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NE OF THE best novels ever written about Constantinople as it is today is "Paul Patoff," by F. Marion Crawford. I read the story during my stay in Turkey, a few years

ago, and have reviewed it since the sultan has been having trouble with the Armenians. I had just finished the second reading, when I met its author 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 many of the leading Turkish officials, and had a good chance to study their civilization. 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.

During our chat the subject of the massacres came up. Mr. Crawford evidently thinks there are two sides to the story, and that all of the truth has not yet been told. Said he: "I have no doubt but that the Armenians are being badly treated, but the story of the massacre must, I think, have been exaggerated. This is not the first time they have been persecuted by the Turks. Why, there are only 600,000 Armenians, all told, and these 600,000 have, it seems to me, been massacred a dozen times over during my personal recollection. Armenia is, you know, very close to Russia. If matters are really so bad as they are painted, it would seem to me that the Armenians could flee across the boundary. The Russians are glad to get them, and the Armenians prosper among them.

"I met a great many Armenians during my travels throughout the east, and I doubt whether they are the innocent, confiding, unoffensive Christians that the American people believe them to be. My experience with them is that they are the sharpest, shrewdest and trickiest of all the eastern people. They say in Turkey that it takes ten Jews to equal one Armenian, and five Armenians

to equal one Persian in sharp business dealings. They have many able men among them, and I doubt not that their leaders have to a certain extent fomented this trouble, hoping that the governments of Europe would interfere, and that Armenia would be entirely freed from Turkish rule."

"How about the Kurds?"

"The Kurds are a very rude, rough people," replied Mr. Crawford. "They are fanatical Mohammedans, and their religious feeling against the Armenians is increased by their business dealings with them. The Armenians get the Kurds drunk and then cheat them out of their property. You must remember that the Armenians are the merchants of that part of the country. They do all the business, and they often get the better of the bargain with the unsophisticated Kurds."

"How did you find the Turks?"

"They are in many ways a very decent people," replied Mr. Crawford. "I assure you I would rather trade with a Turk or a Jew 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 in the minds of eastern travelers 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 mosques, 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 Ramazin, which is the Mohammedan Lent, it is against the laws of the Koran to eat and smoke during the day time, and from sunrise to sunset they will not allow 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 Mohammed-

dans contend that their religion is better than ours on account of its sanitary rules. It prescribes, you know, the details of man's daily life. The Mohammedan has to take a certain number of baths. He has certain habits of eating and drinking. He shaves his head with the exception of a lock on the crown, and he will not eat certain kinds of meat."

"How about the sultan and the Turks of Constantinople, are they very religious?"

"You do not get a good idea of the Turks from the people of Constantinople," replied Mr. Crawford. "That city is made up of a mixture of races. The Turks out in the country often have long beards and fair faces. They are more like the Persians than like the people of the other nations of the Levant."

"As for the sultan," continued Mr. Crawford, "he is not a Turk—at least he is not one in the minds of some people throughout the Levant. He is supposed by many to be of Armenian birth and he has been nicknamed the "Armenian Coachman" from a story that his real father was not the sultan, but an Armenian, who drove one of the coaches in which the ladies of the harem took their outing. Of course this nickname is not uttered above a whisper in Constantinople. It would not be safe. Every one, however, has heard the story and the features of the sultan add some force to it. He looks more like an Armenian than a Turk."

"It may be that he wishes to give the lie to the story by the persecution of the Armenians," said I.

"I don't know about that," replied Mr. Crawford. "He would probably like to stand well with his subjects. He is said to be much in fear of assassination, and he seldom goes out of his palace except on his way to the mosque near by, at which he prays every Friday. I have been told that he sometimes gets up at night and goes from one guard to another examining their revolvers to see if they are properly loaded."

Here the conversation turned to "Paul Patoff" and Mr. Crawford surprised me by saying that its wonderful descriptions were penned from memory in Italy after he left Constantinople and not from notes taken on the ground. He had a phenomenal 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