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F. Marion Crawford.

A Chat with the Novelist About Himself, His Work and His Observations Among the Turks

A New View of the Armenian Question—Something About the Turks and the Kurds—Is the Sultan an American?—How Marion Crawford Writes Novels—The Talk of His Characters—His End to Writing—Morality in Novels and the Difference Between the French and the English Schools—A Curious Novel-Gossiping Proposed—What Crawford Thinks of Zola—His Idea of America as a Field for the Novelist—His Talks of the Great American Novel and This Where It Will Come From and Describes the Kind of Novel That Abraham Lincoln Might Have Written.

Special Correspondent of the NEWS. Washington, January 28th, 1896.

ONE OF THE best novels ever written about Constantinople is today in "Paul Patrol" by F. Marion Crawford. I read the story during my stay in Turkey, a few years ago, and was so impressed that I have been writing about it since the Sultan has been living in the East. I had just finished the second reading, when I met to inform here in Washington, and had a most interesting chat with him about Turkish matters. Mr. Crawford has spent months in Constantinople. During this time he was very close to the Sultan and had a good chance to study the situation. He has traveled over most parts of Asia Minor, and has been a number of times through the regions between the Black and Caspian seas.

to me, been massacred a dozen times over during my personal recollections. Armenia is, you know, very close to Russia. It matters as really so bad as they are pointed, it would seem to me that the Armenians could live across the boundary. The Russians are glad to get them, and the Armenians prosper among them. It is not a great many Armenians during my travels throughout the east, and I found wherever they are the innocent, confident, unselfish Christians that the American people believe them to be. My experience with them is that they are the sharpest, strongest and truest of all the eastern people. They say to the Turk that it takes ten Jews to equal one Persian in shrewd business dealings. They have many able men among them, and I doubt not that their leaders have to a certain extent benefited this decade, hoping that the governments of Europe would interfere, and that Armenia would be entirely freed from Turkish rule.

synonymous with that of their Turkish ally, as a rule, very devout. Nearly all of them read the Koran, and even the men of the better classes are careful to conform to the details of everyday Mohammedan worship. I know of one very prominent Turk who is noted for his liberality, who is nevertheless constant in his attendance on the mosque, and who prays five times a day. He has a costly rug upon which he always kneels when he turns his face toward Mecca and makes his prayers. This rug is carefully watched that nothing unclean may touch it. If a dog should happen to run over it the whole family would be excited and the house would be turned upside down until it was purified. The Mohammedans, in fact, are more rigid in the practice of their religion than we are. They are not ashamed of their faith, and you see many merchants sitting and reading the Koran in bazaars during the intervals of trade. They will say their prayers when the time comes, no matter what is going on about them. They keep all the fast days. In Damascus, which is the Mohammedan East, it is against the lives of the Koran to eat and smoke during the day time, and those who do so are liable to be put in prison. They will not eat a morsel of food to pass their mouths. They will not smoke, and many of them will not even swallow their spittle. Many of the better class of Mohammedans contend that their religion is better than ours on account of its salutary rules. It practices, you know, the details of men's daily life. The Mohammedan man to take a certain number of baths. He has certain habits of eating and drinking. He never has food with the exception of a lock on the crown, and he will not eat certain kinds of meat.

He is said to be much in fear of man's opinion, and he seldom goes out of his palace except on his way to the mosque. I do not believe that he prays every day, but he has been told that he sometimes gets up at night and goes into some quiet place to read the Koran. He has a powerful power of carrying the details of things in his mind. He photographs them, as it were, on the sensitive plates of his brain and develops the negatives as they are needed for his work. I asked him a number of questions as to how he wrote his novels, referring to an interview which I had some time ago with Frank Stockton, in which Mr. Stockton said that he thought out a story as his novel began beginning to end, before he wrote a single word. He put his pen to paper. Mr. Crawford replied:

"My method of working is somewhat the same, though I do not go as far as the writing of the novel or the conversation. I know how the story is to end, however, before I begin, and the finished work of the novel is generally done in my mind. I first study out the plot and outline the chapters and situations, often sitting for a day at my desk with my pen in hand and accumulating practically nothing. I make the outline as complete as possible, writing out the heads of chapters, arranging the chapters and constructing in short a skeleton of the novel. I then begin to write and work along steadily as far as I can, according to my schedule, until the book is completed. Of course, I have sometimes to change from the first outline, but not much."

curious thing, however, that in writing these conversations as they occur to me that will aid me in the development of the latter part of the story. I receive these far-sighted chapters and put them down where they naturally come in."

for him. I wrote it, and I have been writing fiction from that day to this. "A great many people, Mr. Crawford, notably college professors, think that there is some secret process contained in every book, some mission which the author is trying to further. What is your end in novel writing?" "It is that of most literary men," was the reply. "It is to interest and to amuse in order that I may make money out of it. I write novels because it pays me to write them, and because it is my mode of making a living. I have no great lessons to teach, nor moral ends to further. Novels written for such purposes seldom succeed. A man might be able to write one such story, but not more. It requires a peculiar nature to write a great novel of that kind, such, for instance, as that of Abraham Lincoln. Had he been a novel writer he could, from the outcome of his soul, have made a great novel."

THE TURKS AND THEIR RELIGION. "How did you find the Turks?" "They are in many ways a very decent people," replied Mr. Crawford. "I am sure you would rather trade with a Turk of a few in any part of the east than with a Christian. I have the highest respect for Christianity, but the Christians of the east are not like us. The business men among them are to a large extent a set of sharpers, so much so that the word Oriental Christian is almost synonymous with that of thief. The Turks are, as a rule, very devout. Nearly all of them read the Koran, and even the men of the better classes are careful to conform to the details of everyday Mohammedan worship. I know of one very prominent Turk who is noted for his liberality, who is nevertheless constant in his attendance on the mosque, and who prays five times a day. He has a costly rug upon which he always kneels when he turns his face toward Mecca and makes his prayers. This rug is carefully watched that nothing unclean may touch it. If a dog should happen to run over it the whole family would be excited and the house would be turned upside down until it was purified. The Mohammedans, in fact, are more rigid in the practice of their religion than we are. They are not ashamed of their faith, and you see many merchants sitting and reading the Koran in bazaars during the intervals of trade. They will say their prayers when the time comes, no matter what is going on about them. They keep all the fast days. In Damascus, which is the Mohammedan East, it is against the lives of the Koran to eat and smoke during the day time, and those who do so are liable to be put in prison. They will not eat a morsel of food to pass their mouths. They will not smoke, and many of them will not even swallow their spittle. Many of the better class of Mohammedans contend that their religion is better than ours on account of its salutary rules. It practices, you know, the details of men's daily life. The Mohammedan man to take a certain number of baths. He has certain habits of eating and drinking. He never has food with the exception of a lock on the crown, and he will not eat certain kinds of meat."