

THE SWEETMEAT BAZAAR, DAMASCUS
PAINTED FOR THE CENTURY BY JULES GUÉRIN

THE SPELL OF DAMASCUS

(THE HOLY LAND: SECOND PAPER)

BY ROBERT HICHENS

Author of "The Garden of Allah," "Egypt and Its Monuments," etc.

WITH PICTURES BY JULES GUÉRIN AND PHOTOGRAPHS

DAMASCUS is one of the most ancient cities in the world. It looks one of the newest. The approach to it is strangely alluring, but the traveler is deceived: there is nothing to lead him to suppose that he is nearing the "great and sacred city" of Julian, a capital to this day full of religious fanatics, whose adoration is mingled with the robust desire to exterminate. Rather does he seem to be enticed onward toward some town of the sirens, where all the pleasures await him.

Long before the great plain in which Damascus lies opens out from the Gorge of the Barada,—that "golden stream" of the Greeks which to this day is the joy of the dark-eyed Easterns who dwell in the earthly paradise; long before the green cloud of the woods which encircle it floats into sight under the radiant sky; long before the first minaret lifts itself up toward heaven, he who goes to Damascus is thrilled with anticipation. It is the Barada which excites in him this mood of expectant ardor. Many miles before Damascus is reached he is in sight of a stream that looks curiously mischievous and happy as it winds between the hills through an avenue of poplars. At first it is small and furtive, as if bent on keeping its frolicsome joy to itself. It seems to wish to go on its way in hiding; but it chuckles irrepressibly, like a child that cannot contain its pleasure. It knows it is going to Damascus, but it does not wish you to share its knowledge. The red and the golden hills enfold it closer and closer, like arms of the desert determined to silence its silvery voice forever, to arrest its dancing feet, by crushing its life out in a long and

sterile embrace. But it seems only to gain in courage and mischief in the presence of danger. It ceases to be furtive; it forgets to hide its sweet knowledge; it becomes friskily defiant as it now boldly dances onward. And the silver poplars increase about it, as if to afford it protection against the cruel but beautiful hills.

Golden and red, silver and silver-green is the way that leads to Damascus, and the Barada dances, dances along it till the traveler's heart dances too, in sympathy with the stream's secret, which the stream can conceal no longer. "I am going to Damascus" becomes "We are going to Damascus," and at last the whole soul of the traveler is aflame with anticipation. He remembers that for long ages the Arabs have called the city under the sacred Jebel Kasyun one of the four terrestrial paradises. He remembers that it is the fabled city of fountains, of languid gardens, of red roses which pour forth the sweetest perfume emitted by flowers that do not grow in the gardens of heaven. He remembers that there the Indian pilgrims, returning from Mecca, rest under the arcades of the Mosque of Sultan Selim and anticipate the joys that are promised hereafter to the faithful Moslem. Mohammed, when a camel-driver, looked at Damascus from the mountain, and refused to enter it, lest he should be content there to resign the glories of paradise. But the less austere traveler, hurried along by the hurrying stream, as if hand in hand with a wildly joyous child, comes at last into the plain where the great, green glades stretch out toward the Syrian desert. He sees the Minaret of the Bride and the

dome of the Omayyade Mosque. He hears the soft murmur of waters threading their way beneath the branches of fruit-trees, and he thinks, perhaps too soon, "this is the Promised Land."

Damascus has a spell. Jerusalem is austere. Damascus, though sacred, is seductive, a city in which to sink down and to forget. And so, after all, is the traveler entirely deceived? Silken garment and hair shirt—so I think of Damascus and Jerusalem, cities representative of two religions, of the faith that promises sensual joys, and of the faith that bids its followers soar above the raptures of the flesh into the rarified air where the spirit can breathe and be strong.

Damascus is for the Moslem; Jerusalem, despite the growing dominion of the Jew, to whom has come much power in the city of the stones of the Temple, but also of the Holy Sepulcher, is for the Christian.

The view of Damascus from the mountain where Mohammed made his great renunciation is one of the marvelous views of the world. Again and again I deserted the mosques, the bazaars, the marble baths, the courts of the fountains, the shadowy khans and the gardens by the streams, for that bare height on which Abraham is said to have had the unity of God revealed to him.

A "CITY OF MAGIC"

AN Oriental city of magic called up by a slave of the lamp to realize one's dream of the Orient; a city ethereally lovely, exquisitely Eastern, ephemeral, to be blown away by a breath like a tuft of thistle-down, not white, but delicately pale with a pallor holding the faintest hint of a sea-shell flush; a city slender, calm, almost mystic in its fragile grace, set in the heart of a great wonder of green, a maze of bright and ardent woods beyond which lie the desert spaces—this is Damascus from the mountain of Jebel Kasyun. It holds one almost breathless, seen thus from afar. Too perfect it looks to be a continuing city. Surely a wind will come from the cruel desert, and—p'ff!—it will be no more. Like gossamer away will fly those multitudes of tenderly fragile minarets, those little cupolas, those flat-roofed houses that seem to have no solidity, to be made of pearl or some elfin substance.

And the woods will hold no longer their Eastern vision, and the waters will sing no longer to the mirage that forever has faded. And perhaps the wind does come, from the Great Syrian desert or from the glittering crest of Hermon. And, lo! the vision does not fly before it out of the heart of the woods. The wind passes and dies at the edge of the sands, or returns unappeased to the snows. And still the ethereal city is there, a dream that has stayed; is there, keeping you motionless, entranced by its tender beauty. And still the waters are singing like happy lovers to the minarets of marble.

That is one aspect of Damascus. Let us take another.

The great Omayyade Mosque in the midst of the city has three minarets. From the summit of the Medinet-el-Arus, or Minaret of the Bride, there is a view over the whole of Damascus. The town of a dream is there spread out beneath you, but it has changed, has become real, definite, an immense maze of poplars and dried mud houses, and of mosques, from which rise the strange and nasal cries of the East. Tunis, seen from the roof of the Bey's palace, is a dazzling ivory white. Damascus is only pale. Some of the roofs of its houses are tiled with red. Most of them are flat. The prevalent color is a faint, sandy yellow, very pallid, broken up by the red roofs and by some white façades. The houses are crammed closely together. A few trees, as if with an obstinate effort, thrust themselves up above the buildings. And these trees are mostly large and dusty cypresses, not standing in companies, but solitary, severe. The dark-green notes of color are a memorable feature in Damascus. There are scarcely any palms. From the Minaret of the Bride I saw but one, a date-palm that looked unhealthy and out of place. Seen at close quarters, the city looks new, and preserves its oddly ephemeral appearance. A breath might have no effect on it, one thinks, but a hard push would surely overthrow it. Running through it are some long Fafnir-like monsters, that lift themselves high above the houses, round-backed, lead-colored, hideous. These are the wooden, tunnel-shaped roofs, sheeted with lead, that cover in the famous bazaars from the burning rays of the sun. Minarets rise on all sides, some of them very beautiful—striped min-



From a photograph by Henry Troth

A BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT IN THE DESERT

arets, minarets dark green, yellow, gray and white, or brilliant with Oriental tiles. And all over the city are squat cupolas, like rows of turned-down cups set close together. These are the roofs of Arab baths.

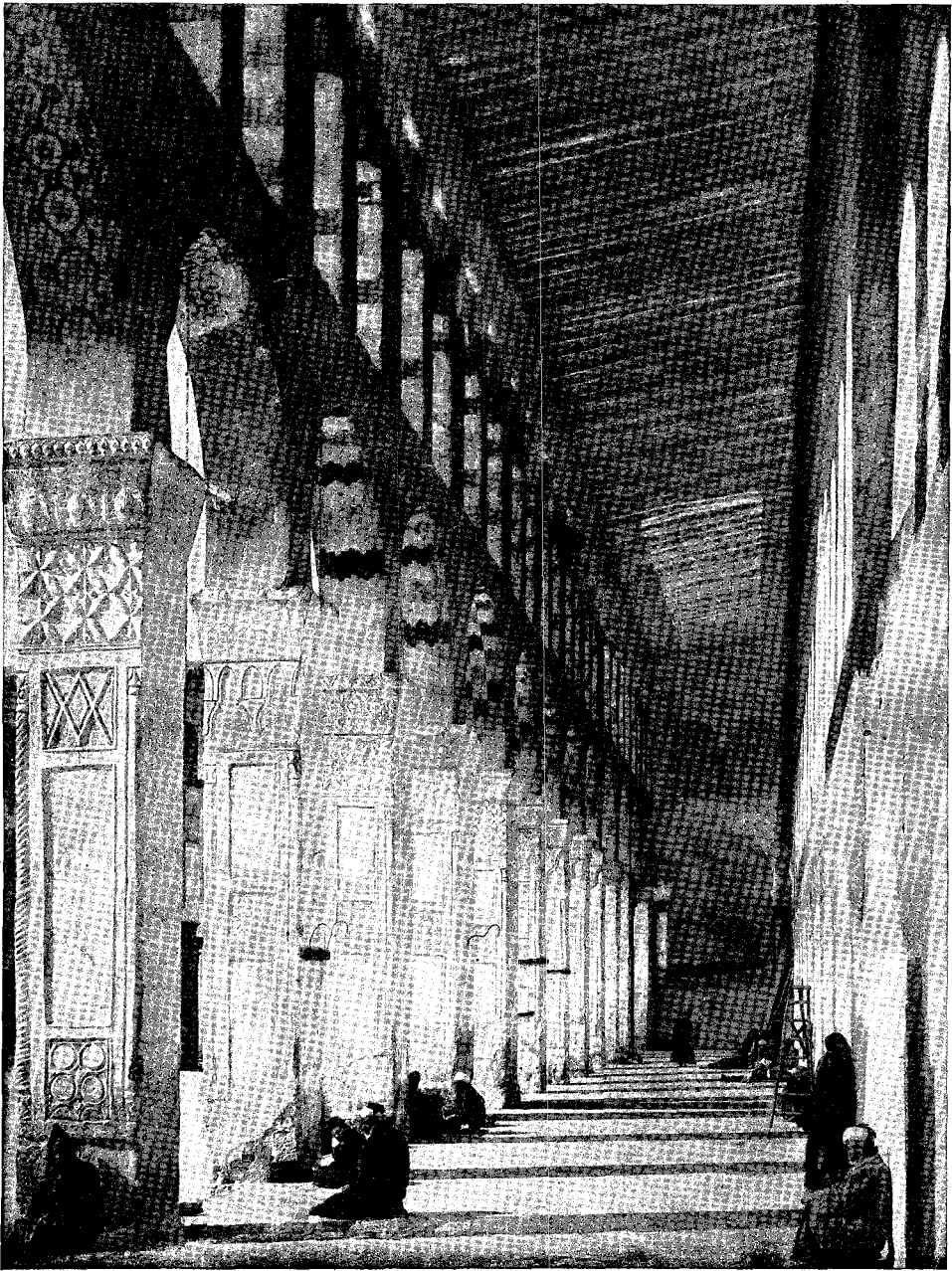
Upon the housetops of Damascus, though many of them are evidently used as terraces, one sees but few people. Now

and then a veiled woman appears for a moment; now and then a child runs out, waving its little arms. But most of the inhabitants are either within, or are swarming through the narrow and busy streets, which teem till after nightfall with a throng in which a European is seldom visible. Into these streets you cannot see from the Minaret of the Bride. Almost



From a photograph by Henry Troth

A PART OF THE BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT (SEE ABOVE)



From a photograph by Bonfis

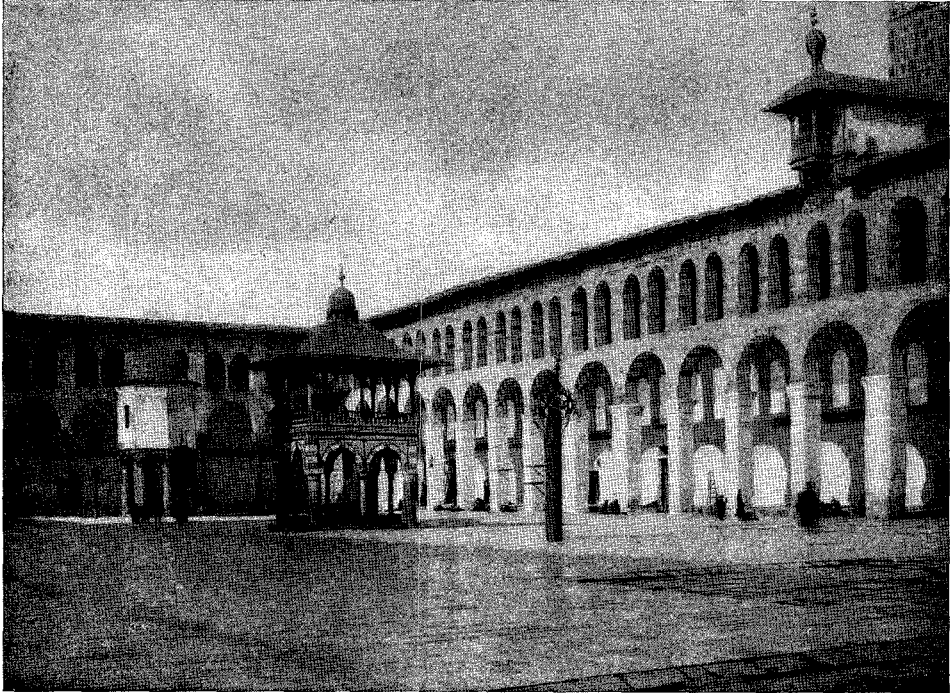
WITHIN THE COLONNADE OF THE OMAYYADE MOSQUE

the whole of the interior of the city is hidden from you. Only two or three courtyards, with orange-trees and fountains, show themselves with a furtive coquetry to the eyes; and the white barracks boldly, almost impudently, reveal themselves, with the Barrack Square, in which doll-like soldiers in uniforms that look black are doing their drill in the sunshine. A sound of drums rolls up to the summit of

—so near to it that it is like a town set in a lovely oasis, a paradise of shade and waters, of roses and singing birds, through which there sometimes filters a breath from the burning wastes, like a Bedouin passing through a throng of chattering townsfolk.

THE TRUE ORIENT

DAMASCUS is still thoroughly Oriental. Cairo has become horribly official and cos-



From a photograph by Bonfils

COURT OF THE OMAYYADE MOSQUE

The fountain for ablutions is seen in the center of the court.

the minaret, and the occasional call of a bugle.

Everywhere in the distance, beyond the houses, the lovely green glades that are the pride of Damascus close softly in. The Anti-Libanus mountains, which seem very close in the clear and radiant atmosphere, lift up their shining snows. Near them are hard, round, yellowish-white hills, with native villages here and there huddled closely against them. Farther off are low, romantic, cinnamon-colored hills melting away into spaces that look like the beginning of the desert—spaces that seem to be trembling gently, as watery mirage seems to tremble ghostlike amid the sands. For the great desert is very near to Damascus

mopolitan; Algiers and Tunis are very French; Jerusalem is the home of religious sects; Beirut contains numbers of Italians, Maltese, Greeks, and Americans: but the fez prevails in the streets and bazaars of Damascus, where once, during a four-hour walk through the principal quarters, I did not meet one man who was not an Eastern or see one house which looked European. Even the trams which, alas! much against the will of many of the Damascenes, have been introduced into the city, and which run out slowly toward the village of Es-Salehiyeh, scarcely interfere with the Eastern atmosphere. They are so small, so dusty, so desert yellow, contain so few persons behind their fluttering curtains,

and creep so humbly, almost as if ashamed, upon their way, that one scarcely notices their presence. The bulk of the citizens will have nothing to do with them, preferring to walk, to drive in the excellent carriages, built in the city and drawn by handsome horses, or to ride when going about their affairs. For they love not change of any kind, and though generally very polite and even helpful to travelers, are proud, often fanatical, and inclined to be thoroughly satisfied with themselves and what was good enough for their forefathers. The granting of the Constitution to the Turkish Empire, instead of being received with general joy in Damascus, horrified many worthy citizens. And though I heard public orations expressive of gratification at the new freedom loudly applauded by Moslems in the circus, there is certainly in Damascus, or was when I was there, a large and influential section of opinion bitterly hostile to the young Turks and all their doings.

But leaving politics and religion aside, and observing the Damascenes at business and at pleasure, in street, bazaar, and garden, in the dancing-houses and the cafés, or galloping over the green, or along the road that leads past the Tekkiyeh, or Pilgrims' House, of Sultan Selim into the midst of the woods, one is surprised by their incessant activity in seeking for gain, and entertained by their vivacious delight in amusement. Yet they can dream. For is not this the town of the narghile and of the striped sofas? The ideal dreaming-place of the Damascene is a public garden or a café, bordered on one side by running water, and lavishly furnished with a multitude of straight-backed, striped sofas, which are stacked together anyhow, under a tree or in a corner, in the "off-hours" of the day, and are set out in rows when customers begin to pour in.

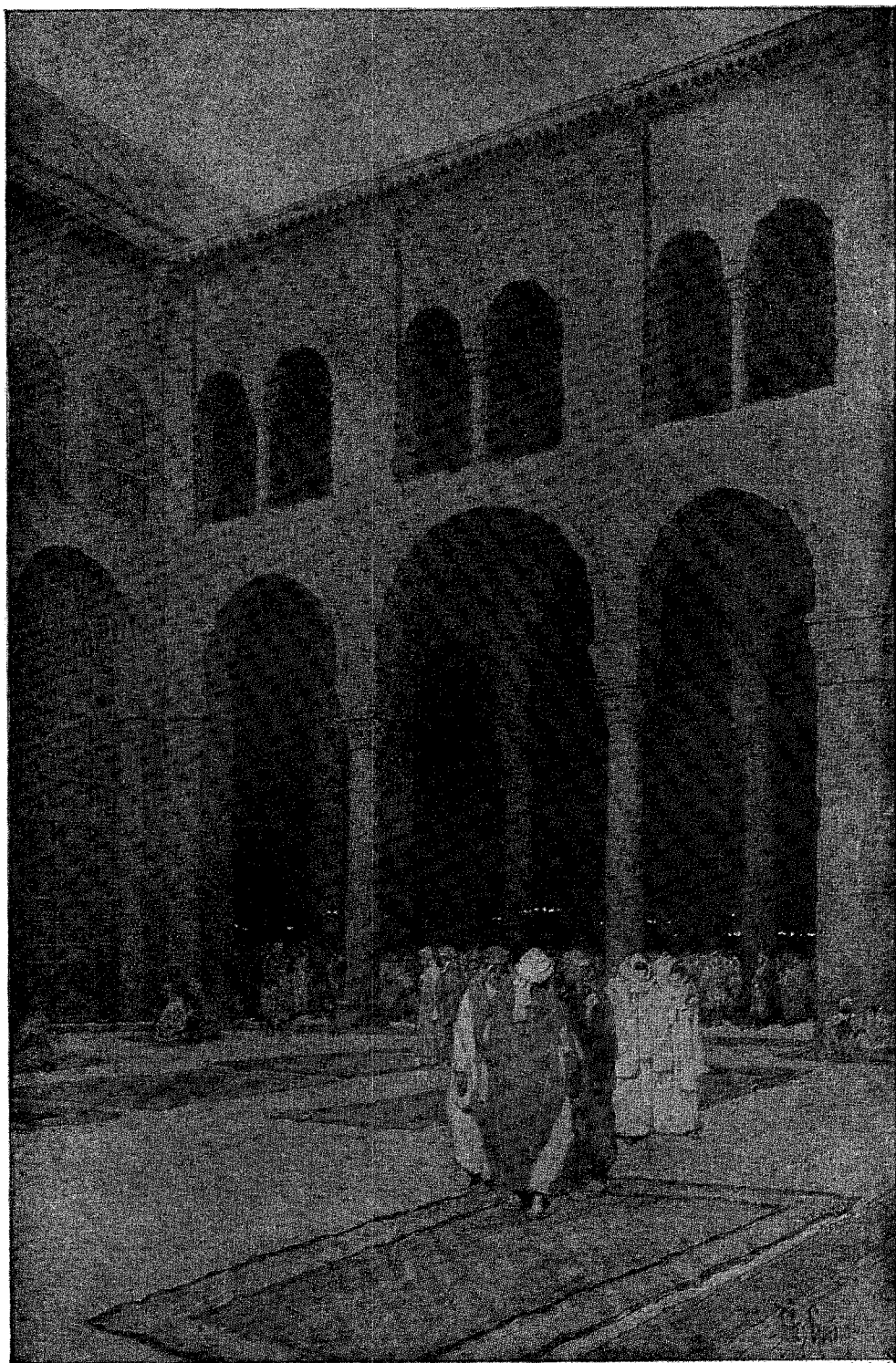
The gardens are often large. They are quite uncultivated, and know not the green sward which is so grateful in Western gardens. Big walnut-trees, poplars,—the poplar is the principal tree in this region,—the almond, and various kinds of fruit-trees cast masses of shade over the wrinkled earth. Here and there are rough arbors made of trellis-work, sometimes surrounded by the tall bushes on which, in their season, flower the world-famous roses from which the attar of roses is distilled.

Beneath the arbors stand discolored wooden tables. At the entrance there is probably a low, white-plastered house for the guardian, with a roof of dried and beaten earth laid on poplar beams. Near it is a fountain.

A calm cheerfulness pervades these pleasaunces. People stroll in quietly, to squat on the striped sofas and listen to the murmur of the water while they drink a cup of coffee, a glass of syrup or raki, and smoke, of course, the imposing narghile, with its long, red tube, ending in green and black. Men are not the only smokers. I have often seen Jewesses in these gardens, fat matrons from the ghetto, with colored and figured handkerchiefs tied over their greasily shining hair, chattering of their families and affairs between the greedily enjoyed whiffs. It is the men who are dreamers. The women talk busily. In the cafés one sees no women.

The typical café of Damascus is a long and rather narrow shed formed by a wooden roof supported by slender wooden pillars, some painted, many merely the trunks of poplars. Between the pillars hang by cords immense lanterns containing petroleum lamps. There are no walls. The sides are open to river and street. The floor is earth. On the side next the street is an iron railing with, perhaps, a few dusty shrubs beside it. The striped sofas, red, yellow, and blue, with wooden frames, are set out in lines. At the end of the café where you enter there is a ramshackle wooden building in which are kept the pipes, the glasses, the coffee-cups, the coffee niche with its glowing embers, the dominoes, backgammon-boards, and the gramophone, which occasionally sheds music that seems to proceed from the throats of husky dwarfs along the river-bank to gladden the hearts of men.

In all Eastern lands the mosques are the chosen dreaming-places of the devout, and Damascus contains about two hundred and forty-eight of them, headed by the great mosque which presides over the city much as St. Paul's Cathedral presides over London. To reach it one goes through the bazaars, passing many shops in which delicious-looking foods of all kinds are exposed for sale. In front of the butchers are sheep's heads, calves' heads, and joints deftly decorated with gold paper and scarlet anemones; the confectioners display



THE COURT OF THE OMAYYADE MOSQUE, DAMASCUS

PAINTED FOR THE CENTURY BY JULES GUÉRIN



M70U



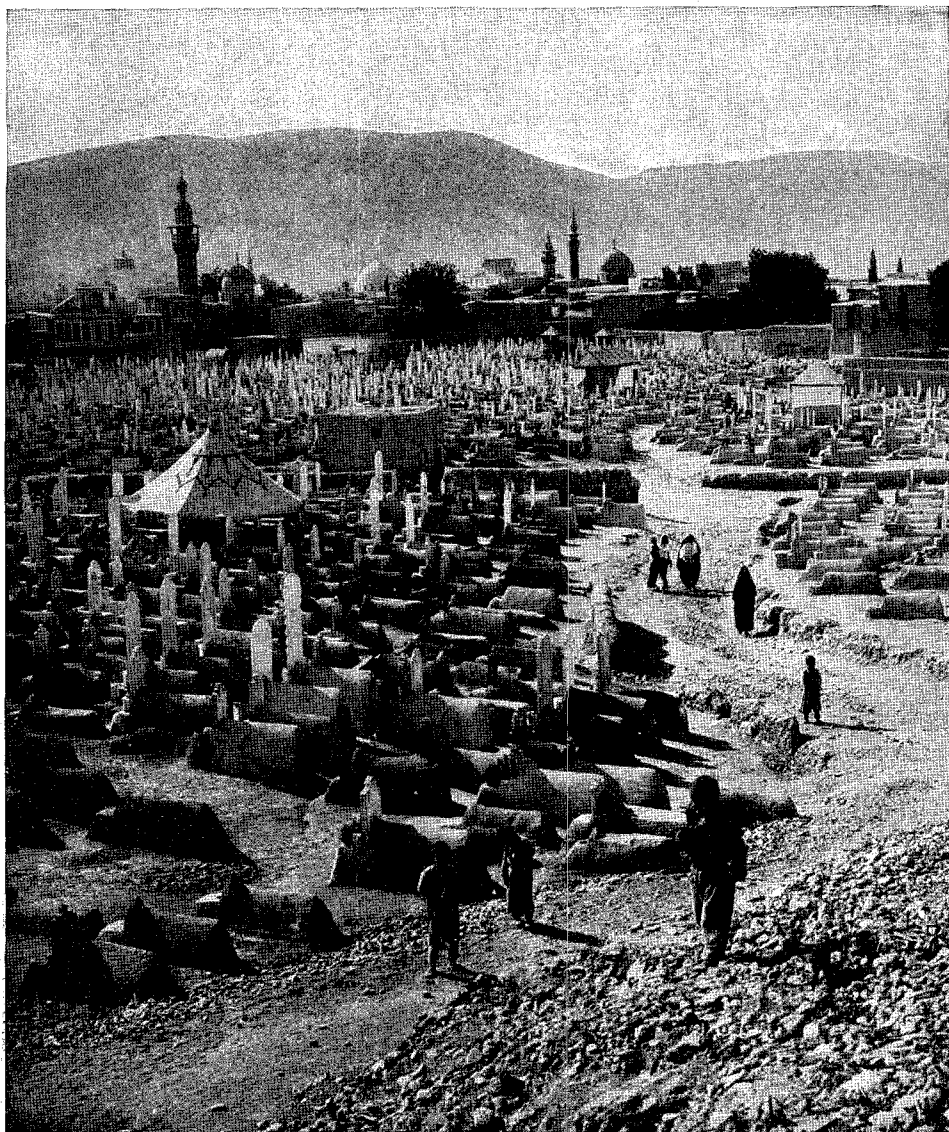
From a photograph, copyright, 1909, by Underwood & Underwood

VIEW OVER THE ROOFS OF DAMASCUS

In the foreground are seen the ruins of the Omayyade Mosque since rebuilt. The arched roof extending across the picture marks the position of a covered street supposed to be referred to in Acts IX, 11, "Go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus."

trays of biscuits, soft cakes, and various kinds of wonderfully light pastry, sticky with honey and grape syrup; at the entrances of the numberless eating-houses are skewers stuck through balls of fried and

larded meat, strips of fat lambs' tails, soups of splendid colors,—the coral red soup beloved of the Eastern is to be seen on all sides,—and bowls full of savory messes, in which rice, *cous-cous* grain, red



From a photograph, copyright, 1909, by Underwood & Underwood

THE CEMETERY, DAMASCUS, MOUNTAINS OF ANTI-LIBANUS IN THE DISTANCE

pepper, spices, fruit, mutton, and chicken mingle in a smooth and succulent mass. Ice-cream is being eagerly bought, and on many spotlessly clean counters are arranged charmingly shaped blue-and-white bowls of sour milk and curds, ornamented with patterns of rich cream. Damascus must be the epicure's paradise. In no other town of East or West have I seen so many alluring displays of food. And butchers, bakers, and confectioners are artists, coquettishly clever in arranging their goods to tempt the most fastidious appe-

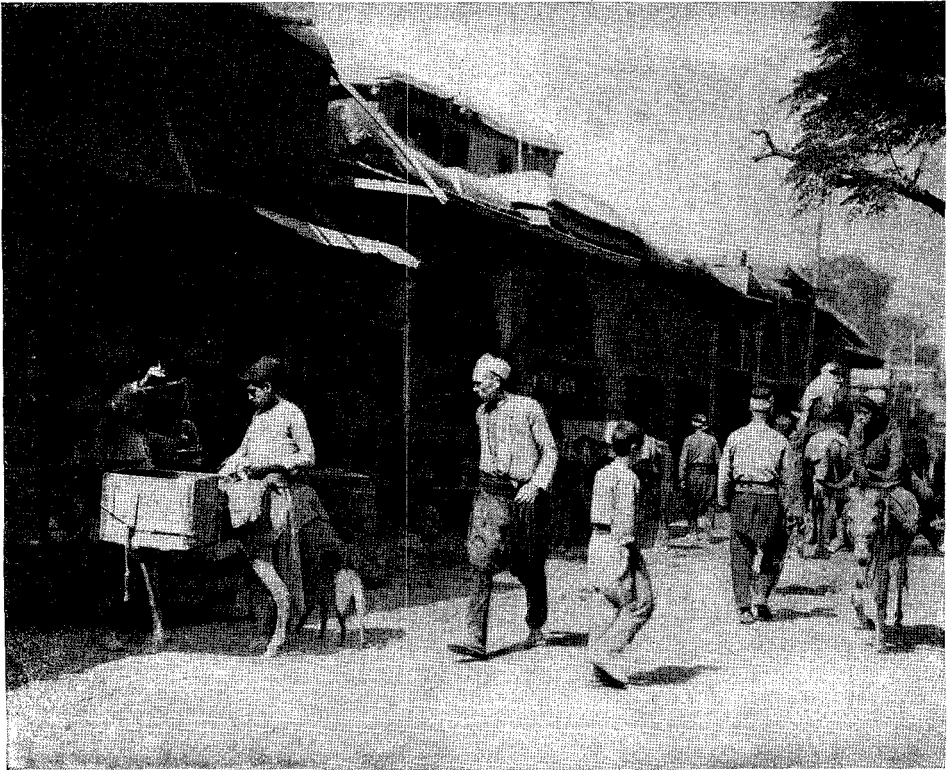
tite. The little red anemone, be sure, is the badge of a subtle mind determined to take you captive.

THE GREAT MOSQUE

At the end of a row of bazaars is the very old and very fine principal gate of the Omayyade Mosque, the great mosque. It is sheeted with brass on which Arabic writing is graven. Just inside, under the high and huge porch, lies Mahmoud, known to every Damascene. Attired in

an amazing, but really beautiful, arrangement of rugs, in which almost every shade of blue and purple is represented, he is stretched prostrate upon a couch, with a multitude of slippers beside him. Without getting up, he ties on your pair, and then immediately relapses into what seems a state of coma. Over an old and rugged pavement, under arches of white plaster, and between pillars of blackened stone, I entered, noticing on my left, let into the wall, some marvelous blue, black, and purple Oriental tiles. Upon the right of the huge court lies the mosque, with its lead-cased "dome of the vulture," with its big columns, and immense, closed doors of light wood, arched and elaborately carved in their upper parts. The court, of course, contains a fountain for ablutions, protected by a sort of balcony of wood with wooden supports, and a lead-cased roof resting on low columns and arches. On the left side of the court is a long arcade with round arches, and at the far end there is also an arcade. The mosque has three minarets, one of which, the Medinet-

el-Gharbiyeh, is beautiful. The other two are the Bride's Minaret, which I ascended, and the Minaret of Isa, or Jesus. The interior of the mosque, much of which was destroyed by fire about eleven years ago, is enormous. Upon the floor are stretched hundreds of small prayer-carpet, many of them beautiful, some gaudy and cheap-looking. Above the carved doors there is some hideous painted glass. The wooden roof, too, is singularly ugly, with much white and green painting. The walls on the right and at the ends are cased to a considerable height with marble. It is believed by many that the head of St. John the Baptist is buried in the eastern wing, and above this sacred place is a large erection of wood with a dome very fine in color, beetle green being mingled with gold. Long trays for slippers lie near it. A tall grandfather's clock, tied to a column with cords, ticks not far off. A heathen temple, which was eventually transformed into a Christian church, called the Church of St. John, once stood here, and in the walls there



From a photograph by Henry Troth

A ROW OF BAZAARS, DAMASCUS

are still to be found remains of these buildings, traces of Greek and Roman architecture.

On one occasion, when I was in this mosque, I saw an Arab carelessly perform a feat which seemed as natural to him as walking on a level road is to me. The marble that cases three of the interior walls rises perhaps twenty feet from the ground, and ends in a minute parapet, upon which a man can stand only with difficulty sideways. There is no rail or support of any kind, and, above, the smooth walls rise to the roof. The Arab whom I saw was a cleaner, and with a long brush in his hand he was coolly promenading about upon this parapet doing his work. I saw him there for half an hour, and left him still in his apparently perilous position, his naked feet clinging sideways to the marble while he used his brush vigorously both above and below him.

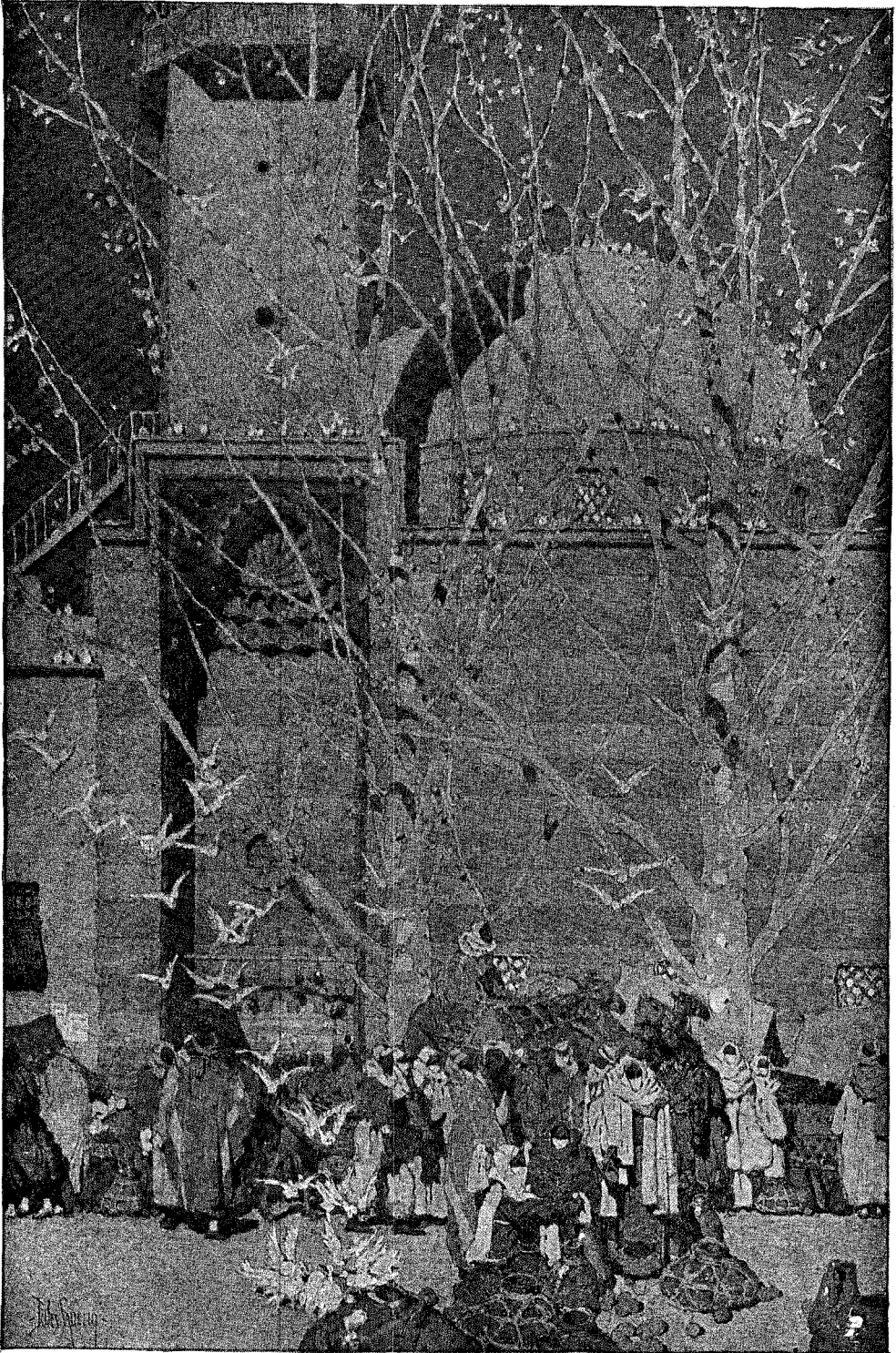
The exterior of the building is far more impressive than the interior, which is not interesting, but even the effect of the massive severity of much of the outer wall is marred by the frightful projecting roof, which, in its dress of pale-blue and green paint, looks almost incredibly tawdry and vulgar.

Near by is the famous tomb of Saladin, in finely carved marble, protected by a cupola and partly covered by a green pall. But here again vile taste wars against beauty. Masses of exquisite Oriental tiles line the walls of the tomb-house, but unfortunately only to a certain height, and above them the eyes are outraged by hideous stripes of offensive color. But in the little garden outside, where sits beneath a wooden porch the grave Moslem who guards the tomb, dreaming quietly in the sunshine, there is a delicately exquisite charm, an inclosed and antique peace which nothing interferes with. Under the porch is a raised platform of stone, and here—of course upon a striped sofa—the guardian passes his quiet days, looking out over a tiny inclosure surrounded by the walls of houses with closely shuttered windows. Little paths, paved roughly with cobblestones, wind between tall green shrubs and rose-bushes. Plum-trees cast masses of shadow. They grow about a huge, oval basin of stone filled with water, in the center of which bubbles a fountain

from a shallow cup. Climbing-roses and jasmine embrace the houses. A big, white arch spans the garden. At the far end, beyond the water, is a trellis.

Why is it so fascinating? Why will it be forever a delicious memory in my mind? I can scarcely tell. Two young Arab boys lean on the edge of the basin dreamily listening to the fountain, and casting sprays of jasmine upon the surface of the water. The guardian draws slowly at his narghile, as he squats on the sofa with his legs tucked under him. A blue pigeon flits under the white arch. The noise of the city, in the heart of which we are, does not penetrate to this place. We hear only the fountain. Who dwells in those shuttered houses, behind the fretwork of wood, behind the climbing-flowers? I shall never know. No voice drops down from them, no eyes peep out. We are in a hermitage, deep surely in old Damascus, where the feet of Abraham trod.

Another garden of Damascus which I can never forget, and to which I returned day after day, lies just outside the town on the bank of the Barada, and is the haunt of pilgrims returning from Mecca to their homes in distant parts of the world. It is inclosed by the mosque and Tekkiyeh, or Pilgrims' House, of Sultan Selim. Outside is a strong wall above which is a multitude of the close-set, cuplike cupolas which are so characteristic of Damascus, interspersed with little pointed towers. Some of the cupolas are large, some small. Behind them, set back from them, rises the mosque, with its squat, lead-covered dome and its two very graceful, yellow stone minarets. The mosque is uninteresting, but the garden at its foot, round which is built the Pilgrims' House, erected in the year 1516, is a bit of enchanted ground. Yet how can its enchantment be defined? The mosque is falling into decay, the Pilgrims' House is neglected, the garden is a wilderness. Old age broods over this place—the strange old age of the East that is like no other antiquity, romantic, fatalistic, and how wonderfully serene! Arched arcades, striped in crude colors, yellow, blue, and white, keep the sun from the rooms of the pilgrims. The interiors look rather like filthy stables, but over every door and every window there is a section of exquisite Oriental tiles, precious things set there to do honor to those who have



THE MARKET-PLACE, DAMASCUS
PAINTED FOR THE CENTURY BY JULES GUÉRIN

M70U

made the long journey. The loveliness of these tiles is indescribable.

No furniture is provided for the pilgrims. At night they lie in a muddle of garments and bundles on wooden platforms. By day they rest in the garden, under the hedges of roses. Never did I fully realize what must be the sweetness of rest after immense exertions and privations, after the weariness of the desert, and the dangers by the way, till I saw the Indian pilgrims reposing in this garden of Selim, watching the water bubbling in the great stone basin before the mosque. Near to them a pear-tree was a mass of snow-white blossom. Poplars with silver trunks trembled in the warm and scented breeze. Between the gray blocks of the pavement the herbage pushed. Everywhere was a wild, untutored tangle of rose-bushes. Here and there a fire burned in a brazier, and pilgrim cooks came and went, preparing mysterious meals. Children in long robes leaned on the raised stone coping of the fountain. Women crouched under the arcade of the mosque. Some Turkish soldiers from the barracks close by strolled in quietly, smoking cigarettes. Beneath a willow a man was praying. And the pilgrims from Samarkand listened to the sound of the bees and the murmur of the water; and some blossoms from the pear-tree, white as their souls were white after their prayers at the holy places, fell softly over them; and surely they thought of the deserts they had traversed, and gave glory to Allah and to his Prophet for bringing them into the earthly paradise, where the minarets look down into the silver-green waters, and the red roses blow beside the doors of their sleeping-places.

Their grave eyes were full of solemnly happy dreams.

"PROTECTOR GENERAL OF THE HOLY CARPET"

IN Damascus there dwells a man famous among the Moslems of Syria, Abdul-Rahman Pasha, Conductor Protector General of the Holy Carpet and of the Sacred Caravan of Syria on the annual journey to Mecca. He is also called the pasha of the *hejâj*. He was kind enough to invite me to pay him a visit. Egypt and Syria have each a holy carpet, but in Egypt the pasha of the *hejâj*, or pilgrims to Mecca, holds his office for one year only, whereas

in Syria the post is hereditary, and is held year after year by the same man. This personage has a position of great dignity in Damascus, but he has to pay for it by journeying every year to Mecca and back. Formerly this was an exhausting undertaking, but now much of the journey can be made by train. When he leaves the train, the pasha steps into his carriage. But he enters the sacred city riding upon a milk-white horse and bareheaded and, save for a white burnoose, naked.

When I arrived at the entrance to his dwelling, which is in a side street close to an Arab bath, I was met by a handsome young Syrian, Elias Nimer, who told me that unexpectedly the pasha had been called away, and that he had been deputed to conduct me through three or four of the principal rooms, and also the pasha's stables. He added, smiling, that his name meant tiger, but that he came from Nazareth and was not at all dangerous. As my admirable and very competent dragoman, Mr. Shukly Jamal of Jerusalem, has a name which signifies camel, I walked through the pasha's palace in pleasantly varied company. We visited first the summer saloon, which of course was on the ground floor, for the rich Damascenes occupy the upper stories of their houses in winter, but in the hot months live chiefly on the ground floor, and spend much time in the courtyards and near the fountains.

Passing across a long and rather narrow interior court, paved with pink volcanic stone, we came into a high room. The floor was covered with black and white marble. A delicious fountain bubbled up in a basin of yellow and white marble, above which was a little yellow lion with gaping jaws. Near it was a framed plaque, on which, in white lettering against black, were the Arabic words, "God has said, 'This is the day when truth is of much benefit to those that speak it.'" Another saying, in letters of ivory, proclaimed, "God is merciful to His people." Over a very graceful and lovely marble table hung a handsome gold and crystal chandelier, and the furniture was exquisite, inlaid with walnut, ivory, silver, and mother-of-pearl, and upholstered in gray and pale-yellow striped silk. The effect of this combination was extraordinarily cool and elegant. A discordant color note

was struck by the ugly painted ceiling, crude and garish, and strangely out of place, looking down on the delicate marble.

Up-stairs was a large, uninteresting dining-room, with an immense round table in the middle, on which were arranged, quite in European fashion, knives, forks, and napkins for sixteen people. Passing through a hall, I then came, between tiger and camel, into the pasha's official reception-room. This was a finely proportioned chamber, containing a quantity of furniture inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl, and cushioned with yellow, black, and red silk. At the windows were striped silk curtains, and from the painted ceiling hung a really magnificent hammered brass chandelier, fitted with a multitude of electric lights, which Mr. Nimer politely turned on for my benefit. The floor was covered with a superb carpet from Persia. The false note in this room was supplied by a large, pink stove. Standing on tables were two pictures painted by a Syrian artist. One was large and displayed the sacred carpets of Egypt and Syria, in their respective palanquins of green and red, set upon camels and surrounded by white-robed pilgrims, approaching the round "mountain of sacrifice"; the other was a view of Mecca, with many mosques, and showed the "Holy Stone" covered with a black pall.

While I was looking at these pictures one of the pasha's eunuchs came from the harem to see me. He was a young negro, very tall, thin, shambling, and pathetic-looking, dressed in a pink shirt, black trousers, and a pepper-and-salt jacket and waistcoat. Standing sidewise to me, with his hands hanging, in a high voice he entered into conversation. He informed me that he had been taken when a child from his home in the Sudan and brought to Damascus, where now for twelve years he had been in the service of the pasha. After offering me a cigarette, he proceeded to show me his watch, a silver one, and his chain, which was of gold. He then told me, with an air of pride, that he received one Turkish pound a month for pocket-money, and was always well treated. I congratulated him, but he suddenly collapsed. His triumph faded, and, drooping his small head, he exclaimed in an almost shrill pipe:

"If I had a thousand pounds, I would give it all to return to my own country. I would give also my watch." He paused, then added, "and my chain."

"Can you remember your country?" I inquired.

The eunuch stared with his bulging eyes, and fingered the watch-chain that lay proudly across the pepper-and-salt waistcoat.

"No; but it is my country, and I wish to go back there."

And he bade me adieu plaintively, and shambled away to the pasha's harem.

After visiting the pasha's stables, in which I saw magnificent horses, with skins like golden satin, munching barley that was piled up in round heaps almost as big as the mountain of sacrifice, I took my leave, and set out for a long and desultory stroll through the city.

THE ESSENCE OF THE CHARM

DAMASCUS is not a city of "sights," like Jerusalem. It is not famous for its antiquities, and there are not many things in it which one must see at whatever cost of fatigue or boredom. Nevertheless, or perhaps for this very reason, I never grew tired of wandering about it, of visiting the bazaars, the mosques, the baths, the gardens, the khans, the cafés, and even the tombs and the graveyards.

The bazaars are fine, and the shadowy khans, where the wholesale trade is carried on, are fascinating. In them one is away from the violent bustle of eager buyers and sellers. The light is soft. The murmur of a fountain is often audible. The dream of Damascus descends on the spirit. People are doing business, no doubt, yet the khans are places of dreams, are full of twilight romance. In the bath-houses immense, dark-red and brown cockroaches promenade over floors of exquisite marble, and an occasional rat bounds out from some favorite nook overshadowed by tight bouquets of flowers. Any protest against the presence of live stock is received by the bath attendants with amused surprise. One must therefore either resign oneself—and the cockroaches are deeply curious about strangers from the West—or one must abruptly withdraw, and pass out into the sunlight, perhaps to

the Meidan, to the city walls, or to some garden by a stream.

Although much of Damascus looks new and frail, the walls of the city have an appearance of hoary age. Beneath them are spread masses of dung, which, when thoroughly dried in the sun, is used as fuel. Above them sometimes fantastic and filthy-looking houses appear—houses that seem to grow out of them like some bulbous form of disease. Behind heavily grated windows the dark eyes of women peep down on the rare passers-by. Here and there decaying towers break up these walls, here and there trees show tufts of foliage. One small and solitary window, above which is a rough arch of brick and stone, is said to be the aperture from which St. Paul, at the time of his conversion near Damascus, descended in a basket. Near the Thomas Gate is the site of the house of Naaman, appropriately close to the present place of the lepers, whom I saw gathered about their well, and who extended their twisted and rotting hands to me for alms. The tomb of St. George, who is said to have helped St. Paul in his memorable escape, is not far off, and there may be seen, leaning against an upright stone, and surmounted by a pale-blue wooden pagoda, from which hangs a lamp, a representation of the saint, on a white horse, slaying a green dragon with scarlet jaws. This fiery picture is discreetly framed in white muslin.

The so-called house of Ananias, which is one of the few "sights," is now a subterranean chapel, small and remarkably ugly. It has two altars, and belongs to the Latins, who celebrate mass in it every Thursday. The floor is of stone, the diseased-looking roof is stained with patches of blue and white. A few wooden benches stand before the altars. A chapel on this site is said to have been the first chapel used for Christian worship. One day, as I was leaving it and mounting to earth, some very well-dressed female worshipers—no doubt Syrian Christians—emerged from their devotions, rose abruptly from their knees, fluttered after me, and held out beringed fingers, desiring to "see my money." But very few requests of this kind fell upon my ears in Damascus, where I was usually ignored or treated with grave politeness. And so there was nothing to disturb for me the strange

charm of the City of Minarets, the City of Rushing Waters. I grew to love the place. It cast upon me a spell. I long to return there.

One night I visited the wooden theater. I sat in a box. Upon the stage was given in Arabic a representation of "The Prisoners of the Bastille," preceded by a hymn in praise of—Abdul-Hamid! But I looked generally at the audience. Among the young dandies, the merchants, the Jews, there sat a Bedouin boy, a little apart. I am certain this was his first visit to civilization. He was clad in party-colored rags, full of lovely shades of blue and purple. On his head was the keffiyeh. He gazed with his desert eyes at the Jewish actresses, at the boxes, at the people about him. Between the acts a boy carried about a tray covered with small dishes of nuts, melon-seeds, oranges. "Oh! my uncles," he cried, "occupy your time! Occupy your time, my uncles! Occupy your time!"

The Bedouin uncle responded to the call. He ate from every dish, paying with coins which he disinterred from his enchanting rags. The play proceeded. He stared, violently cracked his nuts, spat out the shells among his neighbors, devoured his melon-seeds. Never did his expression change. Yet no one in that place was so marvelously expressive as he was. The desert was in his attitude. The desert gazed out of his eyes, which till now had always looked on the limitless spaces, on the trembling mirage, and on the shining gold of the sands.

As I watched him, I knew the essence of the wonderful charm of Damascus. It is a garden city touched by the great desert. Under its roses one feels the sands. Beside its trembling waters one dreams of the trembling mirage. The cry of its muezzins seems to echo from its mosque towers to that most wonderful thing in nature which is "God without man." The breath of the wastes passes among the poplars as that Bedouin boy passed among the merchants when he came and when he went. In Damascus one hears the two voices. And when one looks from the sacred mountain upon that city of dream, cradled among the woods, one sees far off the tawny beginnings of that other magic, which looks out from the Bedouin's eyes. And though, perhaps, with the pilgrims

from Samarkand, one loves to rest beside the fountains under the hedges of roses, one is aware of the other love, intercourse with which has made Damascus an earthly paradise for them and for you.

And one knows why Damascus has a spell. It is the city of shade, of waters,

of marble minarets, and of roses. But it is also the great city of the desert.

From the sacred mountain it looks like an exquisite mirage, and it is near to the mirage.

Its spell is the spell of the desert and the spell of the oasis.

(To be continued)



THE CREATORS: A COMEDY

BY MAY SINCLAIR

Author of "The Divine Fire," "The Helpmate," etc.

XIV

A WEEK after his visit to Jane Holland, Tanqueray was settled, as he called it, in rooms in Bloomsbury. He had got all his books and things sent down from Hampstead, to stay in Bloomsbury forever, because Bloomsbury was cheap.

It had not occurred to him to think what Rose was to do with herself in Bloomsbury, or he with Rose. He had brought her up out of the little village in Sussex where they had lodged in a farmhouse ever since their marriage. Rose had been happy down in Sussex.

And for the first few weeks Tanqueray had been happy, too. He was never tired of playing with Rose, caressing Rose, talking nonsense to Rose, teasing and tormenting Rose forever. The more so as she provoked him by turning an imperturbable face to the attack. He liked to lie with his head in Rose's lap, while Rose's fingers played with his hair, stirring up new ideas to torment her with. He was content for the first few weeks to be what he had become, a sane and happy animal, mated with an animal, a dear little animal, superlatively happy and incorruptibly sane.

He might have gone on like that for an interminable number of weeks but that the mere rest from all intellectual labor had a prodigiously recuperative effect. His genius, just because he had forgotten all about it, began with characteristic perversity to worry him again. It would not

let him alone. It made him more restless than Rose had ever made him. It led him into ways that were so many subtle infidelities to Rose. It tore him from Rose, and took him out with it for long tramps beyond the downs; wherever they went, it was always too far for Rose to go. He would basely try to get off without her seeing him, and managed it, for Rose was so sensible that she never saw.

Then it made him begin a book. He wrote all morning in a room by himself. All afternoon he walked by himself. All evening he lay with his head in Rose's lap, too tired even to tease her.

But because she had Tanqueray's head to nurse in the evenings Rose had been happy down in Sussex. She went about the farm and stroked all the animals. She borrowed the baby at the farm, and nursed it half the day. And in the evening she nursed Tanqueray's head. Tanqueray's head never bothered to think what Rose was doing when she was not nursing it.

Then because his book made him think of Jane Holland, he sat down one day and wrote that letter to Jinny.

He did not know that it was because of Jinny that he had come back to live in Bloomsbury.

They had been a month in Bloomsbury. Rose was sitting alone in the ground-floor room that looked straight on to the pavement, sitting with her hands before her, waiting for Tanqueray to come to lunch. Tanqueray was up-stairs, two flights away, in his study, writing. She was