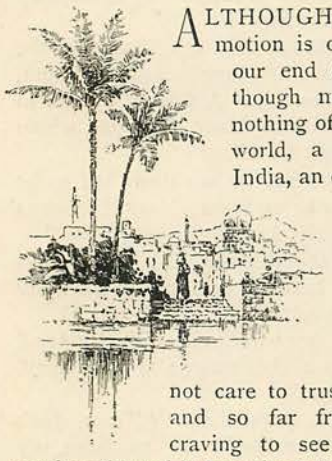
THE NEARER EAST.



ALTHOUGH easy and rapid locomotion is one of the luxuries of our end of the century, and though many travellers think nothing of a journey round the world, a cold-weather trip to India, an excursion to Japan, or a run over to San Francisco, still it is a "far cry" even now to some of the ends of the earth, and there are timorous souls who do not care to trust themselves so long and so far from home. Yet the craving to see the world and the wonders thereof is sometimes strong even in the least venturesome minds.

The East especially, with its immemorial associations, has a fascination for natures the least curious and the least imaginative. But it is a long way to India, and the sea-voyage is a terror to many; Cairo is distant and expensive; the Nile means a sojourn of many weeks and a full purse; while the trip through Palestine is still complicated as to details, in spite of the ubiquitous influence of "personal conductors." But there is a nearer East than these if people would only realise the fact—an East within fifty hours of London, to be reached by a journey as direct as the crow's flight, and as simple and rapid as modern travel can make it. What is less formidable than the journey to Marseilles? And, once there, what is simpler than the transfer of self and baggage on board one of the lively little steamers which are bound all the days of the week save one or two for the harbour of Algiers? The boat starts, let us say, at mid-day, and the eyes which close upon the brilliant, many-towned coast of France—upon Europe in one of its most highly-civilised and hackneyed aspects—open upon a scene of the most striking and brilliant contrast—upon the shining white terraces of a tiny oriental city, climbing the cone of an abrupt hillside, and stretching out into the blue waters of its famous harbour the long arm of its ancient, storm-beaten mole.

This is Algiers: French Algiers, it is true—in some respects very French indeed, and even more English—but Algiers all the same, still a city of the East, as truly as Cairo or Damascus, still delightfully redolent of the Arabian Nights, and where, across the slender stage of French colonial and English fashionable civilisation, there still stalk the wild figures of the tent, the desert, and the caravan. Its mixture of races, its babel of tongues, its wonderful medley of costumes, complexions, manners, and customs, its muddle of architectures, its varieties of vegetation, half-tropical and half-European—combine to make Algiers a place of cosmopolitan, perhaps, rather than of precisely unique fascination. But the East, and things Eastern, undoubtedly do predominate, and the feeling that one is out of Europe ("It is such a *rest* to be out of Europe!" somebody once said) is the first of many new impressions which crowd upon your mind as you step ashore on the piers of the Algerian harbour.

Algiers does not, as is a common impression, face directly north. It creeps round the sharp curve of its own bay, and its outgoing suburb of Mustapha, where the English live and the hotels are, almost faces the rising sun. From Mustapha, across the foaming curve of the bay, and across the green levels of the Metidja Plain, may be seen the ranges of the Atlas and Djudjura Mountains, piled one against the other in splendid relief against the varying sky. From the higher summits of the suburb of El Biar, beyond Mustapha, the more purely seaward view is to be had in greater perfection. Here, from the rose-grown terraces of some favoured villa, you may look down upon the placid harbour, with its varied shipping and its group of ancient buildings, and you may stand and

IN THE MOORISH TOWN.

watch, in contemplative moments of lovely afternoons, the slow, graceful sweep of some outgoing vessel, as she rounds the angle of the mole and breasts the outer waters of the bluest and most treacherous sea in the world.

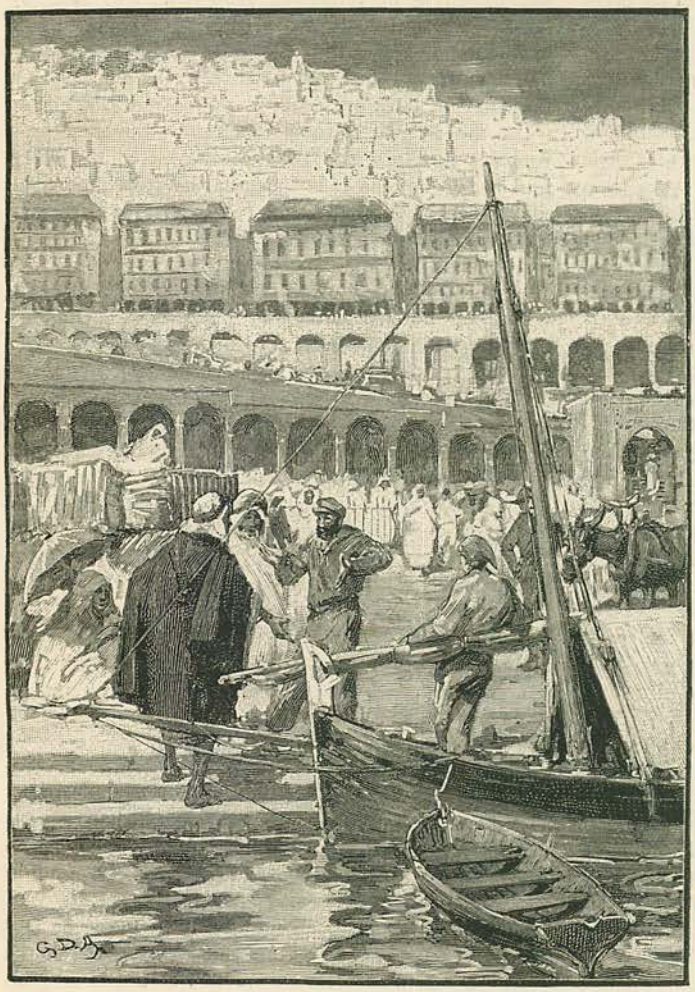
But there is no doubt that these beautiful views, so delightful to the pleasure-seeker, once wore a very baneful aspect to other eyes. Up into the blue vaults of this superb and cloudless sky, across that glittering strip of sea, along the dazzling white walls of mosque and terrace, there once wandered weary and hopeless glances, dim with the heart-sickness of the exile and black with the hatred of the slave. For the traditions of Algiers were for centuries the traditions of slavery; and ever since its foundation by some Arab prince, in or about the tenth century, the little white town, with its fortress and its sheltered harbour, gave refuge to the renegades and adventurers of every nation, and was the centre of every sort of lawlessness and barbarity, until a period not by any means distant from the present. To Algiers, in the fourteenth century, fled the Moors of Spain, at the time of their expulsion from Europe; and from there they kept up that warfare against the civilised powers which gained for them in time such names as the Nation of Corsairs and the Scourge of Christendom. Their galleys scoured the sea, and were the pest of every nation; no flag was sacred to them, and their prisoners of every nationality became slaves, to be ransomed, it might be, or, if not, to work out their lives in exile and slavery under their conquerors. It is difficult to believe that at a time within the memory of our own grandfathers, there were no fewer than twelve hundred Christian slaves in Algiers. It was not until 1816 that the English and Dutch fleets combined successfully bombarded the fierce little capital of the corsairs, forced its governor to yield, and exacted a treaty which insured the liberation of slaves without ransom, and practically abolished Christian slavery and Algerian piracy for ever. A chain of subsequent events, trivial enough in themselves, led to the acquisition of Algeria by the French. In 1830 Algiers fell to the French guns, and its colonisation under the French has been proceeding by slow degrees ever since. It is certain that much unnecessary cruelty marked the French conquest, and has borne bitter fruit in the hatred of the Arab tribes towards their conquerors; but those dark days are over now, and the native of Algeria, if he is not a devoted vassal of the great Republic has, at least, no longer much to complain of. Peace reigns, and where slaves once toiled, and pirates landed, and armies bled, the languid step of the invalid now paces the sunny terraces of Mustapha, and eager tourists turn their faces towards the desert and all the joys of travel in the "interior."

As we have said, the town of Algiers wears at first sight a decidedly cosmopolitan aspect. But this is only true of the French, or lower town, which consists, roughly speaking, of three long parallel streets, converging towards a central square—the Place du Gouvernement, which, but for a group of palm-trees at one side, might be the shabby *place* of any little French provincial town. There is the Boulevard de la République, facing the harbour, with a handsome frontage of hotels, offices, arcades, and shops. There is the Rue Bab Azoun, entirely composed of European shops, where French and English do their household shopping; and above that again is the Rue de la Lyre, a street of mixtures, where the native element first begins to predominate. These streets are alive with business and movement, with the comings and goings of the infinitely varied population of the town. Under the dingy arcades of the Bab Azoun French and English, American and Moor, Arab and Jew, Spanish and Portuguese, Kabyle, Negro, and Turk, and every other variation of the peculiarly mongrel races for which Algiers is famed, rub shoulders with perfect impartiality. The brilliant uniform of the Zouave or of the Chasseur d'Afrique clashes in a confusion of colours with the scarlet *burnous* of the Spahi, or soldier of the native regiment; the picturesque rags of the Arab, draped about his tall, gaunt figure with a certain native dignity, contrast in a striking manner with the greasy broad-cloth of the French citizen; neat English and smart American maidens are jostled by the bold gipsy women, who rush at them in the open street and begin fortune-telling in vehement gibberish; and side by side with the trim Frenchwoman in high heels and higher hat waddles the inmate of the harem, a formless bundle of white draperies, showing nothing but the velvet of dark eyes above a muslin mask. It is when the French town is left below, and the tourist ventures upwards into the network of alleys which lead out of the Rue de la Lyre, that he begins to realise that Algiers is really an oriental city. He might go much farther and fare worse in this respect, for anything more genuinely "native" than the Moorish town of Algiers it would be difficult to find. The blank, white walls, the blinded windows, the grim, iron-studded portals, speak eloquently of oriental seclusion. The mysterious, veiled figures of women slipping noiselessly from street to street; the water-carriers balancing pitchers upon well-accustomed shoulder-blades; the merchants sitting cross-legged in their open shops; the bearded, patriarchal-looking men, in gorgeous raiment, who pause to haggle, to converse, or to greet an acquaintance—all breathe of the Arabian Nights. Now you come upon the bustle of a little native market, where fruits and vegetables, and clotted masses of dates, and sacks of grain are exposed for sale. Now you are squeezed up against the wall by the passing of a laden troop of miserable little donkeys, goaded from behind by a cruel, shouting, and gesticulating driver. From the house-tops the unveiled faces of women look down at you, and promptly disappear if you look up; charming children, as bright as humming-birds in their vivid little vests and jackets, cross your path at every turn and play about your feet; and from the doors of native cafés come the subdued voices of men playing cards and dominoes, and sipping coffee out of tiny vessels like egg-cups.

When you reach the summit of the town you find the Casbah or citadel—an ancient fortress, which the little city wears as its crown—which stands in its grim entirety a witness to many a dark page in the history

of Algiers. From this point you probably descend by an outer road, and so descending, you come upon a mosque in a garden of palms. This is the Mosque of Sidi Abder Rahman, and its graceful minaret pierces the sky with a dazzling whiteness, picked out with a few coloured tiles. The afternoon breeze sighs through the palms of the Jardin Marengo: down the long flight of steps to the mosque go shuffling the wild, ungainly figures of its worshippers, and beyond them and through the framing branches of mimosa and palm you catch glimpses of an almost purple sea. Such a scene photographs itself upon the memory, and in colours! It is an Eastern fairyland—something quite un-European, quite unlike the Nineteenth Century. The impression is not destroyed when you enter upon the cool, arcaded silence of the mosque. About its matted floors, stand, or kneel, or lie, the perfectly motionless figures of the worshippers in the various attitudes of prayer. As you pass them (on your stocking-soles—for you must ignominiously leave your boots at the entrance) not by a flicker of the eyelid, not by the shadow of a change in the stern and immovable expression of their faces, do they betray a consciousness of your presence. They worship in silence; no sound reaches them but the dripping of a fountain in the outer court, or, perhaps, from some inner sanctum, the drone of a voice which is reading monotonously the stored wisdom of the Koran.

Such is Algiers the town in its modern and in its Moorish aspect. Round and about it the country breaks into the gentle undulations of the Sahel range, low hills, which are in places well wooded, in others dotted with villas and gardens, and in others again covered with heath and ling. On the eastern slope of these Mustapha, the fashionable suburb, suns itself, a sprinkling of hotels and villas, which nestle in the midst of fir and eucalyptus woods, of gardens, and orange-groves and pleasure grounds. Between these, and threading the country in every direction, wind and climb the narrow, deep-cut, stony Arab lanes, overhung with wild hedges of the cactus and the aloe, and where every branch that meets above your head is twined and hung with wreaths of the pale, ivory-tinted clematis and trails and tendrils of the delicate wild vine. But the charm of suburban Algiers is in its gardens, where as the season advances and the April days grow long and the nights balmy, there is a luxuriance of blossoming shrubs, a riot of flowers, which passes description. Violets bloom early in the year, and make beds and borders purple, and the whole air sweet, before March, but they need care and cultivation. It is the rose, *par excellence*, that runs riot in these delightful gardens. The *Gloire de Dijon* covers every available wall with a solid weight of blossom; the delicate lemon-tinted *Maréchal Niel*, and wild sprays of the *Banksia*, yellow and white, clamber over terraces and arbours, pillars and balustrades, while every delicate variety of *La France* and *Fortune's Yellow*, and the whole delightful family of tea and monthly roses make themselves everywhere at home. In the cooler place of every garden is a thicket of arum lilies, breast-high; the walks are bordered with tall white irises; beds of petunias and geraniums, ixias, and sparaxis blaze in the sun. Blossoming trees and shrubs make arbours everywhere; oranges and lemons still hang on the glossy green branches, some of which are already breaking into heavily-scented bridal bloom. The blood-red purple of the *Bougainvillea* spreads itself like a mantle over the white villa-walls, and here and there the deep plum-colour of the Judas tree puts the pale tints of the lilac to shame. In the gardens



LANDING AT ALGIERS.

ON THE BORDERS OF THE DESERT.

of the older Arab villas on the slopes of Mustapha and El Biar a picturesque neglect is allowed to prevail. Many of them are half-deserted, and the stranger may wander through them almost at will. In such a garden on a hot night of May or June the nightingale sings in the deep shadow of the mimosa hedges, and the cuckoo answers her from the pine wood across the gully, and to these delicate solos the harsh, dry croaking of the frogs in the slimy garden tanks makes a grotesque and not altogether disagreeable accompaniment.

It is a fact that lovers of the Riviera have seen or say they have seen, something like this before. The rose, the palm, and the orange abound on the south coasts of France and in Italy, and are not, of course, peculiar to North Africa. The charm of novelty in Algiers is perhaps more potent in certain of its aspects of desolation and loneliness than in its luxuriance of gardens and flowers. When the suburb, and the villas, and the woods are left behind, the country becomes wild, open, and arid. Dusty highways stretch in every direction over the uplands of the Sahel, and meander vaguely across the interminable levels of the plain below. These you may follow for hours, and meet nothing but the curious, high, native coaches lumbering along through the dust, from the hooded roofs of which wild, dark faces look down at you with their impassive stare. The Plain itself, the Metidja, is a curiosity to European eyes, and has, if not beauty, its own unique fascination. It is green and fertile enough, now with vineyards, now with wheatfields (which are streaked with the purple of the wild gladiola, growing lavishly among the green), and now with acres of the sweet-scented geranium from which certain strong essences are distilled. It is in the twilight that the prairie-like stretches of these flats grow weird to the eye; only here and there a jagged clump of cactus starts up against the red sky-line, or a palm, rising in solitary slenderness, breaks, while it only seems to accentuate, the illimitable loneliness of the plain.

It is in these lonelier tracts, too, that you catch glimpses of a wild and wandering life, which make you realise that you are in the land of the Great Desert. Wild figures start up by the lonely roadways, which startle you with their barbaric air; out of miserable Arab huts, under the palmetto and cactus-scrub of some scorched hill-top, troops of nearly naked children rush out at you, and women, bare-footed and bare-legged, with scanty draperies clasped about their persons with pieces of barbaric jewellery, stand staring as you pass by. As you pick your steps down the declivities of some Arab lane, you may be startled at any moment by the apparition of the long train of a gipsy caravan wending its way back, with laden horses and mules, with women and children and black-eyed babies, to native desert places in the interior. Such sad, stern faces stare at you from under the tattered, *burnous* hoods! You feel that through these fluttering rags the scorching wind of the desert has blown, and that desert sands are sifted in their folds. And there is the strange feeling with these wild figures that they are—while yet they are not—familiar. The actual eye has not before beheld them, but to the mind's eye they are fraught with the familiarity of innermost and earliest association. The Picture Bible of one's childhood was full of such figures, just so draped, with just such dark faces, and just such tall, gaunt, solemn forms. Abraham at the tent-door, Isaac as he went to meet Rebecca, Balaam as he bestrode the ass, Ishmael as he clung to the garments of the repudiated Hagar,

these seem to live again in the wild and yet majestic figures of this strange land, which is—and yet is not—the East, and which, though it is hardly nearer the Promised Land than is the fashionable and familiar Riviera, yet seems to be haunted with associations which take us back to the very beginning of things.

Such, then, is Algiers, in a few of her aspects, as she appeared to one who hardly wandered out of sight of her white walls, and who lives in hope of returning to her again, and exploring further the surrounding country which bears her name. The "interior," the borders of the Great Desert itself are within easy reach of Algiers, and so are the highlands and the fastnesses of Kabylia. Within less than a week of London, with the roar of Piccadilly, and the clamour of the Strand, still in his ears, the traveller may thus behold the Sahara and ride (on camels, if he likes) to the very verge of the vanishing mirage, or he may climb the Atlas and boast that he has seen the sun set from one, at least, of the giant ranges of the world.

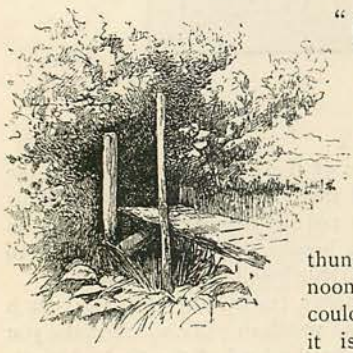
CHARLOTTE STEWART.

BARBARA MERIVALE.

By ARABELLA M. HOPKINSON, Author of "The Probation of Dorothy Travers," "Vere Thornleigh's Inheritance," "A Woman's Strength," etc. etc.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON.



"GOOD-BYE, Barbara. Then we shall see you again on Tuesday; and please be more punctual than you were to-day. Oh, yes; I know it was the thunderstorm this afternoon; of course you could not help that; but it is so essential that Evy, delicate as she is, should have her meals punctually. And, by the by, if you are bringing her any fresh music, don't be *quite* so classical, please. Let her have something light and cheerful, which her father would enjoy. Good-bye; *au revoir*"; and, with a nod and a smile, Mrs. Murray turned round to pick her way along the wet gravel back to the house, from whence she had just accompanied Barbara Merivale down the drive.

"I am very glad I showed Barbara plainly that I do not approve of her being late," she murmured to herself. "It is just as well to put one's foot down at once on that kind of thing, particularly with such a young girl as she is. That is one advantage of having her for Evy, I can say what I like to her, and certainly she teaches extremely well—far better than Danski, and half the money. She looks very ill," she added cheerfully. "I should not wonder if she were to break down some day. It would be a great pity, for I don't know how the family could get on without her."

Meanwhile, Barbara pursued her way home through the woods, looking furtively around her, lest Oliver should suddenly spring up, and remembering with relief that he had said something at luncheon-time about being engaged to meet Mr. Holmes that evening. She had not had a pleasant time at the Murrays'. Mrs. Murray had taken her severely to task before her daughter for being late; Evelyn had been flippant and densely stupid, so that she was thankful to be out of the house, and alone again.

"Well, it won't be for much longer," she thought to herself. "I wonder what Mrs. Murray will say when she hears of it?" and then she shivered as she suddenly realised all that those words meant.

Mr. Denzil's wife! Yes, she had accepted him under the Queen's Oak this afternoon, had consented to be his. He would go back to London probably on Monday, and tell Richmond—she smiled as she thought of it—that they were engaged. Minnie, too, would know it; and soon they would all come down to Denzilstone; she would be congratulated, made much of; perhaps Lord and Lady Denzil might even—although it was not likely—be pleased; they had always been so kind to her.

She would meet Richmond—already in imagination she saw that meeting—perhaps in the big drawing-room at Denzilstone, perhaps in Centrewood street; but wherever it might be, she would be able to look into his face and wish him joy, and ask for his good wishes in return without flinching. Thus she mused and speculated as she walked home through the woods, absorbed in the triumphant vision of proving to Richmond undeniably that she had cared for him as little as he had cared for her. And all the time she was keeping resolutely at bay the recollection that this triumph must be dearly bought, even at the cost of becoming Oliver's wife; whilst deep down in her heart the dull ache that had never left her since Lord Denzil's visit seemed to have grown suddenly intolerably acute.

Somehow or other she got through the evening at home, with all its manifold duties; giving her father his tea; putting baby to bed; then out again to the choir practice—she had undertaken the post of organist lately, to save expense—and then at last home to supper, too tired out in body and mind to eat anything. Mrs. Merivale looked at her with inquisitive eyes. She had hoped she hardly knew what, but something vague and delightful, from her stepdaughter's walk this afternoon with Mr. Denzil; but evidently