

NEW YORK'S SYRIAN QUARTER.

A LITTLE imagination, like a little burning, is an exceedingly dangerous thing. It has a fashion of making ducks and drakes of the real truth, welding, oftentimes, exaggerations of facts into a farrago that would be dramatic and interesting were the picture only painted in the own true colors. Blotous running after startling facts is the inwardness of this, and it happens, therefore, that on many a subject the outer world, that does not investigate at close hand, gets false ideas. The Syrian quarter—famed in the minds of some ambitious young writers for the press as a case in point.

Now, there is nothing gorgeously romantic about this tumbled, unwashed section of New York. It has abundant interest, of course, as any gathering of Orientals in any part of the world outside their own Orient would have. Turks, Armenians, Syrians, when they ship for America, do not leave all their quaint customs, garments, ways of thinking at home. Nor do they become ordinary American citizens directly after landing. Just enough of their traits, dress, ideas remain, no matter how long they have been here, to give the colonies they form spice and a touch of novelty. But these same colonies are by no means haunts of Asiatic mystery and seductions. "Red-fozzed heads, languorous eyes." These words the writer recalls as the headline of a newspaper article on the New York Syrians not so very long ago. In high colors this painted up men that were picturesque; ducky beauties, with eyes that were meltingly charming in their softness. It was a theatrical Syrian quarter that this explorer claimed he had found, a quarter whose only realization must have been behind the footlights. Where could he have come across it? Certainly not in lower Washington Street—though he claimed this is the locality—the place of New York's real Syrian quarter.

For lower Washington Street has no ambitions in such directions. It is foreign, quaint, interesting, but not in the manner the tale-tellers scribble about it. It has no "languorous eyes" and few "red-fozzes." In its bounds there are, indeed, a number of amazingly pretty girls, prettier, one is tempted to assert, than those of any other foreign colony of New York could bring forth. But—and here is another point that distinguishes the Syrians from the other foreigners of the city—all these girls, with the exception of the public dancing maidens, keep very closely, day and evening, to their homes. "Little Syria" is curious in that it is made up of Orientals of many stations in life. The lower class, men and women alike, have little that is attractive about them. They have been called the dirtiest people in all New York, and their tenement rooms are dens of crime and odor. The women here have no beauty of either face or form. But a block or so away are Orientals of a very diverse social order. These are the families of the small merchants, the very prosperous peddlers. Their women folks, in many cases, are attractive, and markedly, but these appear less on Washington Street than does a Fifth Avenue belle on the public highways. It is only through the chinks of a shutter by day that one gets a glimpse of one of these transplanted beauties of Syria.

Let it not be thought, however, that the quarter is devoid of charm, that it is not worth a visit, and more than one. This foreword is written merely to disabuse the minds of those who have read that it possesses extraordinary romance. In a manner, the Ghetto, or one of New York's "Halls," is more romantic, for in these colonies there are at least some hints of national costumes. Syria, down in Washington Street, shows nothing beyond a fez here and again, and an occasional head-dress of black on the part of the women. The dancing girls, those Fatimas that are not recruited from the slopes of Cherry Hill, and, as decidedly pinhead good-looking, are a little more foreign in appearance. It is true, but they are few in number and away from Washington Street most of the time. Michael Kaydouh meets me at the door-

way of Bahadi's shop at the corner of Rector Street, where I have been sipping Syrian araq, a glorified Absinthe, heady, yet divine to the taste. A wonderful shop, this of the merchant Bahadi, with native wines and liquors, American groceries, broods and lamps, glass bracelets of many colors, Oriental embroideries, water pipes, (hubbie bubbles), and their "fixings"; Kaydouh is a type of the better class Syrian of the quarter, of the sort that make shops like this, filled with wares that are not inexpensive, paying enterprises. There are plenty of low grade groceries and restaurants, for, of course, the greater number of the colony's 3,000 SYRIANS ARE POOR. But many of these Orientals are well off, comparatively, Kaydouh, save for his olive skin and his cast of features, scarcely seems a Syrian at all. His English is pure and has little foreign accent. He is a wholesale merchant on this self same block, an importer with his uncle, Tadros, of Syrian wares, and young as he is he is becoming a sort of a godfather to the poor of the colony, Americanized completely already he may yet become a political leader to the quarter, and swing the Syrian vote.

The Greek Church priest hurries by, a bearded figure in rusty black, speaking only Syrian, a foreigner in sharp contrast with the young man here, for this ecclesiastic has eyes and ears for his people only, and does not touch the life of New York at any point. He might quite as well be in some tiny Syrian village. His "church" is easy to enter. It is a room on the second floor of one of these dingy tenements. The shops—and mercantile establishments—below, dwellings above. No other sanctuary in New York is half so gorgeous and gay. The end of the room where the priest stands, the "altar," here designated by two small reading desks and two great candlesticks, the "holy of holies" being hidden in a closed recess, is paneled completely with sacred paintings. In brilliant colors are depicted the agony of the Christ, the mighty saints of the Church of the East. Chairs, now crowded to one side, are the seats. A table holds many



SYRIAN TYPES OF ALL AGES From a Flashlight Photograph Taken in the Street at 10 o'Clock at Night.

worshippers. Not far away, each Sunday, meet a band of Syrian Catholics, while in Rector Street, under the guidance of the priest Karambas, is the little congregation of the Maronites, that strange Christian sect of strange rites.

Again the number three for "Little Syria." Three newspapers thrive in the quarter, more remarkable even to the eye with their Arabic fonts of type that look like schoolboy pothooks than are the strange, Yiddish news sheets of the Ghetto. There

to play a part in New York. A picturesque figure, too, is disclosed in Ebbel N. Damm, editor of "Al-Jeliah," as per in hand, correcting the quaint proofs, rolling countless cigarettes of Syrian tobacco, capped with a blue fly, he sits at his desk. N. Arbedly, the third editor, whose paper—"Kishan America," is the only daily, is a man of the same type. The writer cannot say as to the last named, but the two former were educated at the American College in Beirut, and can speak and write English, French, Arabic, German, Greek, and Italian. Foreign politics, "Young Syria," the overthrowing of the Ottoman power in the lands of Syria and Armenia, with the impetus and the sinews of war for this movement coming from New York, the existence of a hotbed of revolutionists on lower Washington Street—these are the stories that are excitedly told from time to time of this colony. There may be something in them, of course, a few may be foreshadowing a rising against the grim Sultan so far away, because of whom many have had to flee. But there are, at all events, no indications on the surface, nothing that evidences anything of the sort to the onlooker. There are too commercial a people, on the whole, to make serious revolutionary propagating a business. This is a colony Syrian heartily every one is a merchant on his own account. The employees—much is the curious state of affairs—are very few. First come the importers, then the shopkeepers, then the traveling merchants, the peddlers with packs upon their backs. Each has a stake that will increase every year in the uninterrupted importation of goods from the Orient. For there is hardly a man that does not sell Syrian and Turkish and Armenian wares, fabrics, metals, embroideries, and novelties.

They have built up this trade through the East, a few venturesome Syrians even closing in on the Western country with much success, and the demand for the sort of things they sell increases year following year. The average Syrian in America is not very provident; he is apt to spend the most of that which he gains each week in pleasure, but it is hardly comprehensible that these men should jeopardize their chance of livelihood in the manner said. Syria is shrewd and keen these days, and there is much that might be called "cat's talk."

It is lower Washington Street in the early evening. The four tenements close to Battery Place have spat out their hordes of dwellers and the streets are crowded. Up above, near Rector Street, lights still gleam in the buildings on the east side of the way, for here are the better class, whose women



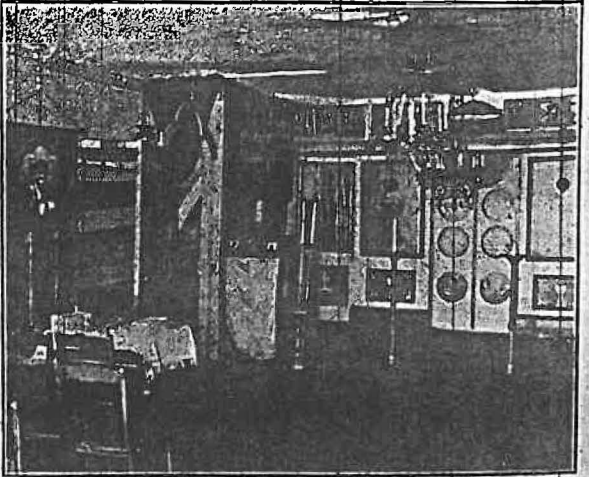
BAHADI'S SHOP, WHERE SYRIAN "ARAC," GROCERIES, AND CURIOS ARE SOLD.

candles, to be bought day after day as the votive offerings of the worshippers. The wall is thickly covered with crudely painted, highly colored pictures, large and small, of yet other saints, martyrs, and religious scenes. Stories are told in these that only they who bend the knee to the Metropolitan of Constantinople can know. To any one, however, the room is impressive, and full of a dignity that does not lose its power. Three churches, "Little Syria" supports, all in its tenement's rooms. The Greek Church has the bulk of the

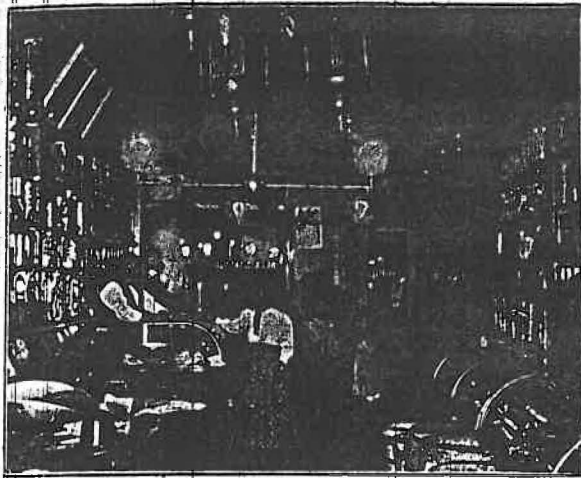
is "Al-Islah" (Reform), "Al-Ayam" (Reformer), and "Kishan America" (Star of America). In the Ghetto the "holders of public thought" are frequently unwashed and greasy. Syria's editors, on the other hand, are delicately nurtured gentlemen, of the highest mercantile order. Malouf is a famous name for extensive trade in the colony. Joseph Malouf, "Al-Ayam's" editor, one of this family, is a man of extraordinary personal attractions, a romantic looking figure, who, it would seem, had stepped out of the pages of a Syrian novel



A CONVIVIAL GROUP WITH THEIR WATER PIPES AND SYRIAN WINE.



THE LITTLE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH ON WASHINGTON STREET.



ONE OF THE SHOPS IN THE SYRIAN QUARTER.

may not and would not pace the streets of a night to be viewed by every Syrian Tom and Dick. The very best and most prosperous class of Orientals, it should be said, do not live here at all. They may come to Washington Street to business during the day, but their homes are in Brooklyn or on Staten Island. All these considerations account for there being so few women on Washington Street of a night and so seldom a young and pretty girl. Here there are in great plenty, some dozens of stout matrons, but so far as street life goes the Eve of Syria, the Lolla, best beloved of All, is not there.

This brings about a strange sort of colony, one widely different from those of Jewry and the various "Italies," where the chaffing between man and girl and girl and man in the patter of some dialect or in public school Americanese forms a great portion of the evening's amusement. Indeed, the Syrian quarter in many a regard is a new civilization. It is the restaurant that became a cafe after Syria has eaten her evening meal that what is perhaps the most interesting life is to be seen.

There are half a dozen and more of these restaurants, the greatest of which, perhaps, is Arta's. Arta is a magnificent specimen of the modern Syrian, broad shouldered, massive, six feet tall in his stockings, far over 200 pounds in weight. His hands are his glossy olive skin shows that not an ounce of this weight is superfluous. A curling black mustache adorns his face, and he is of the type that from his very personality controls women as well as men. When a Syrian of any class is handsome he is apt to be exceedingly handsome.

They call Arta the "Mayor of Washington Street," a title of great honor. A man of mark in this colony, he has done not speak a syllable of English. It is not necessary. He comes into no touch with the outer world, and none but Syrians wander to eat and drink into his store of the low ceiling, the parlor of one of New York's old houses, with the back room turned into a kitchen. In shirt-sleeves, fessed, all his other garments quite American, this Syrian "innkeeper is a sight good to look upon.

One glance at the Arabic bill of fare, written in Arabic script on a shiny bit of white paper, shows the impossibility of making head or tail out of it. That New Yorkers may know what the families of the Syrian restaurants here are, a translation of this bill of fare has been made, with comments on Sunday dishes:

- Rice 5 cents
- Mutton neck, stuffed, with rice and sliced meat 10 cents
- Squash, similarly prepared 10 cents
- Okra, (a vegetable resembling beans) cooked with mutton 10 cents
- Grape leaves, stuffed with veal and mutton 10 cents
- Mutton roast, with potatoes 10 cents
- Eggplant, stuffed 10 cents
- Kobei, (pronounced couby), wheat roughly ground up and mixed together, with mutton; baked in oven 10 cents
- Eggplant, fried with sweet oil 10 cents
- Labab, thickened milk, &c., prepared in a peculiarly Syrian way, a dessert 10 cents

It must be made known that Arta's is one of Syria's finest restaurants. There are none in the bounds of the entire colony of better class, and several much cheaper and poorer. The Syrian of the best class must go outside of the quarter if he would get his meals away from home. Even to an American palate, however, Arta's cooking is tasty and delicate. It has a fragrance all its own, neither French nor Tontonic, something quite apart.

The bread and pastry here are even stranger. A Syrian loaf is like unto a gigantic circular corn-cake, about four inches in diameter. It is of wheat, puts it to a center and when broken is discovered to be little more than a well-browned outer crust. The national dish of pastry that stands in the place of the great American pie is baklava, as nearly as English letters can render the phonetic equivalent. This is made up of fifteen to twenty thin layers of pasta, with butter in between, and is the

center of each walnut paste and ground sugar. The luscious morsel then goes into the oven and is thoroughly baked. No baklava is ever seen in the colony in the Summer months, however. It is a Winter dish, as all other varieties of Syrian pastry are. When the Summer days come the baker of the quarter shuts up shop, for he has no customers at all. In these restaurants at night, then, transmuted into cafes, a red Syrian wine is

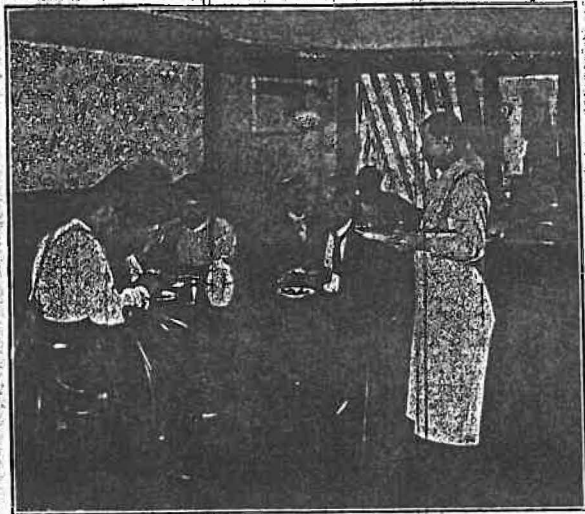


A SYRIAN FRUIT AND ICE CREAM STAND. A Popular Spot with the Youngsters.

drunk and the "bubble bubbles" appear. These are none of their attractions because the man smoking them is in American clothes instead of a national costume. The "water pipe" is still an institution of the Syrian quarter, though its use is limited to hours of ease, the cigarette having vogue by day. Chess and a game much resembling checkers are the amusements of these cafes, and in their dimly lighted depths, many of them being mere burrows in basements, roughly clad men, peddlers returned from a journeying, may be seen playing for hours.

These cafes, the shops, the wholesale emporiums, and the group of dirty tenements down toward Battery Place tell the story of "Little Syria" precisely. The shops are nearly all groceries to start with, but they carry much else in stock, not the least among which sundries are great brass lamps, one store in particular having almost its entire ceiling hung with these. The wholesale establishments, especially those in a big modern business building, are much Americanized in their arrangements, but their heaps of goods speak of the Orient and that alone. Goods suitable for a peddler's pack are what these keen importers deal in, and little novelties of metal and fabric that can be nothing but Eastern fill their shelves. Silks and embroideries and rugs are other favorite articles of commerce. Some of the signs are very strange to American eyes—"Selim Elias," "Noor & Maloor," "Rahaim & Malhami."

The shabby City of New York cannot show anything more villainously filthy than the old tenements on the west side near the foot of Washington Street, and the dens on their lower floors. Here bums and holdames gather, wretched old men and great families of dirty children, besides fat matrons and workmen, who do not think it worth the while to wash off the grime of toil. This is "Little Syria," inferno, but one of its sides. There are yet brighter sides, for, take it all in all, the colony is by no means badly housed or badly fed. The men and women are improvident; it is "easy come, easy go." Syria believes in spending money while it lingers in the pocket. CROMWELL CHILDE.



A SYRIAN RESTAURANT ON WASHINGTON STREET.

A DEWEY TABLET IN BURNT WOOD.

If Admiral Dewey is not embarrassed by the shower of gifts his friends are preparing for him when he arrives in New York, it will not be the fault of his friends. One of the latest tokens of appreciation which has been prepared is a decorative tablet

of heated iron, producing an effect of rich brown tones, combined with a slightly mottled surface that suggests wood carving.

The design represents Dewey seated in his familiar wicker chair, with his hand resting on the hilt of a sword, while beneath is shown a view of Manila Bay, with the fleet in action; eagles, with outspread wings, laurel wreaths, and the inscription, "Manila, May the First, 1898," are portions of an architectural border surrounding the whole.

Mr. Weed's work in this medium has been seen at exhibitions in this city and elsewhere, where it has attracted attention.

FRENCH COMFORT.

In the best hotel in Paris one gets luxury, comfort, and even splendor, but never one's cards or notes, according to Harper's Bazar. There is a fatal gift for these. One is a number, not an individuality. The table is, however, very luxurious. It is a clean and well-ordered caravansary. As for the comfort of warmth in winter, they do not know the meaning of the word. We are justly accused of exaggerating the heat of our rooms in America; the furnace is denounced; but after freezing to death in Paris, one of the coldest of cities, very far north, cursed with an abominable winter climate, one returns willingly to the heated rooms of America.

We exaggerate the excellence of the French bed. There is no such thing in France as that comfortable, broad, low thing which we call a French bed. A high, hard, narrow bed is the apology for it.

We exaggerate our comforts by having gas in our sleeping rooms, and hot and cold water in our stationary washbowls and bathrooms. They never exaggerate comfort in France. You have as many candles as you will pay for, and no bath, unless you order it, when man laboriously bring you a tub filled with hot or cold water, and take it away after you have bathed.

We exaggerate very much the supposed good living in France. To go to a hotel in Paris to live we must expect out of the season very little good food, very little that is sustaining and nourishing. It is "all sauce." There are no good joints of mutton, no good American desserts. This is an especial discomfort to the sick, who never get good toast, good custard, good tapioca pudding, nor oysters that they like.

designed by Raphael A. Weed, which has been purchased by C. C. Shayne of the Dewey Reception Committee, and presented to the committee to be given Admiral Dewey on his arrival.

The tablet, which measures about 3 by 4 feet in size, is something unique, the design being burned into prepared and polished white, basswood by the application



A DEWEY MEMORIAL IN BURNT WOOD, FROM THE DESIGN BY RAPHAEL A. WEED. Purchased by C. C. Shayne, and Presented to the Dewey Reception Committee, to be Given to Admiral Dewey on His Arrival.