sense of discipline which distinguishes both peoples, there is some similarity between the Englishman and the Turk. The latter would probably have, for political reasons, reformed Islam as the former claims to have reformed Christianity, were it not for the fact that the Turkish Sultans not only defeated the Pope of Mohammedanism on his own soil, but even captured him, and added the spiritual thunders of the Khalifate to their own redoubtable military strength. After that exploit there was, of course, nothing tangible left them to fight for on the field of spiritual supremacy.

"Where," the reader may ask, "are these stories still told?" To say "In the coffee-houses" might not, perhaps, enlighten much some one or two readers whose ideas of coffee-houses are derived from those excellent, but unromantic, institutions which London owes to Sir Joseph Lyons. If a man began telling interminable stories of the Ali Baba order in a Lyons "depot," it is probable that one of the prim waitresses who are such a pleasing feature of those London cafés would icily suggest to him that he had better adjourn to the nearest "pub" in order to continue there his fascinating narrative. And it is doubtful, indeed, if a real, unexpropriated Oriental tale could be told even in a "pub"—that last sad refuge of the immemorial, interminable (and sometimes, alas! intoxicated) story-teller. Of London clubs I sternly refuse to single line in the whole of our popular literature which could inspire hatred of the Christian." And weight may certainly be claimed for the facts that the wealthiest subjects of the Empire are Greeks and Armenians; that Christians are the owners of probably three-fourths of its real estate; and that all types of Christian worship are practised in Turkey with a freedom that is not to be found, say, in the neighbouring dominions of the Tsar. It was an American missionary in Armenia who said to Mr. Whitman: "If the Russians ever come here, they will turn us missionaries neck and crop out of the country."

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speak. The only way to deal with some of the alleged story-tellers who haunt these institutions is with a shot-gun. no, I am not going to lose my temper by dwelling on painful aspect of the question. Revenons à notre "pub."

I was just saying that not even there is the sacred story-teller always sure of a sympathetic atmosphere. Have I O true believers! seen recently with my own eyes in County Down, near Belfast, a bar over which hung following dreadful legend?—"Customers are requested to consume their liquor as quickly as possible, and then to leave. Some people seem to think that their purchase of a small quantity of liquor at the bar entitles them to remain on premises as long as they like. This is a mistake."

Need I add that the inn-keeper who was guilty of outrage was an Orangeman and a Covenanter? What do species of Irishman would be capable of even attempting to introduce this base and alien spirit of commercialism "hustle" into the calm sanctuary of an Irish public-house?

To return, however, to Turkey's "pubs"—namely, the harmless coffee-houses—I have often wondered seri if most of them are not run by fanatical antiquarians philanthropists, for how they can be made to pass powers of comprehension. A man buys there a cup of costing less than a halfpenny, and may remain "on premises" for hours, telling stories or exchanging gossip the café-je (keeper of the café).

There are of course different kinds of cafés, those in being the richest and, from my point of view, the w... The coffee-houses in the country are generally very bare uninviting, and sometimes one can get nothing in them coffee. Bread or any kind of food does not seem to exi far as these country cafés are concerned. Interpreting lite his own Eastern proverb, "A dish of coffee and a pip
tobacco are a complete entertainment," the café-je seems to support life exclusively on coffee and tobacco. Probably these lonely cafés are intended more as places where travellers can rest their aching limbs than as places where the inner man can be substantially refreshed. While travelling on horseback in Turkey I have often found the very sight of a coffee-house to be as grateful and comforting as the coffee it sold. Sometimes, tired of jolting in the saddle, and choked with dust, one sees the coffee-house from afar off, quivering in the noon-day heat. The café-je welcomes the guest with such a respectful manner and such gracefully turned Oriental phrases that the object of these attentions is half persuaded that for years his arrival has been patiently awaited; that he is a sort of Messiah in that part of the world. As a matter of fact mine host does not know him from Adam. "The effendi (gentleman) is come," says the café-je with emphasis to his assistant boy, although he could not possibly have had notice of the arrival beforehand, and could not possibly know anything about this particular effendi. Then comes a very small cup of hot coffee and a large tumbler of delicious, cold, spring water. The traveller uses his own cigarettes as he reclines on the bench; but he does not tell stories as a rule, nor does anybody else. He is too tired to speak or to listen much; and, after having thrown the café-je into transports of joy by giving him twopence, he remounts his horse and resumes his journey.

On one occasion while my tired steed and I were struggling long after nightfall to reach a place in Albania a short distance south of the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, my soldier escort groped his way into a coffee-house of which the entrance was as black as the mouth of Hades. Even inside there was no light save what came from a fire which looked like a baker’s oven. I sat down on an earthern couch which I found by
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touch alone, for it was quite invisible; and to this day I have no idea how many people were in that room, for we stayed there only about five minutes, until ourselves and our horses had rested a bit. Indeed now, as I write this, the idea comes for the first time into my mind that everybody had gone to bed, I mean gone to sleep, in the Oriental fashion, on the floor and all over the place. I certainly remember stumbling several times over invisible bodies which I supposed for a second to be corpses until a stream of lurid objurgations in the Turkish language convinced me of my mistake.

The only occupant of the room whom I could see clearly was an Albanian youth, an assistant café-je apparently, who tended the fire and prepared our coffee in the usual jezve or small, brass, long-handled coffee-pot. He had taken off his jacket and moved about noiselessly in the fire-light, barefooted and bareheaded, clad only in a thin singlet and a pair of tight-fitting native trousers. The Albanians are often remarkably graceful and well-formed, and, in his close-fitting dress, this youth might have been a Greek statue come to life and clad in a page's costume of the Plantagenet days. The same opinion was expressed by my travel companion, the well-known novelist and war-correspondent Franz de Jessen, whose skill as a critic of sculpture and painting is very great, and far superior to mine.

It is in such houses—half han (inn) and half café—that stories are told on stormy nights, the absence of any light save the glow from the fire adding to the dramatic effect of the narrative. The only drawback, from the European point of view, is that the audience always consists of men. It is nearly as bad as a London club, and the story-teller must miss immensely the soft, mobile faces of women and girls, and the inspiration of their contagious enthusiasms. For the women are always kept apart. So Mohammed decreed, they
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say, and, if so, that decree is, methinks, the most fatal obstacle to the durability of the religion which Mohammed taught.

But the best place for the story-teller is the village café, which is regularly frequented by the people of the neighbourhood, by the half-pay officer, the hamál (porter), the khoja, the Jew, the barber, the Turkish bath-man, the cobbler, the lame ex-wrestler, the carpenter, the dervish, the local policeman, the holy but paralytic beggar and the other permanent features of neighbouring society.

The first thing that strikes one about such a café is the remarkably democratic tone which pervades it. You find there officers sitting alongside private soldiers, Mohammedan clergymen listening to the edifying yarns of smugglers, and tailors curdling the blood of professional bandits with tales of terror and mystery.

The café is the public-house of Turkey; and, though intoxicating liquors are not as a rule drunk there, Moslems sometimes manage to get drunk on coffee. Occasionally you hear a Turkish Bey tell in lugubrious accents of a servant of his who has gone to the bad; and when you inquire further, you learn that he has gone on a coffee-spree. In other words he spends his whole day in a café talking politics, exchanging gossip with old cronies, and listening to stories—but all the time drinking coffee. He never tastes any spirits, but I am inclined to believe that a prolonged and determined bout of coffee-drinking is worse for the nerves, for the stomach, and for the general health, than a prolonged bout of whisky-drinking. No wonder that in the eighteenth century there arose a number of Turkish Father Mathews who preached a crusade against coffee and tobacco. Their declaration that indulgence in these two luxuries of the East was contrary to the precepts of the Koran led, by the way, to a temporary schism in Islam and to furious riots in the streets of Stam-

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boul. And, long before that time, the learned Abd’alkâder Mohammed al Ansâri had written a whole book about coffee, whose lawfulness he maintained, though an Englishman, Mr. George Sale, one of the translators of the Koran, declared that “the fumes of it (coffee) have some effect on the imagination ;” adding “this drink . . . has been the occasion of great disputes and disorders, having been sometimes publicly condemned and forbidden, and again declared lawful and allowed.” There have even been disputes about tobacco, but the more religious make a scruple of taking the latter, “not only because it inebriates” (I am again quoting Mr. Sale), “but also out of respect to a traditional saying of their prophet (which, if it could be made out to be his, would prove him a prophet indeed), ‘That in the latter days there should be men who should bear the name of Moslems, but should not be really such; and that they should smoke a certain weed, which should be called Tobacco.’”

Stay-at-home Englishmen have sometimes thought that I was joking when I talked of coffee-drunkenness in Turkey, but the vice is not unknown elsewhere. I do not mean to say that a party of our hilarious English “nuts” would be likely to make a night of it at one of Sir Joseph Lyons’ cafés over cups of “our own celebrated blend of Mocha.” In fact I can quite figure to myself the withering glance of contempt which any real “nut” would bestow on me if I even suggested the possibility of such a cheap, unusual, and dilatory jamboree. I fully realize that such a slow spree is not at all suitable to the genius of the cycling, motoring, aeroplaning West. But on the other hand I will maintain that it is eminently suitable to the land of the sedate, slow-stepping camel, of the wise and deliberate elephant.

A man given to excessive coffee-drinking is known in Turkey as a tirâlî, a word which means literally a je veux or
enthusiast, and is generally applied to one addicted to the excessive use of opium, tobacco, or spirits. It is not an impolite word, however, like sar-kosh (drunkard), which is a term of contempt.

The tirikti stupefies himself with innumerable cups of coffee; and, like the common or public-house drunkard, he recklessly squanders his substance on his beloved “tipple.” A friend of mine once employed a Turkish coachman named Ali, who was so fervent a tirikti that he spent on coffee all his monthly wage of eighteen Turkish pounds a month—one hundred and eighty-nine English pounds sterling a year. Ali never staggered, but he always seemed to be more or less stupefied, and his eye continually wandered. When he fell once off his box, it became clear to the employer that Ali’s services could no longer be utilized with safety to his master, to the coachman himself and to the public. Ali was accordingly discharged, and he seems to have lived ever since in his favourite café, quaffing cup after cup of the café-jê’s best and darkest infusion.

But even here in the West I have seen old lady teetotalers who probably indulge in more coffee-drinking and tea-drinking than is good for them. And I remember once reading, in an authentic account of a wreck, how some English sailors, who had to their horror found themselves stranded on a desert island with a whole cargo of coffee and not a single bottle of whisky, used very strong coffee in order to produce in themselves some of the effects which alcohol would have produced.

Far be it from me, however, to blame any old lady for coffee-drinking or even for tea-drinking, much less to blame her husband for dram-drinking. The drinking of coffee or of whisky, the smoking of tobacco or of opium, are all alike evidences of a profound, philosophic disgust with the injustice of the world and the cynicism of fate. This divine discontent acts in different ways on different religions and different races and different men. It makes one man go on strike. It makes another man (being a Cabinet Minister) “go for” dukas. Siam it causes a European to “go native.” In Japan it incites a householder to “go inkyo”—in other words to abdicate the property to his heir and become a Siam prince. In India it leads to a respectable citizen divesting himself of every bit of clothing and becoming a naked fakir. In Hyde Park it makes a man become a Socialist orator with a red tie. In Mongo...
Edward G. Browne of Cambridge. The café is as useful to the young student interpreter in Constantinople as the storyteller's hall is useful to the young-student interpreter in Tokio: long may both of these admirable institutions flourish! I understand that Professor Browne always advises his young men to live in Stamboul and not in Péra (the fashionable European quarter), to get rooms in a thoroughly Turkish han, and to pass their evenings discussing folk-lore with grave and pious khojas, ulamas, hamals, and mullahs. This is undoubtedly the right way to learn the Turkish language and to understand the Turkish mind: better far than to spend one's leisure playing Auction Bridge in Levantine French at the Club de Constantinople. Moreover, it is intensely interesting and instructive, for in a Stamboul café one meets with a greater variety of Oriental character, and samples a richer blend of fiction than would be possible in a country coffee-house.

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that the Turkish café has, like the Turkish bath and the Turkish Empire, degenerated enormously in the land of its birth during the last hundred years. As will be seen from one of the pictures reproduced in this book, the old Turkish café was a very gorgeous edifice, supported on pillars and open in front. According to the description given of it about a century ago by the Rev. Robert Walsh, chaplain to the British Embassy at the Ottoman Porte, it was surrounded on the inside by a raised platform, covered with mats or cushions, on which the Turks sat cross-legged. On one side were musicians, generally Greeks, with mandolins and tambourines, accompanying singers who shouted rather than sang. On the opposite side were men, generally of a respectable class, some of them to be found there every day and all day long, dozing under the double influence of coffee and tobacco. The coffee was and is served in very small cups, not larger than egg-cups, grounds
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devoted of a keen business sense of the kind which is shown by the astute magazine editor who breaks off a story at just the most interesting point with the cold phrase, “To be continued in our next.” When the attention of his audience was excited to the highest degree at the approach of some dire calamity to the hero, or some other crisis in the tale, the meddik used to stop short with an abruptness suggestive of sudden decapitation. Then he descended from his platform—and solemnly went round with the hat. The most celebrated of these meddiks in the last century was a man called Kiz Achmet, who was such a capital story-teller that the Sultan often sent for him to entertain the ladies of his harem. Achmet’s stories, like those of all his confrères, are described as being “of a very coarse and indecent character.” Yet he was nicknamed Kiz Achmet or “Achmet the Girl,” perhaps, on the lucus a non lucendo principle, because his stories were so flagrantly unsuitable for the young lady of fifteen. This indelicacy also accounts in all probability for the fact that the great majority of these “Turkish Nights” have been lost to posterity. Had they been less coarse they would doubtless have been translated by European scholars and formed into a collection rivaling the immortal collection of Arabic tales. But it was apparently agreed that two sets of unexpurgated “Arabian Nights” would be more than the conscience of the world could stand.

Some of those old Turkish tales were actually taken, indeed, from the “Arabian Nights” (the old jinns having had no copyright apparently, despite their extensive and peculiar power in other directions); and all of them greatly resembled the masterpieces of Arabistān. Sometimes the corruption of a kadi was detailed with considerable humour. Sometimes a Turkish proverb was illustrated, and formed, as it were, the text of the tale. Among the proverbs thus illustrated and

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dramatized were the following. “A man cannot carry melons under one arm.” “Though your enemy be no bigger than an ant, suppose him as large as an elephant.” “Though the tongue has no bones, it breaks many bones.”

The meddik introduced individuals of all the multitudes of races and nations which were to be found inside the Turkish Empire, and imitated with admirable precision the language of each. But he was particularly fond of introducing Jews, whose imperfect pronunciation of every language (presumably) their own, presented him with a happy subject for caricature. Not, indeed, that he forgot the Christ. The imitation by Turkish performers of the bad Turkish spoken by Greeks, Armenians, Albanians, Franks, and others a perennial source of merriment to the Osmanli and, according to one English scholar who did know Turkish, “a salutary discipline for any foreigner who thinks he has mastered the Osmanli language.”

But why not, let me ask before I go further, why not similar story-tellers’ halls in England? Why not have living story-teller instead of the lifeless printed page? Why not hark back to our own ancient history or repair to a source of all wisdom, the tranquil and immemorial East, a hint at the establishment of a new source of popular instruction and amusement? This new departure was probably denounced by the oculists as taking the bread of their mouths, but on the other hand it might save the sight of future generations. For undoubtedly we use eyes too much for purposes of instruction and amusement, our ears too little. What are those places miscalled “mus halls but traps for the eye? Almost all our knowledge of history and fiction comes to us through the eye. One hardly ever travel in England by train or omnibus with seeing people whose eyes are glued to some cheap wor
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fiction. Indeed I have quite frequently noticed messenger-boys absorbed in "penny dreadfuls" while traversing like somnambulists the perilous streets of our great metropolis.

The departure which I suggest would relieve the pressure on the optic nerve, and restore to our people some of that skill in artistic, well-told, and full-bodied anecdote which went out with the stage-coaches and the coffee-houses of the Restoration.

Why, I say, should not some enterprising and philanthropic Company (Limited) open story-tellers' halls where, after half an hour of Marie Corelli, (on the principle of "Ladies first"), Mr. Hall Caine would trip lightly on to the scene? Other establishments, catering for a different public, might engage (regardless of expense) the services of Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Mr. Wells and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In still other halls, foreign novelists and native bards might hold forth.

The scheme which I faintly adumbrate would be of benefit even to the novelists themselves. They would be in touch with the great heart of the Public, face to face with their readers, able to see their magnetic spell actually work. They would know how such-and-such an incident would "go down." Lastly, they would have a new source of income. Publishers also would be benefited, as they could easily ascertain who was drawing the biggest houses and who was attracting, on the other hand, the greatest number of rotten eggs. The modern novelists may think that their position under these circumstances would be undignified. Nothing of the kind. Shakespeare was in that position; and I feel sure that Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mr. Chesterton, and possibly Mr. Belloc would eagerly welcome such a scheme for keeping themselves before the public. One of our greatest novelists has already, in "The Hand of Ethelberta" described his heroine as putting just such a scheme into execution on her own account. He was unaware, I take it, that a similar system is actually working in Japan at the present moment. I hasten to add that, in cases where an author is shy, it would be easy to fit a trained story-teller to do the work for him just as a trained actor serves as interpreter for the dramatist.

As a result of this scheme our people would learn to enjoy the rich savour of certain words and would learn the lost art of telling a story with effect. The only stories one now hears in England (this storied land of the Canterbury Tales) are bald, curt, inartistic and incredible yarns about golf, motor records, and gigantic trout. They would learn, moreover, to render correctly (and this can never be done on paper) the various dialects which are spoken in these islands, and the various ways in which the English language is murdered by strangers. The intelligent foreigner—who, like the poor, is always with us—would get a chance of learning our language in all its niceties and in all its finer shades of expression. What is more, to the point, however, the native himself would get a chance of learning his own language. Moreover, the native would enjoy his fiction more, for half of a story is lost when it is only told on paper. One misses the facial play of the artist who tells it. One loses those subtle inflections of the voice which cannot be rendered in print.

To return, however, to the Turkish café, all its glory is now a thing of the past. To find a gorgeous café or a gorgeous Turkish bath-house, you must go to Berlin or Vienna or Paris or New York, for in Stamboul you will find neither the one nor the other. Constantinople is very far removed, indeed, as Gautier points out, from the splendour of le café turc au boulevard du Temple, from "cette magnificence d'arc en cœur, de colonnettes, de miroirs et d'œufs d'autruche."

And the professional story-teller is also a thing of the past, though oddly enough, this species of artist still flourishes...
in Japan, where one of the most celebrated story-tellers is an Englishman called Black who was brought to Yokohama by his parents at a very early age. All the stories that one hears now in a Turkish café are told by the guests themselves or by the proprietor, just as the lofty Johnsonian conversation in the Cheshire Cheese used, before it changed hands a few years ago, to be carried on for the benefit of American visitors by the publican himself and his brother. The café now adds shaving and hair-dressing to his other occupation, just as the English publican is sometimes reduced to the dismal extremity of adding "hot coffee" or "cut from the joint and two vegetables, roid." to the faded attractions of his bar. But on the other hand the coffee-house keeper has become more loquacious since he has blossomed out as a barber, and this loquaciousness stands him in good stead when he lays aside the razor and assumes the rôle of story-teller.

His coffee-house is, as a rule, a tawdry, tumble-down place, consisting usually of little more than one large, barn-like room, with walls made to a large extent (if I may use the expression), of small panes of glass. The furniture consists of a tripod with a contrivance for holding the kettle, and a fire to keep the water boiling. A carpeted bench or divan traverses the entire length of the room and is usually occupied by grave, turbaned or fezzed Turks, their legs folded under them. They smoke nargilehs ("hubble-bubbles") or chibooks (both of which are supplied by the house, being too heavy to be carried about by the guests); but cigarettes are now becoming more common here as everywhere else. Their sole drink is coffee, a few of them will engage in a game of Tavula or backgammon, but the majority enter into conversation, at first only in monosyllables, which gradually swell, however, to the dignity of a general discussion. Finally some sage of the neighbourhood comes in and the company appeals to him to settle the point at

issue. This he usually does by telling them a story to illustrate his opinion. As I have already pointed out, some of those stories are adaptations from the Arabic. Many of them come from the Persian; but in most cases the Turkish mind gives them a new setting and a peculiar philosophy. They are therefore characteristic of Turkish habits, customs, and methods of life, and they seem for this reason to be worth preservation.

In Péra and also in Stamboul, near the Sublime Porte, there are a number of what are called up-to-date Europeanized cafés with café à la Turque, it is true, but also, alas! with marble topped tables, mirrors, cane-bottomed chairs and—gramophones! These are largely frequented by Greeks, Armenians, Western Europeans, and Young Turks. I reproduce a photograph of a typical café of this kind, which was taken in Constantinople during the recent war by a correspondent of the Daily Mirror. Unfortunately there is no evidence in that photograph, probably because the Young Turk politicians represented therein are too much occupied with their newspapers—with the Sabah, the Teni Gazette, the Osmanli, the Jeune Turc, the İkdam, the Hillal, the Hakikat, the Mizan, &c. In the Grande Rue de Péra there is a very large and very European café owned by an Armenian called Tokatlian, after whom it is named. This place is worth a book in itself, for it is always thronged with military officers, newspaper correspondents, Greek and Armenian reporters employed by the said correspondents, spies, politicians, smugglers, deputies, and all kinds of ladies except Turkish ladies. It is really an important political centre, is Tokatlian's; but it does not concern me here. I should like to mention, however, that farther down the Grande Rue is a Greek café where a chorus of Hellenic youths, mounted on a raised platform, sing every evening a selection of Greek
PREFACE

Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes."

To taste the full flavour of the following tales one must imagine oneself among "that pentecostal crew." The great thing in the Oriental tale is the atmosphere; and it is in order to create the necessary atmosphere that I make this preface so long, and that I illustrate this book so fully with typical Turkish pictures.

For I have a theory, O ye of understanding! that tales of this kind should be copiously illustrated not only with scenes from the life described in the tales, but also with scenes from the life amid which the stories are told. To hear them by word of mouth in Turkey is the best thing possible. Failing that, the next best thing is to listen to them in a Stamboul which has been brought to England by means of photographs and pictures.

In Turkey the medâk does not need to draw attention to the mosques, the turbaned khojas, the scribes, the bullock-carts, the Triple Walls, the ruins of antiquity. All of these things are before the eyes of his auditors as he speaks. Now, a book like this has its circulation chiefly in British homes. It is read in English trains, seaside resorts, and other places where there is no Oriental atmosphere to speak of. The editor cannot alter the tales himself in order to impart "atmosphere." He does not enjoy in this matter the privilege of the historian, the poet and the writer of fiction. Hence the necessity of his copiously illustrating his collection with pictures of the scenes amid which his stories are laid. And even if, in the present instance, some of the pictures do not seem to be connected very closely with the text which they are supposed to illustrate, they may still attain their object—which is to produce the proper "atmosphere." Some of the
pictures in this volume need no explanation, but others represent scenes that are less well known. In such cases we have added short explanations placed in such a way as not to interfere with the flow of the narrative. The reader who may be disposed to criticize this arrangement must remember that, even in a Stamboul café, the Turks who listen to humorous tales about their khojas have, before their eyes, or at all events at the back of their minds, visions of Santa Sofia, the Bosphorus, the Marmora, the great peaceful cemeteries on the Asiatic shore. Sometimes, it is true, my illustrations, instead of helping the reader to a better comprehension of the text, are in striking contrast to the text. The tale is that of the simple Anatolian shepherd; the illustration recalls the mighty and complex civilizations of Rome and Byzantium. But this very want of harmony is in accordance with facts, for often the Osmanli strike us as primitive, unsophisticated and almost pathetic figures, moving unwittingly against a mighty background of tremendous memories. I frequently think of them ruling in Constantinople as I would think of Eskimaux ruling in London. Suppose that the diversion of the Gulf Stream (which Allah forfend!) and the return of the Ice Age led to England's occupation by the tribes of the frozen North. Imagine these tribes sitting on the plinth of Nelson's pillar and the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral without knowing or caring what those monuments were meant to represent. Imagine them ignorant of the fact that the ground beneath them was honeycombed with subterranean passages. Imagine them erecting their ice-houses in Parliament Square and telling each other, under the shadow of the Clock Tower, not stories of Asquith and Carson, but funny and primitive yarns about penguins, whales, reindeer, and polar bears. The parallel is not inapt, for the Turks know nothing of the Burnt Column and the other invaluable relics of a past civilization with which their city abounds; and for hundreds of years they knew naught of the vast subterranean halls which existed underneath their very feet in Stamboul. For further information on this latter point, the reader should turn to my explanation of the picture entitled Téfé-Batan-Serat (The Subterranean Palace) which appears in the story of "Chapkin Halid."

With the same object in view, that is, in order to produce the proper atmosphere, I occasionally make use of Turkish words and phrases, for there are Turkish or Arabic words which are as indispensable in a Turkish story as mosques, fezzes, chibouks, turbans, camels and latticed harem windows are indispensable in a typical Turkish picture. In almost all cases where I use these Turkish words I give the English translation as well, but it would be no harm to give here a few of the more necessary words.

Aleikum selâm
Allah Akbar!
Allah bereket versin!
Allah râzy olsun!
Allah-â esmarladik!
Allah-â teshkekcur ederim
Allah'-en yardim elâ
Bi'-Allah!
Bi'-smi'-llah!
Bourun!
Chibook.
Dervish

And on you be peace! (response between Mussulmans only).
God is great!
May God give you abundance! (Thank God!)
May God be pleased or content with you!
Adieu!
I thank God (Thanks).
With God's help.
By God!
In the name of Allah!
Welcome!
Pipe with long stem.
Mendicant monk.
Preface

Effendi
Ev-Allah
Evvet, Effendim
Fez

Han
Helwa

Imam

In-shâ-Allah!
Jin or jinn
Kadi
Kismet
Lira

Lokma
Mâshâ’Allâh!
Medâk
Mézé
Padishah
Piaster or Piastre
Pilaf
Qah’védji or Café-je
Sélâm!
Sélâm aleikum!

Sheikh
Softa
Turbeh
Vali
Vezir
PREFACE

It will be noticed that a few of the following tales are not legendary tales, or indeed, tales of any kind but simply sketches of contemporary or recent life in Turkey. These are easily distinguished, however, from the folk-stories, and I have not, therefore, thought it worth while to put them in a section by themselves. I had no hesitation, however, in adding them to the present collection. They are true,—that is, of course, a serious charge against them;—but in spite of that I consider that they are all, at the same time, typical fragments of Turkish life or else accounts of remarkable and characteristic men like Sheikh Assiferi of Latakiah, who are well remembered by people still alive but whose rough histories have already become transmuted into the pure gold of popular legend.

Not that the stories here collected are all pure gold, even in my opinion. Some of them have, indeed, no glitter at all, so far as I can see (though of course I hope that the reader will perceive it). But even this absence of glitter is of interest testifying as it does, like the inscription "Made in Turkey," to fabrication by the somewhat rude and unskilful Osmanli. For the Turks are stolid and inartistic. They have neither the gorgeous imagination of the Arabs nor the extraordinarily flexible, complex, and subtle mentality of the mystical Persian.

Not all the tales, however, are of Turkish origin. At least one of them, "The Thirteenth Son" is of Armenian authorship, while others seem to be Jewish. The great bulk of them are, however, Turkish of Turkey, and I flatter myself that they smack strongly of their native soil.

There are, of course, other tales than Turkish in Constantinople and in the isles of the Archipelago. The Greek tales of Stamboul would alone constitute a bulky volume—a volume which, by the by, the editors of the present collection may yet present to the public.
PREFACE

But for the moment I have got to consider the stories on which I am at present engaged, and the voice of conscience reminds me that those stories will inevitably be crowded out unless I bring this already overgrown preface to an end. Not that it is a preface—really. It should, I suppose, be entitled "The Preliminary Discourse" or, better still, "Musings without Method." I do not, however, apologize for either its length or its excursiveness. On the contrary when I come to die and am interrogated in the tomb by Muker and Nekir, the terrible angels of the Inquisition, regarding the good actions (if any) which I have done during my earthly life, I shall point with modest satisfaction to the fact that I have not only invented a new form of preface but have even introduced the novelty of illustrating it. This invention is entirely due to my pity for overworked reviewers who, as is well known among the enlightened, seldom get beyond the preface which, on the other, however, is caviare to the general.

Therefore I take leave of you O my readers, O company of genii and men, with a fervent Allah bereket versin! (May Allah give you abundance!) also a solemn Selâmin aleikum! (Peace be on you!) and likewise a sincere Allaha esmarladeq! (Good-bye!)

FRANCIS McCULLAGH.

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HOW THE FARMER CURED
HIS WIFE
with him, and regretted that he himself was the cause of that
tiredness. But at the same time he could not help expressing
his astonishment at the horse for working so hard.

"Ah, my friend, I had to work hard," answered the horse.
"I can't bear the whip; the thought of its hideous crack!
crack! makes me shiver even now."

"But leaving that aside, my poor horned friend," pro-
ceeded the horse, "I am now most anxious for you. I heard
the master say to-night that if you are not well in the
morning, the butcher will come and slaughter you."

"You need not worry about me, friend horse," said the
ox, "as I much prefer the yoke to chewing the cud of self-
reproach."

At this point the farmer left the animals and entered his
home, smiling as he did so at his own craft in re-establishing,
if not contentment, at least resignation to their fate, among
the occupants of his stable. Meeting his wife, she at once
inquired as to the cause of his happy smile. He put her off,
first with one excuse, then with another, but to no purpose: the
more he protested, the stronger her inquisitiveness grew.
Her unsatisfied curiosity at length made her ill. The en-
deavours of the numerous doctors brought to her assistance
were as futile as the incantations of the witches from far and
near, and as powerless to remove the spell as were the amulets,
the charms, and the abracadabras composed and written by
holy men. Her unsatisfied curiosity gnawed at her very vitals,
and she visibly pined away. The poor farmer was distracted;
and, rather than see her die, he at last decided to tell her his
secret, and thus forfeit his own life in order to save hers.
Deeply dejected, for no man quits this planet without a pang,
he sat at the window gazing for the last time, as he thought,
on the familiar surroundings. Of a sudden he noticed his favourite chanticleer, followed by his numerous harem, sadly
STORIES ABOUT HANOUMS

walking about without his accustomed strut, only allowing his favourites to eat the morsels he discovered, and ruthlessly driving the others away. To one of those "others" he said: "Allaha Teshekkur ederim [Thanks be to God] I am not like our poor master, to be ruled by one of you or even by a score of you. He, poor man, will die to-day for revealing his secret knowledge to save his wife's life."

"What is the secret knowledge?" asked one of the wives; whereupon chanticleer flew at her and pecked her mercilessly, saying after each vigorous peck, "That's the secret; and if our master only treated the mistress as I treat you, he would not need to give up his life to-day."

And, as if maddened at the thought, he pecked them all in turn. The master, seeing and appreciating the effects of this cure from the window, went to his wife and treated her in precisely the same manner. And this effected what neither doctors, sages, nor holy men could do—it completely cured her.
THE HANOUM AND THE UNJUST KADI

The chöpdji (dustman) and the bekdji (night watchman) are the most important and necessary servants of a Turkish quarter. The bekdji receives a monthly salary from the big houses of five piastres, and from small houses of two and a half piastres; and as a rule the chöpdji receives the same, but sometimes he gets less than the bekdji. The latter is the individual who calls out in a loud, melancholy, and far-resounding voice, "Yangin Var!" ("There is a fire") to announce the outbreak of a fire in any part of Constantinople or its suburbs.

"Yangin Var!" sounds somewhat like this—

This cry is not unmusical, especially if one happens to own some uninhabitable but heavily insured houses in the street where the fire is raging. But, as a rule, considering the terrible conflagrations which have devastated Stamboul, it is a cry which causes panic.

The brave bekdji runs very swiftly, yelling all the time at the top of his voice, and always taking care to give the name of the place where the conflagration has occurred. This he does so that kindly hearted people may go and loot the houses which are supposed to be on fire, but which very often are not on fire at all. Foreigners have sometimes greatest difficulty in keeping those would-be "rescuers" of their houses on such an occasion; and, even if there is fire, they always prefer the fire to the firemen. The latter scantily clad, run swiftly, and remind one very much of the bare-limbed, lightly clad youths whom one sometimes practising for a race by running after night-fall around Lincoln's Inn Fields and other London squares. They carry with them on their shoulders a most exiguous and antique fire-engine, looking like a big squirt and quite unsuited putting out an ordinary kitchen-fire, much less a conflagration. The men chant some weird chant as they race along, and first time I saw them was it was in the processions carrying a religious procession carrying the Ark of the Covenant, Beard of the Prophet, or some such holy relic. And, crown all, they have a curious theory that sea-water will extinguish flames,—a theory which has led to the loss of not one splendid palace washed by the very waters of the Bosporus.

Despite the fact that he is such an unmitigated nuisance the bekdji annually bothers the neighbourhood for a " specially. The "festival season" which he chooses for this infliction, the feast of the Shaiker Bairam, the three days feast follow Ramazan or Ramadan, the annual Mohammedan fast of those days or one lunar month, when it is the custom for all Turks to exchange presents of sweetmeats. At this time the chöpdji and the bekdji call at each of the houses in the quarter to wish their victims a happy New Year, and to give them some Bairam sweets. They each carry a tray of sweets and say, "May your Bairam be happy!" ("Bairamla Nusurek Ouloun!") In reality, however, their object receive their annual Backsheesh, or Baiiram present.
TALES FROM TURKEY

I am told that similar customs are not quite unknown in England at Christmas-time.

It was, and still is in some parts of Constantinople, the custom of the refuse-gatherer or chöpdji to go about the streets with a basket on his back, and a wooden shovel in his hand, calling out: "Refuse removed! Refuse removed! Refuse!"

These words do not lend themselves very well to poetry; and, indeed, some English lady tourists who were once ravished by this melancholy call of a good-looking young chöpdji were shocked when the cry was translated for them. Yet, for all that, those words constitute quite a musical street cry, something like this—

Dust man
Chöpdji

Dust man
Chöpdji

Dust
Chap

Now it came to pass that a certain chöpdji had, in the course of five years of assiduous labour, amassed the not unimportant sum of five hundred piastres. He was afraid to keep this money by him; so, hearing the kadi of Stamboul highly and reverently spoken of, he decided to entrust his hard-earned savings to the kadi’s keeping.

Going to the kadi, he said: "Oh learned and righteous man, for five long years have I laboured, carrying the dregs and dross of rich and poor alike, and I have saved a sum of five hundred piastres. With the help of Allah, in another two years, I shall have saved a further sum of at least one hundred piastres, when, Insallah! I shall return to my country and clasp my wife and children in my arms again. In the meantime you will grant a boon to your slave, if you will consent to keep this money for me until the time for my departure has come."

STORIES ABOUT HANOUNS

The kadi replied: "Thou hast done well, my son. I swear by the solemn oath of divorce that this money will kept faithfully and returned unto thee when required."

The poor chöpdji departed, well satisfied. But after very short time he learned that several of his friends were about to return to their memleket (province) and he decided to join them, thinking that his five hundred piastres were ample for the time being. "Besides," said he, "who knows what may or may not happen in the next two years?" So he decided to depart with his friends at once.

He went to the kadi, explained that he had changed his mind, that he was going to leave for his country immediately, and asked for his money. The kadi called him a dog and ordered him to be whipped out of the place by his servant. Alas! what could the poor chöpdji do? He wept in impotent despair, as he counted the number of years he must yet work before he beheld his loved ones.

One day, while removing the refuse from the konak of wealthy pasha, his soul uttered a sigh which reached the ear of the hanoun, and from the window she asked him why he sighed so deeply. He replied that he sighed for something that could in no way interest her. The hanoun’s sympathies

* This is one of the most solemn forms of oath known to the Mohammedan. The person taking it says, "I impose upon myself divorce from my wife. Considering, however, that a Turk may have many wives, the calumny thus invoked does not seem to a Christian to be necessarily and always so very awful—for the husband. I am inclined to suspect that, though monogamy is the rule in the United Kingdom, there is in this realm more than one married man who would not violently object to the adoption of such a form of promissory oath in the British Law Courts. And on bachelors (in Turkey an unknown class among men who are over sixteen years of age) this oath would have no effect whatsoever. The administration of it in their case would be like the pouring of water on a duck’s back."
TALES FROM TURKEY

was excited, however; and finally, with tears in his eyes, the chöpdji consented, after much coaxing, to tell her of his great misfortune. The hanoum thought for a few minutes and then told him to go the following day to the kadi at a certain hour and again ask for the money as if nothing had happened.

The hanoum in the meantime gathered together a quantity of jewellery, to the value of several hundred pounds, and, instructing her favourite and confidential female slave to come with her to the kadi, she told her to remain outside whilst she went in. She also told the slave that when she saw the chöpdji come out with his money, she, the slave, was to enter the kadi’s room hurriedly and to say to her mistress,—

“Your husband has arrived from Egypt, and is waiting for you at the konak.”

The hanoum then went to the kadi, carrying in her hand a bag containing the jewellery. With a profound salaam she said:

“Oh, kadi, my husband, who is in Egypt and who has been there for several years, has at last asked me to come and join him there. These jewels are, however, of great value, and I hesitate to take them with me on so long and dangerous a journey. If you would kindly consent to keep them for me until my return, I will think of you with lifelong gratitude. And in case I never return, you may keep them in token of my esteem.”

The hanoum then began displaying the rich jewellery. Just at that moment the chöpdji entered, and, bending low, said:

“Oh, master, your slave has come for his savings in order that he may proceed to his country.”

“Aha! welcome!” said the kadi, “So you are going already!” And immediately he ordered the treasurer to pay the five hundred piastres to the chöpdji.

STORIES ABOUT HANOUMS

“You see,” said the kadi to the hanoum, “what confidence the people have in me. This money I have held for some time without receipt or acknowledgment; but directly it was asked for it is paid.”

No sooner had the chöpdji gone out of the door, than the hanoum’s slave came rushing in: “Hanoum effendi! hanoum effendi!” she cried, “your husband has arrived from Egypt and is anxiously awaiting you at the konak.”

On hearing this, the hanoum, in well-feigned excitement gathered up her jewellery, and, wishing the kadi a thousand years of happiness, departed.

The kadi was thunderstruck, and, caressing his beard with grave affection, thoughtfully said to it: “For forty years have been a judge, but never before, by Allah, has a cause been pleaded here in this fashion.”
WHAT HAPPENED TO HADJI

Hadji was a merchant in the Great Bazaar of Stamboul. Being a pious Mohammedan, he was of course a married man, but even Turkish married men are not invulnerable to the charms of women who are not their legal wives. It happened one day, when possibly the engrossing power of his lawful wife's influence was feeble upon him, that a charming hanoum came to his shop to purchase some spices. After the departure of his fair visitor, Hadji, do what he might, could not drive her image from his mind's eye or her attractive influence from his heart. Furthermore, he was greatly puzzled by a tiny black bag containing twelve grains of wheat, which the hanoum had evidently forgotten.

Till a late hour that night did Hadji remain in his shop, the hope that either the hanoum or one of her servants would come for the bag, and thus give him the means of seeing her again, or at least of learning where she lived. But Hadji was doomed to disappointment; and, much preoccupied, he returned to his house. There he sat, plunged in thought, unresponsive to his wife's conversation, and no doubt making mental comparisons between her and his visitor.

Hadji remained downcast day after day, and at last, giving way to the entreaties of his wife, who implored him to let her share his troubles, he frankly told her what had happened and admitted that ever since that fatal day his soul had been in bondage to the fair unknown.
"Yes," said Hadji. "You are truly a wonderful woman, 
\textit{Mash'd'llah}! But I do not know why she came to the window 
and showed me a mirror both in front and back, instead of 
opening the door."

"Oh," said his wife, "that is very simple; she means that 
you must go when the face of the moon has reversed itself, 
about ten o'clock." The hour arrived, Hadji hurried off, and 
so did his wife; the one to see his love, and the other to 
inform the police.

Whilst Hadji and his charmer were talking in the garden 
the police seized them and carried them both off to prison; 
and Hadji's wife, having accomplished her mission, returned 
home.

The next morning she baked a quantity of lokma cakes, 
and, taking them to the prison, begged entrance of the guards, 
and permission to distribute those cakes to the prisoners, for 
the repose of the souls of her, dead. This being a request 
which could not be denied, she was allowed to enter. Finding 
the cell in which the lady who had infatuated her husband 
was confined, she offered to save her the disgrace of the 
exposure, provided she would consent never again to cast 
loving eyes upon Hadji, the merchant. Those conditions 
were gratefully accepted, and Hadji's wife changed places with 
the prisoner.

When they were brought before the judge, Hadji 
was thunderstruck to see his wife, but, being a wise 
man, he held his peace, and left her to do the talking, 
which she did most vigorously. Vehemently did she 
protest against the insult inflicted on both her and her 
husband. What right had the police to bring them to 
prison, because they chose to converse in a garden, seeing 
that they were lawfully wedded people? In witness of 
the fact that they were man and wife she called upon
STORIES ABOUT HANOUMS

the bckdji (watchmen) and the imam (priest) of the district and several of her neighbours.

Poor Hadji was dumbsounded, as, accompanied by his better half, he soon after left the prison where he had expected to stay at least a year or two. "Truly thou art a wonderful woman, Māshā‘ilah." That is all he was able to say.
HIER-SIS TCHECHMÉ, "THE BLESSINGLESS FOUNTAIN"

On the road to the Mevlévé Teké, which is outside the walls of Constantinople, beyond the famous Adrianople gate, is a strange looking fountain, perfect in its construction, but with no obtainable water. Few know the history of this fountain, which has never given water to man, beast, or bird; though the style of construction would lead one to conclude that the builder intended it to quench the thirst of all who pined for water on the dusty road.

The history of this deceptive fountain, which is known as "Hier-sis," was told me many years ago, by an old Turk. It runs as follows:

"Long, long ago, there lived in Constantinople a khoja, Sari Chismeli Mehmed Agha, whose learning was profound, and who had travelled far and wide in the Ottoman Empire. Contrary to the invariable practice of the Mohammedans, clergymen as well as laymen, this pious man neglected during his youth and his early manhood to get married. The result was that, at a late age, when he should have been thinking of the pleasures in store for him in another world, Sari Chismeli Mehmed Agha took unto himself a wife—a wife possessing youth and beauty and family connexions. The newly married pair did not harmonize however. Their ages differed. Their sentiments, aspirations, and aims in life pointed in opposite directions.
STORIES ABOUT HANOUNMS

The khoja did all in his power to return his wife's affections, but the two drifted further apart every day, till, finally, they hardly ever spoke to one another, though they continued to live in the same house. The khoja, pious man, omitted not, however, to pray every day for the salvation of them both. Finally the khoja and his wife rarely even met one another. He was greatly occupied in the "Selamlik" (men's quarter) praying, teaching, and studying. She was just as occupied in her own portion of the house, the "Haremlik" (ladies' quarter) with her female relations and friends.

In this manner Ramazans and BaIrams came and went; but, beyond the prescribed salutation at the given hour, she did not intrude on him. The khoja could have taken another wife, but he refrained from doing so.

Finally, she became ill even unto death. The breath of Allah was on her and mortal man could not save her. This, she herself soon knew. She knew it by the great fever of the last thirst that will one day come to all. Realizing then, that the inevitable end was near, she implored the khoja to do her one last favour. She pined to be well thought of after she had passed away; she wished that the khoja whom she had so persistently ignored, should think well of her; she desired to do some deed of kindness to man, beast, or bird. She had missed her opportunities, while it was yet day, to do it herself; but she wished that others should do in her name something she had never done.

"Oh, khoja effendi!" said she—her tongue parched by the fever of death—"Oh, khoja effendi, the dust and heat of summer are so great that I feel for every man, bird, or beast that comes along this weary road. I feel their suffering in my own parched throat, in my own, alas! unquenchable thirst."

Poor creatures, indeed! Often had she looked at them, yet
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never had she seen that the men's lips were cracked with the sun's rays beating down on them, that the beasts' tongues hung out parched and painful, or that the birds panted with open beaks, their wings drooping from weakness.

"Certainly," said the wife, "I have been both good and kind; and, above all, khoja effendi, I have been faithful to you! Erect, then, in my name, a fountain, that my memory may remain, and that those who pass this way may bless my name, as I trust you, khoja effendi, will always bless me."

The pious khoja forgave her; he wished her no ill, but he wished her relief. Men should forgive, men should help even their enemies in that dread moment, and so the khoja promised to build a fountain in her name.

He built it, and it stands there to this day. The water was brought from a great distance in pipes most carefully laid; and the quality of the water was much appreciated by water-drinkers, for it was water that would dissolve stone (Tash-deen). This name the Turks, for some reason or other, give to the best kind of drinking water. There was a marble fountain; there were taps and drinking goblets attached to chains, for the wayfarer. There was a drinking trough for beasts and cattle; and also, high on the fountain, places for the birds of the air to quench their thirst. But never a drop of water entered any of these receptacles.

The thirsty could hear the water rushing through the ground underneath the fountain, but the destination of this water was never discovered, and no thirst was ever quenched at that fountain. On the front of the fountain was engraved a few words about the khoja's wife to whom the fountain was dedicated. They had been written by the khoja; they were engraved under his direction; and they were to the following effect. "As she was in life, so is she in death, sterile. Her mission and object in life as well as the destination of her

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blessing were as unknown to man, beast, or bird as the destination of the water which flows under the fountain which you so clearly hear. The refreshing sound of water promises great comfort but does not fulfill that promise. It is the mirage seen by the caravan leader dying of thirst in the desert—the vision of oases and of houris bringing gifts of life-giving water."
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Khoja Nasr-ud-Din
Khoja Nasr-ud-Din and the Jew
The Khoja in the Divorce Courts
The Khoja in the Pulpit
The Khoja and the Thieves
The Khoja and the Cauldron
The Khoja's Dinner-Party
The Khoja as Host
The Khoja Feigns Death
The Khoja's Ass
The Khoja and the Burglars
The Khoja as Mayor
The Khoja's Fast
The Death of the Khoja's Wife
The Tomb of Khoja Nasr-ud-Din

KHOJA NASR-UD-DIN

Among most peoples there arises, from time to time, a man who, without being at all entitled to the epithet great, represents so well the national character, especially on its more humorous and homely sides, that sorts of sayings, jokes, bons mots and stupidities are attributed to him. He is even credited with a good deal of "sharp practice" which the modern city-dweller would call swindling, but which for all that is dear to the peasant's heart in every primitive land.

The iconoclastic modern critic generally ascertains, it is true, that most of those jokes, stories, etcetera, date from a period far anterior to that of the personage to whom they were attributed; and, indeed, in some cases, doubts have been thrown on the very existence of the personage himself. Nevertheless, he is so useful to the student of national characteristics that modify slightly a famous saying, if he never existed he would deserve to be invented. For, when due allowance is made for humorous exaggeration, he generally represents with considerable fidelity the mind of the average man in the country to which he belongs.

Many people will, I am sure, be shocked at this doctrine, especially after they have read some of the ludicrous tales which are told in the present volume about Khoja Nasr-ud-Din; but, after all, the average man in most nations is a simple, homely, humorous, good-natured, hard-working soul with great enthusiasm for war-lords or politics or epic poetry, even for religion; but with a taste for rough comfort, rude jol
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stimulants, and stories about horses and women. The cultured classes, and the cliques of gentlemen and gentlewomen who write, take a different view, because in most cases they know nothing of the millions who form the base of the pyramid whereof they themselves are, in a sense, the apex. Charles Dickens did know, and he was consequently able to give us in his Mr. Pickwick a nearer approach to the average English type than had, up to that time, appeared in literature.

In England we all know how Mr. Pickwick and John Bull originated, just as in Portugal they all know about the literary origin of Ze Povinho, just as in Germany the Michel of the caricaturists deceives nobody, and just as in France Jacques Bonhomme is a creation of yesterday. It is to illiterate countries that we must go for the typical character which is half real, half a creation of the popular mind, but wholly loved and wholly believed in. In some remote districts in Ireland, Dan O'Connell,—“the immortal Dan,”—has to some extent suffered this kind of change. All sorts of witty stories are fathered on him. The same thing has taken place with regard to Father Tom Burke, a celebrated and very humorous Dominican preacher of the last century. It is to Turkey, however, with its splendid illiteracy and its mediaeval atmosphere, that we must go for the best national personification of the kind I mean. And we find that personification in Khoja Nasr-ud-Din.

Khoja Nasr-ud-Din lived in Asia Minor towards the end of the fourteenth century of our era; but that does not prevent audacious story-tellers from making him a contemporar of Sultan Saladin, and from describing his trip from Constantinople to the Sweet Waters of Asia on the Bosphorus at a time when Constant inople and both shores of the Bosphorus were in the hands of the Greeks. I make no attempt, of course, to correct those delightful anachronisms,

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for this collection only undertakes to give specimens of tales told by the common people in Turkey, and does not pretend to be in any sense a scholarly or critical product.

The word khoja, sometimes pronounced hoja by Turks, who are as averse from the guttural kh sound as we are ourselves, means teacher or schoolmaster; and, in Turkey it is used before the proper name, exactly as the “Dominie” is used in Scotland. But as in Moslem countries the teacher has an ecclesiastical character, the khoja has something more than a schoolmaster. He is, rather something of the “Dominie” and the curate. One story I present collection tells of Khoja Nasr-ud-Din preaching in a mosque. Several other stories show him teaching his pupils or disciples.

Khoja Nasr-ud-Din was, it is said, a contemporary of celebrated but heterodox Turkish poet Nesimi. The Khoja seems to have likewise been affected by the Hurufi heresy; he was solemnly cursed by his Sheikh to the usual accompaniment of bell, book, and candle. The poet was to suffer with greater severity, being skinned alive at Aleppo. Some of the poetry which he composed while that disagreeable operation was being carried out is given in Gibb’s monumental “History of Ottoman Poetry” (edited by Prof E. G. Browne of Cambridge); but the best critics do not think it is quite up to Nesimi’s usual standard.

Whether it was because he disappointed the public by escape from being flayed alive also, or for some other reason, the fact remains that Khoja Nasr-ud-Din became famous as the laughing-stock of the world.” The phrase that of Professor Browne; and Mr. E. J. W. Gibb is less severe, for he describes our reverend friend as “a Turkish Joe Miller who is credited with endless comical sayings and doings.” One thing certain is that “the terrible cu
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launched at him by his ecclesiastical superior did not apparently make him feel "a penny the worse." On the contrary, it seemed to put new life into him, for it is from this time that we begin to hear of his jokes. Endless, indeed, are the stories which are told about this holy but ludicrous man; and, curiously enough, they seem to increase in number each year—like American Civil War pensioners. In the Stamboul coffee-houses one still hears them narrated every day by grave, turbaned Turks, sitting cross-legged before their chiboks and their tiny cups of coffee. A very large number of them will not bear repetition, owing to what we of this fastidious age and nation would regard as their appalling grossness. And, unfortunately, a great many others will not bear translation owing to the fact that their wit lies in the Turkish manner of expression, or in some reference to local interests or religious rites or Oriental customs, which it would be tedious to explain.

It is instructive to note, however, that the typical Turk, as represented by Khoja Nasr-ud-Din, is as unlike the Terrible Turk of Christian legend, literature, and history as Mr. Bernard Shaw's usual stage Englishman is unlike the heroic Englishman of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, or as Mr. Pickwick is unlike General Gordon. It may surprise some of my readers to learn that, in religious matters, the Turk is rather inclined to be lax, obtuse, and tolerant. On that account the quick-witted and fanatical Arab generally denounces him as practically an Infidel himself. No Turk ever becomes a "Mad Mullah." As a matter of fact the slow, heretical, and materialistic Osmanli suffer quite as much from "Mad Mullahs" as do the slow, heretical, and materialistic English. It must be admitted, therefore, that with his stupidity, his unconscious humour, and his good nature, Khoja Nasr-ud-Din is far nearer the average Turk than any of the historical Osmanli with whose names we are all familiar.

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It is pretty certain, indeed, that the average Turkish peasant knows precious little of the historical Osmanlis, Mohammed the Conqueror, for example, or Suleiman the Magnificent—while, on the other hand, there is no doubt that Khoja Nasr-ud-Din has become literally a house word with him. In the village coffee-house he will relate long stories about the khoja; and in the market, on the road, or when he is quarrelling with his wife, he will freely use of the proverbs and pithy sayings attributed to the holy but very human personage. Like the Spanish pen, the Turk speaks in parables. Subtract from his discourses wise saws wherewith he adorns it, and there will be almost nothing left. A few of those sayings may not, therefore, be out of place here. My first will show, by the way, that, with all his wisdom, the khoja never foresaw the advent of the aeroplane.

"O Brethren," said he, on one occasion, after having so long in thought that his disciples expected some general divine revelation to drop from his lips, "O Brethren, thanks to Allah the Most High, that camels have no wings. For, if they had, imagine the condition of our roads and houses, and what an unhappy state ours would be, if all those brutes perched on the roof-top and we underneath.

On another occasion a beggar knocked at the door of the khoja's house. The khoja, who happened to be upstairs at the time, called out to the visitor to come in. But, instead of entering, the beggar said, "Please come down," and when the khoja descended he pathetically solicited alms. The khoja listened attentively, and then said, "Please come upstairs." When they reached the top floor the khoja turned to the beggar and said in all solemnity, "May God give unto you!"—an Eastern expression, which, like the
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words, “Have patience!” of the Portuguese, immediately silences the most persistent beggar.

The khowa once yoked a young calf to a light cart, but the animal strongly objected to its liberty being thus interfered with, and became quite unmanageable. The khowa then took a stout stick and, going up to the ox, proceeded to punish it severely for not having taught the calf how to behave itself when it was being yoked.

One day the khowa was seen to be standing on one foot at the hour of prayer. When asked why he stood like a stork, on one foot, he answered that the other foot had not performed the ablution, as he had not sufficient water.

A guest passing the night at the khowa’s house called out to him to give him the taper which was at his right side, as the night-light had gone out. Unto whom the khowa promptly answered, in a voice slightly roughened by irritation and sleep, “How can I know which is my right side in the dark?”

One of the khowa’s disciples was an Abyssinian, who once had the misfortune to spill a bottle of ink over his revered master. When the other Softas asked the khowa what had happened to him, he simply said, “It is only the tears of my black disciple has shed over me!”

The khowa had a difference with his wife, who told him in great anger to go away, pointing the direction in which he was to go. The khowa immediately obeyed her, and set off in the direction she had ordered him to take. After a few days hard travelling he met a man coming in the opposite direction, whom he begged to go and ask his wife if he had travelled far enough, or must he continue to go on.

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The khowa once travelled to a town at some distance, when he reached the market-place he was much surprised on finding that, in some respects, this foreign city reminded him of home. Mounting a chair, he said in a voice, “Friends, the air of this city is exactly the same as the air of my native city, and I see the same number of stars as I saw there!”

One day the khowa went with a friend to the den of a wolf in order to see the cubs. The khowa persuaded his friend to go into the den and bring out the young wolves. The friends descended into the cave while the khowa kept watch. The mother wolf was abroad, but returned in haste at the first sound of her cubs. Just as the furious animal was disappearing into the hole, the khowa seized hold of its tail, and held on to it with all his might despite its desperate struggles. The friend angrily called out to him asking why he was throwing in so much dust and dirt on top of him, whereupon, in a choked voice, the khowa replied, “If the wolf’s tail breaks you’ll soon see what the dust and dirt mean!”

The khowa once entered a vegetable garden and had himself generously to such vegetables as he felt he required for the moment or might require later on. The gardener happened to come upon the scene, however; and, speaking with considerable heat, he inquired what the holy man was doing there. Without any hesitation, the khowa mildly remonstrated that the wind had blown him thither. The gardener then asked how it came to pass that those vegetables which belonged to him, the gardener, happened to be in the khowa’s hands, and how a number of other vegetables had managed to get stowed away in the khowa’s bosom. In a benignant way Nasr-ud-Din answered, saying that the wind was so violent that, in trying to save himself from being overturned...
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had caught at anything and everything which came in his way, with the result that those vegetables had got into his hands and into the breast of his garment.

"But what about those vegetables in the sack?" continued the gardener, whose manner was becoming decidedly impolite.

"Why now," quoth the saintly man, scratching his head in perplexity, "that's the very question I was asking myself just when you seized hold of me!"

Some boys, anxious to play a practical joke on the khoja, asked him to climb a tree, their object being to run away with his sandals. They informed the khoja that no one had ever been able to climb that particular tree, and the khoja, always a sportsman, despite his years and the restrictions imposed on him by his sacred profession, at once said that he could do it; whereupon the boys, of course, told him stoutly that he could not, and defied him to try.

The khoja immediately accepted the challenge, and gathered up the skirts of his robe, which he tied round his waist to give his limbs freedom. Then taking off his sandals he placed them in his bosom and began to climb the tree. Naturally the boys were disappointed and hurt on seeing the sandals go up the tree as well as the khoja, and it was not without asperity that they asked the holy man what he was going to do with his sandals in the tree. "O," said the khoja, somewhat taken aback, "I—I need them. I may find a road up here and I don't want to get footsore. Always look well to your feet, my children! Whatever you do, don't get sore feet!"

The khoja was seen one day perched up in an apricot tree, enjoying the fruit. The owner, espying him, asked what business he had up there, and with whose permission he was eating the apricots. The khoja in answer said: "Don't you see that I'm a nightingale?" The owner of the garden laughed, and told the khoja that nightingales were birds that they sang beautifully. At this the khoja began to imitate a bird as best he could, but his vocal efforts amused the gardener, who said: "Surely you don't call a singing?" "Well, you see, I'm a Persian nightingale (bul)" said the khoja, "and this is the way in which the Persian nightingales sing."

Such are the shorter tales told about Khoja Nasr-ud-Din, that disreputable old clergyman whom the Court chronicles of his time probably regarded as a most vulgar person. Doubtful orthodoxy and still more doubtful sobriety, curiously enough, those tales have survived, while pompous and inflated productions of the Stambuli historians have sunk into deserved oblivion. Of these Stambuli wigs "Odysseus" says:

"I will not here enumerate the Stambuli chroniclers or poets. The curious reader will find their names in any his- torian or encyclopaedia. But if I pass them by in silence, it is not from distaste, but from diffidence in recommending a style which can appeal to few. Their writings may be compared to the gateways of Dolma Bagche, or some triumphal arch of caligraphic skill in which the letters and dots are arranged not in the positions which facilitate comprehension, but those which produce the best artistic effect. Of late years it has become the custom to compose in a comparatively simple style, but the old ornate language can still be read in a column of the newspaper which has the felicity to contain the Court circular or the orders which have come forth from "the centre of Majesty," and which, "honoured in their origin and their issue," burst upon a delighted world. The combination of dignity and fatuity which this style affords.