

## EDWARD TRYJARSKI

### A Visit of a Polish Aristocrat to Ottoman Turkey (1883)



*A. Sierakowski*

Among numerous travel accounts left by the Poles visiting Turkey throughout the ages noteworthy are, in the second half of the nineteenth century, texts written by a Polish aristocrat, Count Adam Sierakowski (1846–1912). They have a form of a series of private letters sent by the author from various places abroad to his consort living in Poland.

Strange as it may be, we do not know much about the author of these letters, certainly less than we would like to.<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that this lacuna will be filled up by a new volume of *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (Polish Biographical Dictionary), still unpublished.

The author of the letters was a man of a noble stock having serious merits for his country and living mainly in the region of Wielkopolska (Great Poland). His own family estate was Waplewo, situated in the district of Prusy Królewskie (Royal Prussia), after the partition of Poland also known as Prusy Zachodnie (Occidental Prussia).

Count Adam Sierakowski was a man carefully brought up, highly educated and well-read. His formal education was crowned by his taking a Doctor degree in Law. He was susceptible to all shapes of the beauty, devoted to his Catholic religion, a patriot wedded to a cause of his dismembered motherland.

<sup>1</sup> A short notice on him was printed in S. Orgelbrand, *Encyklopedia powszechna z ilustracjami i mapami*, Vol. XIII, Warsaw 1902, p. 490. Adam Sierakowski, son of Alfons Sierakowski and Maria née Soltan, proprietor of a large estate Waplewo in the administrative district of Sz-tum. He married at Krzeszowice, on July 25 1876, Maria Anna Potocka (born in October 1855), daughter of Adam Potocki and Katarzyna, née Branicka (and granddaughter of Róża Potocka and Władysław Grzegorz Branicki). For more detailed information on Potocki and Branicki families see commentaries to newly edited private letters of Eliza Krasińska, née Branicka: *Świadek epoki Listy Elizy z Branickich Krasińskiej z lat 1835–1876*, Vols 1–4, ed. Z. Sudolski, Warszawa 1995–1996.

Time and place in which he had to live in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland were very unfavourable and hard for the Polish population being evicted, dispossessed and deprived of other human and national liberties. During a certain period, Count Adam Sierakowski was politically engaged as a deputy but, at a given moment, protesting against persecutions of Poles by Prussian authorities, resigned his function. Travelling abroad and being informed about a new wave of persecutions he called in one of his letters this violation of law "a horrible news".

Starting from his young age, he liked very much to organize trips and, disposing of necessary means, he made a series of interesting and useful travels abroad. The question is of a few scientific expeditions and, more often, of his private voyages. All of them brought him the name of a "traveller" or "explorer". He travelled in India beyond the Ganges and in the western part of that country, from where he was sending, in 1872-73, his letters-reports, much appreciated by the readers of the "Dziennik Poznański" (Posnan Daily). Sponsored by the "Geographic Society" in Berlin, he succeeded in collecting a rich ethnographic and linguistic material concerning one of the local clans. He summed up the results of his explorations in Algeria in a study entitled *Das Schani. Ein Beitrag zur berberischen Sprachen und Völkerkunde* and published in Dresden in 1876.

In accordance with his life passion "Videre mundum", Count Adam Sierakowski made a long series of voyages which can be grouped as follows: Algeria (about 1875), Palestine across Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria (1883), Italy and Sicily (1890-92), the Crimea and the Caucasus (1901), Tunisia (1909), Italy and Sicily (1910), Tunisia and Algeria (1911-12). His travels were motivated by scientific purposes, as it was the case of his expeditions sponsored by learned societies, by a cognitive passion and special interest in foreign civilizations or, mainly in the last part of his life, by his not quite good state of health.

Count Adam Sierakowski visited Turkey in the Spring of 1883 after having chosen a rather complicated itinerary. Making use of Lloyd's steamers, a train and even a cab he passed through Pesht, Draueck, Essegg (Osijek), Dyakovar (Dyakovo), Bucharest, Djurdjevo, Rushchuk (Ruse) and Varna and reached Stamboul by a luxurious ship "Urano". Thus, on April 23, he was present in Stamboul, on May 1 — in Brusa (Bursa), on May 5 — again in Stamboul and, for six hours only in Smyrna (Izmir), starting from May 8 on he visited Rhodes and Cyprus, on May 14 he arrived at Beirouth and on May 16 at Haifa. During all his travel in the East he was accompanied by his rather numerous family: his mother-in-law, Katarzyna Potocka, née Branicka, with two children Andrzej Potocki and Anna (future wife of Xawery Branicki), his uncle Konstanty Branicki with his wife, Jadwiga Branicka. Andrzej had his personal servant and there was also a maid servant for ladies. Count Adam's spouse (Maria Anna née Potocka, see note 1) has remained at home, most probably for family or health reasons. It seems to be clear that she could rather rarely accompany her husband on his travelling abroad as evidenced by tens or even hundreds of letters posted in var-



ious distant places and addressed to her. Despite frequent and long separation periods we may assume that, as shown by mere letter-heads and the contents of the very letters, there existed a deep feeling and friendship between the married couple. Count Adam frequently and regularly gave her detailed reports of places, people and all other details of his travel, also of his impressions and feelings. A considerable part of this intimate family information, important no doubt to a biographical study but rather superfluous in the present edition, has been left out of the English translation.<sup>2</sup>

The letters are written in an everyday but careful Polish language. They were destined exclusively for the addressee and their author had probably no idea that they might ever be published. On several occasions we find in the letters geographical names, often in a Polish traditional form, like Dolma-Bagcze, Rasgrad, Brussa, along with quotations and other foreign expressions, mainly in French. The author is a very keen and intelligent observer owing to which even his trifling remarks or descriptions of landscapes, depicted on hundred occasions, enriched by a personal choice of objects and a rare erudition, acquire a special value. His high social rank and financial status along with his practical knowledge of good sides of life result among others in his contacts with interesting and influential personages of the epoch, the more so that in many places he has his relatives and friends. So in course of his travel he meets diplomates, generals, high clergymen, artists etc. In Vienna, Pesht or Stamboul he puts up at sumptuous hotels, he uses coaches, he knows well where and what guides should be engaged, what objects ought to be seen in the first place, etc. He is subtle in his artistic impressions and both excellent human works and formations of the nature cause his sincere and spontaneous admiration. It is also true that he enjoys a good chance. Thus, in Stamboul, just after his arrival, he has a special occasion to see the Sultan Abdul Hamid in person, when coming in a golden coach and hastily entering the mosque to attend a Friday prayer. The Sultan seems to him mournful, sad and frighten away. Among nicely uniformed generals assisting the ceremony he perceives the German military. "Out of them forty are pashas" — he adds. He pays visits to Mr. and Mrs. Geppler, relatives of the celebrated Polish painter, Jan Matejko, to general Hobe, native of Mecklemburg district and the Sultan's Great Master of Horse. In Brusa he meets a German viceconsul, Sczoler [?], exporter of a raw silk, "a good German soul who dislikes Prussians", in Stamboul Count Szehenyi (probably Ödön) of Hungarian origin (Széchenyi), the chief of the fire-brigade

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<sup>2</sup> Some more information has been given by K. Morawski and S. Tarnowski in their two introductions to the volumes of his Travel Letters: Adam hr. Sierakowski, *Listy z podróży* (Travels to the Holy Land and to Italy), Warszawa 1913, pp. 3–7, and *Listy z podróży* (Travels to the Crimea, Caucasus and Tunisia), Warszawa 1914, pp. I–V. The bibliographical data are cited after the above authors. The translation has been made after the Polish text contained in the volume published in 1913, pp. 35–74. The choice of fragments has, naturally, an arbitrary character.

of Stamboul. Invited by him, he attends a show of the fireman who protect the whole city against fire, so often bursting at the epoch.

A man of many-sided education and having artistic tastes, he has a deep knowledge of the history of art both in Europe and in Asia. Not only he describes the objects of art, like architectural monuments, paintings, sculptures, mosaics, frescos etc., but also evaluates them. He has a good artistic taste of his own and expresses his private opinions. He mostly admires renowned objects but, at the same time, he appreciates those that are less known and not visited by foreign tourists. So, for instance, he is persuaded that the most interesting and first-class object of architecture to be seen throughout Stamboul is the Kahriyeh Djamisi.

Count Adam Sierakowski is interested, however, not only in history, archaeology and art — architecture, painting, music etc. — but also in modern problems of the Ottoman Turkey — politics, economy, transport, army and others. He makes his best to be neutral and friendly in his opinions but sometimes he cannot fail to notice various debilities of the State, called “a sick man of Europe”, helped, or rather invaded, by foreign specialists, mainly Germans, and standing on edge of a general catastrophe. Anecdotically, and at the same time even humourously, sounds his story of the railway line:

“Seven years ago, the first railway from Mudania to Brusa was constructed at the cost of 200.000 pounds but the Turks, wanting that each bigger proprietor might profit of it, made a line for the train so winding and the embankment so bad that the railway measures now 42 kilometers in length instead of 25, and the locomotives, on account of excessive meandering, could not run on the rails. Thus the railway has remained unexploited, the bridges fell down and 200.000 pounds have been wasted beyond reclaim.”

The author of the *Letters* is equally interested in Turkish customs, morality, manners, mode, and beauty of Turkish ladies. He foresees the rapid progress in emancipation of Turkish women and a liquidation, as if spontaneous or natural, of the *harems* since the men begin to have no sufficient means to maintain them.

Now allow us to speak the author himself.

## Count Adam Sierakowski' selected letters written in Turkey to his wife

April 26, 1883, Constantinople. Hôtel de l'Angleterre à Pera

My Dear,

From Rushchuk<sup>3</sup> (after a passage from Gjurdjevo to Rushchuk by steamer) we took a train of Baron Hirs<sup>4</sup> along the Danube up to Varna on the Bulgarian side. [...] The train from Rushchuk to Varna runs for a certain time just close to the Danube. In Shaytanjik (Satan's house) we refreshed ourselves not too badly. We passed populous small cities of Razgrad and Shumla.<sup>5</sup> Limestone cliffs, white from chalk washed by rains out of them, had phantastic shapes, and in natural caves situated near the summits of those mountains there lives up to the present a part of the pastoral inhabitants of the region. Just before Varna we saw a nice, beautifully blue lake of Devnia, separated from the sea only by a lagoon, and, to the left of the sea, a great field which in old times had been covered with a beech forest. The Polish King, Vladislav of Varna, together with 8000 of Hungarians, defending the Bulgarian Czardom, attacked, in 1444, the Turks, in defiance of a treatise concluded with them. The Turks hanged out the documents of the treatise broken by the enemy on their horse-tails, dislodged the Polish-Hungarian troops from the forest and drove them into the lake, then the King perished. Lately the Poles erected in that place a small pyramide of stones. In Varna the port is a bad one. After the swinging in the boats, we touched at 7 o'clock p.m. at a magnificent Lloyd's ship "Urano". We had a perfectly nice passage. [...] the next morning we entered the Bosphorus admiring beautiful Büyük Dere and Therapia, two castles dating back to the Crusades, offering incomparably beautiful views. In the narrowest place there are two noble castles with nice towers: *Le château d'Europe*, *Le château d'Asie* on both shores of the Bosphorus. There is a stupendous plenty of water fowl, a sort of hybrid ducks flying in flocks all the time. The Turks call them "souls of dead persons". At last there appears before us the charming *La Punta del Seraglio*, the dome of the Saint Sophia, the Golden Horn, and, on the Asiatic shore, the amphitheatrical Scutari. This is the most beautiful view in the world, it is impossible to describe it, especially when the sun breaks through the clouds (what happened in our presence), and one forgets a recent rain. [...]

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<sup>3</sup> Now Ruse.

<sup>4</sup> Probably: Hirsch.

<sup>5</sup> Now Shumen.



Constantinople, April 28, 1883, very early in the morning

My Dearest,

[...] In the morning we were in the place where the Sultan Abdul Hamid was entering the mosque to attend the Friday prayer. We saw well this poor creature, pale, mournful, sad. He drove in a golden coach up to the very mosque, jumped from the coach into the gate like a beast chased by bloodhounds jumps into the thicket of the forest that protects it. In the place in front of the mosque the choice troops were defiling, and there were standing all generals in beautiful uniforms, almost all of them were Germans, out of whose nearly forty are Pashas. Among them most splendidly looked Drygalski Pasha. The troops are poorly clad but the men are sturdy. You can see at every step the misery of a great ruined lord who shines with the rests of his splendours — such is the present day court and the Turkish army. The Sultan dwells in Yildiz Kiosk, a far-removed, lonely, small palace up there and, out of fear, he almost never gets out except on Fridays to the mosque. He has no tranquil moment, on account of the fate of Abdul Aziz who did not commit suicide by means of scissors but, after the local rumours, was killed with a revolver in his palace. Some months ago, there was detected among the Circassians a plot against his life. All those who had earlier formed the most exquisite Guards of the Sultan were immediately expelled.

When the ceremony was over [...] we went by caique and by coaches to *Eaux douces d'Europe* where, on Fridays, the ladies of the Harem have their carriage corso, and they get out of their carriages and picnic on the grass. I myself, Andrzej and a certain very stupid *attaché* from the Embassy of Austria went by caique along the Golden Horn up to the estuary of Sweet Rivers, to the upper part of the Golden Horn. It was very cold on water but despite this the water was swarming with hundreds of caiques. In some of them there were sitting Turkish women, lightly covered with *yashmaqs*, often charming, in others the Turks and the Europeans. An Arabo-Turkish music with an overstrained melancholic melody, originating from the desert, accompanied by tambourines could be heard everywhere on water, on shore, and in boats. In some boats two men were standing vis-à-vis and producing a sort of dance on the rolling caique. Andrzej, while ashore, perceived a nice Turkish lady clad in pink and sitting in a coach. He sent her a bouquet by a flower-girl. She smiled pleasantly but, out of a sudden, a black eunuch came and let the coach immediately go away! Our return by caique was nothing else but a sheer carnival on water! There was much singing, noise, laughing.. Also the views were wonderful all the time long since in Stamboul there are no other views but wonderful. [...]

Constantinople, April 23, 1883

My Dearest,

[...] We were very happy at the hotel and we had extremely good eating for 25 fr.<sup>6</sup> daily. I have this advantage that I pay nothing for visiting the city (dragoman, coaches, baksheesh). We have an excellent dragoman of Turkish origin, Victor Emanuel, who performs his ablutions thrice a day but, with all this, he has quite civilized manners, seems to be relatively honest, and is awfully funny. Out of all splendours that we saw yesterday the Saint Sophia made upon us, of course, the greatest impression. Its gilded mosaics of lower galleries remind of those of Saint Marc in Venice. Everywhere crosses, angels and other Christian emblems can still be visible. In the apse a head of God the Father still appears. The Turks are probably in a church not barbarians, they hide from sight the Christian emblems and cover them with their own paintings but they do not dare to destroy them. Besides, they are the only people in the world that nowadays observes most complete tolerance towards foreign religions. The Bulgarian massacres had exclusively a political, not religious base.

In the vicinity of the Stamboul mosques there are low, long rows of small domes, one after the other, each of them covering a cell of a young *softa* (a student of the Koran, studying in the mosque). The whole of those cells is called *medresse*. There are in Stamboul several dozen thousands of *softas*. From the Seraskerat Tower, which has 250 extremely high steps, the view was of extraordinary beauty: we saw *un promontoire* with a small lighthouse at the distance of about one mile from Stamboul, it was the celebrated San Stephano! In the covered bazaars of Stamboul (a real labyrinth) I bought a silk gauze for a tunic (Genre Algérien) for you, while your mother bought for you a Bulgarian necklace of the so-called Bulgarian silver. [...] It is still cold here and the trees hardly grow green. At nightfall an overcoat is indispensable.

The mosque of Suleiman the Magnificent is splendid! There are elevated places in which the *imams* on Fridays gratuitously drew up petitions for the believers, write and read letters for them, etc. There is a pulpit (gallery) for women where they are taught how to live in peace one with another. There are, most splendid in the world, Persian stain-glass windows with flowers and Arabic letters dating back to Suleiman's epoch (16. century). In the vicinity, a very nice Suleiman's Tomb in a kiosk faced inside with excellent faience (enameled tiles) — a curious model of the pilgrimage to Mecca, beautiful cupboard and cases incrustated with mother of pearl to serve as a cubby hole for the copies of the Koran, diamonds in the dome — a coexistence of dead and living people in Stamboul. Curious walls of interspersed stones pointed with beautifully figured bricks.

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<sup>6</sup> Probably: French francs.

The Tomb of Roxolana ("Hurrem"), supposedly a princess of Halich, who was brought along from the Rus' by Suleiman returning from the Hungarian expedition. During twenty six years she was his wife with a title of "Sultana", a title given always to the mother of the Sultan (*valide*) and after her death to the wet-nurse of the Sultan, but almost never to the Sultan's wife. She remained Christian, she used to send over from Stamboul gifts to the Dominican monastery in Cracow (this is certain!). When her son had killed her in fear that his mother being Christian might not impede him to succeed the throne, Suleiman killed him and buried him together with his mother in a separate tomb in which afterwards also Roxolana's daughter was buried. There are no Christian emblems on the tomb.

We mounted the Serasker Tower, 500''<sup>7</sup> high, from which a magnificent view (extends). [...] It is a mosque of pigeons. Close to the Old Saray (there grows) the oldest tree in Stamboul, a secular plane-tree. *L'arbe de la pendaison* in the vicinity of the Serasker Tower: just here a Circassian, Hassan, murder of four ministers, was recently hung up on a dry branch. I had a talk to Szehenyi-Pasha, a general, a chief of the fire-brigade in Stamboul. He has under his command 2000 militarily educated men in uniforms, 800 men for transporting water, besides 3 steamers with powerful fire-engines anchored in the Golden Horn ready to start. Briefly, he has 900 men under his command, a volunteer fire-brigade included. At the present moment there are in Stamboul not more than a hundred of fires each year (earlier there used to be three hundreds). 150 up to 200 burnt houses are considered to be a small fire; 200 up to 500 burnt houses — a middle fire, more than 500 burnt houses — a big fire. In some quarters water is lacking. Hand fire-engines and those on wheels are disponible according to requirement.

In the evening we had a visit of Jaroszyński, a Pole employed as an *attaché* of the French Embassy. I made acquaintance of Father Przewłocki. Father Superior of the mission of the Community of the Resurrection [Pol. *Zmartwychwstańcy*] from Adrianople [Edirne].

April 29

Today the whole street of Pera is in extraordinary agitation since it is a feast of Greek Easter. Petards and pistol shooting at every step. The variety and richness of costumes is incredible — the old Turkish attire composed of yellow or pink gowns is most imposing. At 9 o'clock we heard a Holy Mass in a nice church of the Franciscan Fathers. No one in Stamboul is able to guess that he is entering a church since only a small cross placed above a small gate indicates it. Inside the

<sup>7</sup> Probably for "feet".



cloister walls or in the churchyards there rises a nice church hardly visible from the street, or even quite invisible. However, all Greek churches make exception, and Fanar, i.e. a residence and a church of the Greek Patriarch, can be seen from a long distance close to biggest mosques. Immediately after the mass we went to Babek to visit Mr. Groppler and his wife; they have a villa on the Bosphorus. [...] Past 4 o'clock p.m. I paid a visit to general Hobe-Pasha, originating from the state of Mecklenburg, a Big Master of the Horse of the Sultan, and a husband of a lady from Danzig (Gdańsk). Then I went together with Andrzej to see the dragoman of the Embassy of Austria in order to receive an *irade* for your mother to visit the Sultan's palaces of Dolma Bahche, Cheragan, and the Sultan's Treasury.

May 1, 1883, at 9 3/4 o'clock p.m.  
in the Stamboul port, riding at anchor

My Dearest,

Yesterday at 8 o'clock a.m. I myself, Andrzej and his servant, Franc, we embarked this ship just to go to Brusa. At first the captain feared to sail out of the Marmara Sea being rough but, as soon as we allowed him to return to the port in case of excessively bad weather, he plucked up his courage and we started at 9 1/2 o'clock a.m. The sea was factually rough, the billows spattered up to the captain's deck but they were kind enough not to make us sea-sick. Andrzej has got his gun with him and shot from the deck at the sea-mews and dolphines but, on account of turbulent movements of the ship, he killed only one sea-mew and shot a lot of cartridges, I can not even know how many. On account of a bad weather we steamed six hours and a half (instead of four and a half), our ship held itself well. At least, having passed the Prince's Islands and the Promontory of Buz-Burun, we entered a quiet gulf along which, escorted by playful dolphines, we arrived in torrential rain at a small city of Mudania, being a port of Brusa but situated at a distance of nearly 4 miles from it. There a local commissioner, Mr. Nicolaïdi, awaited us at a gang-way along with a coach, grand in old times but shabby nowadays, drawn by four horses (with an outrider on the front horses and a coachman, nicely clad after Albanian fashion, on the coach-box).

May 2, at the hotel

Nicolaïdi (the Greek) introduced us to his wife and children, entertained to coffee and confitures and, at last, he allowed us to leave. The way was magnificent

as far as views were concerned — in front of us the snowy Olympus, behind us a bay and in its background Gemlik, a family small city of Szczęsna Potocka; all around us extremely fertile fields; famous olive-trees the oil of which equals that of the Provence. Among olive-trees there grow grape-vine, mulberry-trees for silkworms, in the fields rye and wheat which have already put forth their ears, all around peach-trees and apple-trees, all in blossom. On the other hand, the road is wretched on account of security since it runs just close to the edge of a precipice and despite a lot of strown pebbles there are big pits and humps, and it is difficult to cross small country carts, covered with white and red cloth on which picturesque Turkish crescents are embroidered. Most interesting, however, is that at every half a mile distance there are small houses covered with bricks; in front of each of them a Turk with a burning coal on a stick is standing. When we are passing by and the coach stopping, this guard of the road approaches us and hands over light to our coachmen that they might light their cigarettes, also to us if we ask him *atesh* (fire). The institution of those “light-giving-guards” makes that the travellers to Asia are no more in need to bring matches on them! Another interesting case is the following. Just next to the road there winds the railway but the rails are grown up with grass and the station in Mudania is in ruin. Seven years ago, the first railway from Mudania to Brusa was constructed at the cost of 200,000 pounds but the Turks, wanting that each bigger proprietor might profit of it, made a line for the train so much winding and the embankment so bad that the railway measures now 42 kilometers in length instead of 25, and the locomotives, on account of excessive meandering, could not run on the rails. Thus the railway has remained unexploited, the bridges fell down and 200,000 pounds have been wasted beyond reclaim. [...]

Brusa, a city of 75,000 inhabitants out of which 30,000 are engaged in sericulture, ancient Prussia of the Kingdom of Bithynia, was, from 1325 and throughout one hundred years, the capital of the Turkish Sultans. From that comes a multitude of mosques (about 500 still today). Those mosques are interesting as most ancient Seldjuk-Turkish architectural monuments that Stamboul has none. They are especially famous because of their Old Persian tiles of faience that they are faced with. The pearl of those mosques is Yeshil Djami (the Brave<sup>8</sup> Mosque), build by Mahmud. There are inside most exquisite faience decorations and tiles. The walls are so ingeniously gilded with multicolour small tiles appearing as if engraved, that you could swear that they are made *des cuirs de Cordou*! Close to this mosque, that I have never seen a more beautiful one (Saint Sophia excepted, naturally), there is a *turbeh*, i.e. Mahmud’s Tomb, quite blue outside because of small faience tiles. Unfortunately, this was the end of Brusa’s mervels for me since it still rained cats and dogs, the Olympus was covered with clouds and silk spinning factories were closed for Greek holidays.

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<sup>8</sup> An evident error for “Green”.

In May and in September many people stream from Stamboul to Brusa because of sulphur baths. There are hot springs like those in Pesht. We took a bath in Turkish baths, in a really boiling water, while on the walls there could be seen creeping blackbeetles, since they like the warmth, too. We smoked a *nargileh* each of us (a sort of hemp (drug) from Shiraz in Persia is being burnt in it; it is called *tembeki*<sup>9</sup>), then we came back to the hotel "Francesco" that we had left yesterday at 12 o'clock a.m. for Mundania. Our guide throughout Brusa was a German viceconsul, Sczoler, exporter of a raw silk (that is sent over to Lyon to the weavers), a good soul German who dislikes Prussians.

As soon as we left Brusa, the sun appeared and we had a marvellous way up to Mundania and from Mundania back by our steamer to Stamboul across the sea smooth like a lake. In the evening there was a beautiful phosphorescence of the sea and one could see fiery fish swimming in it. Andrzej shot at a dolphin which was seen as a black point contrasting on the background of this splendid phosphorescence!

The entrance to the port of Stamboul was incomparably charming! A sea of lights ranged amphitheatrically in Pera, Galata, Stamboul and Scutari seemed to be a battle-field of stars thrust down from the sky!... Since at our arrival at the port it was nearly 10 o'clock p.m. and the customs-house was closed, we were obliged to spend the night on ship after having taken there quite a miserable supper washed down with *vin d'Olympe*, not too bad. [...]

One must bargain here awfully and offer the merchant less than half a price. I regretted sometimes that we are not richer because each nice thing is here not for our pocket: small rugs cost 800 fres.,<sup>10</sup> tapestries 1000 fres., a piece, etc. [...]

Today we visited a marvellously nice palace of Dolma Bahche (owing to a special Sultan's *irade* since the Sultan sets his name to all permits to visit his palaces — one is allowed to visit neither his caserns nor stables without his personal leave).

Then we observed, together with Andrzej, the exercises of the local fire-brigade directed by its chief, Count Szehenyi-Pasha. In the evening we rode with your mother and Anna by boat along the Golden Horn. The sun-set was marvellous: windows of the houses in Scurati and Stamboul were shining like faint red light until the haze, so nicely depicted by Ajvazovskij in his paintings, covered all the horizon. [...]

<sup>9</sup> Probably for *tembul* 'betel-leaf', *New Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary* (1968), p. 1135.

<sup>10</sup> Instead of francs?



Constantinople, May 3, 1883, 7 o'clock a.m.

Saddled horses are just waiting for us, i.e. Andrzej and myself. We intend to make a tour of the old walls of the city. Today at 4 o'clock p.m. all of us embark the ship "Minerva", we have tickets up to Beyrouth. From there we shall cross over to Jaffa, if God allows us. [...]

On the deck of the Autrichian Lloyd's steamer  
"Minerva", May 3, 10 o'clock p.m.

My Dearest,

We are crossing quietly the Marmara Sea, the nicest sea in the world, looking like a mirror. [...] Yesterday we visited the nicest of the Sultan's palaces, Dolma Bahche, built fifty years ago by Abdul Medjid, Abdul Aziz's brother. In that palace, which only because of influence can be visited, all splendours of East and West are combined, the Western style, however, prevails.

There is the greatest throne chamber in the world, with a high copula and extremely beautiful crystal chandelier. Pity that the stucco-works prevail. Most profitably and most admirably arranged are the Sultan's bath rooms: two small alabaster chambers marvellously sculptured. Above the bathroom a glass copula decorated with festoons of most beautiful garlands and flowers made of gilded bronze! These two rooms cost two million francs. There is a plenty of paintings in the palace: most numerous are those by Chlebowski, beautiful sea panoramas by Ajvazovskij, masterly representing the haze on the Bosphorus, a beautiful portrait of Abdul Medjid (it is the anomaly in a palace of the Islam believers!), a well known and very fine painting by Jérôme (representing the inside of a harem in Egypt), three interesting portraits of most beautiful harem odalisques, beautiful "battaglie" by Pasini, a pêle-mêle with oil paintings, engravings, wood-cuts from the "Illustrated London News", all of them framed and glassed! Fire-places made of glass adorned with a ruby glass, exquisite pieces of furniture covered with Brusa silks. In addition, this delightful palace is situated just on the Bosphorus! The palace of white marble, the entrance gate curved in lace reminds of most beautiful temple facades in Southern India. In a clearly visible place there can be seen on a green background the Sultan's golden signature imitating a sign left by a human hand soaked in ink and flatwise impressed on the paper (since first Turkish Sultans were unable to write), with addition of a flower in memory of the fact that Abdul Medjid made wars with success. He himself and his brother, Abdul Aziz, are both sons of Mahmud who had murdered out the Janissaries.

They say about those three Sultans that Mahmud was insatiable of blood, Abdul Medjid of women, and Abdul Aziz of money. Abdul Aziz was a son of Mahmud and of a charwoman from baths (*gül-hane* 'house of ash', i.e. the place where in a bathroom they dry clothes above the ash and, since the police drives at night tramps to those places in order that they could sleep there, *gül-hane* means in Turkish also 'tramp', and Abdul Aziz was just given this name by his people).<sup>11</sup> He was hated because he used to take money assigned for his army to his own funds and has cumulated enormous treasures. That was too much when he put to his own pocket the money assigned for his army fighting at Nish against the people of Charna Gora.<sup>12</sup> Then the plotters dragged him out at night from Dolma Bahche to Cheragan (another palace) and, after putting him asleep by means of a kerchief dipped in opium, they cut him his veins. Now Abdul Aziz is commonly mourned for, they say that the war in the East of 1877 could have been avoided if he were alive. The present Sultan, Abdul Hamid, son of Abdul Medjid, is a good man full of best intentions, laborious; he holds conferences with his ministers during long hours but he trusts no one and is constantly in fear of his life. He goes to the mosque on Friday only, but even then he makes his best to be accompanied by Osman, a hero of Plevna, in order to be protected by the popularity of the other. "Il gouverne mais il ne règne pas." He is thrifty by necessity since the coffers of the Government are empty. However, he must willy-nilly keep his big court, he has 1063 horses in his stables while the cooks of his Yildiz Kiosk, where he at present lives, give out daily eating for 3000 persons out of which nearly 600 belong to his Harem and to various musicians of the court.

From the Dolma Bahche Palace I went accompanied by Andrzej to observe the exercises of the fire-brigade, organized in a military fashion by Count Szehenyi and commanded by him. In a tropical sunshine we were sitting outside in beautiful chairs brought from the commandant's kiosk and a serviceable fireman each moment helped us to coffee and lighted the cigarettes. Here in the East, nothing can happen without coffee and cigarettes! The fire-brigade is very pretty organized but men are poorly clad, because there is no money for renovation of helmets and uniforms. The soldiers are first-rate, although they see no money, they are anyway well nourished. Szehenyi would like to concentrate all improvements and innovations concerning fire-brigades and assistance for those who are in fire in one great join-stock company seated in Paris and also having there a central informing and arranging office *de sauvetage*. Officials of that office would go throughout the world arranging for instance theatres in such a way that they

<sup>11</sup> There is some inaccuracy in our traveller's exposition: 'house of ash' should read *külhane*, not *gülhane* which means 'rosegarden' (*Gülhane* 'a celebrated part of Sultan's Great Palace'). On the other side, *külhan* means 'stokehole of a bath', *New Redhouse*, p. 695.

<sup>12</sup> Probably Czarna Góra, Czarnogóra, Črna Gora, Montenegro.

might not catch fire, and taking for this good provisions. The Company would also have for sale a *dépôt* of fire-engines of most modern systems, etc. It is a good idea since up to the present there is no central company for fire affairs as far as they concern helping and insuring of fire. It is a pity, however, that for a foundation of such a company a dozen and so of millions are needed that Szehenyi cannot find out. He asked both of us whether we were or not ready to inscribe shares for a few millions!

The fire-exercises being over, we went to visit Mrs. Hobe, a very loved and very cheerful wife of the Sultan's Horse Master. Just in that moment, Mrs. Hilmi Pasha, wife of a pasha of the same name was leaving her home. She has emancipated herself to such a degree that she entertains men at home and plays whist with them. She is up to present alone but soon also other Turkish women will follow her since their husbands have no more money to keep harems any longer à la Turca. Notice, please, that your mother and Anna have not succeeded in visiting the Harem. [...]

Today I am sending you over a continuation of my impressions from Stamboul. [...] Yesterday (i.e. on May 3) at 7 o'clock a.m. we started with Andrzej on two nice Arab horses to ride round the old walls of Stamboul. We made a rush, galloped across the bridge that connects Stamboul and Galata and riding like a wind across a big square in front of the Seraskerat we reached the Seven Towers (Yedi Kule). There we visited the prison of European ambassadors where they used to be kept in the war time. On the walls of their prison in a round big tower those gentlemen immortalized their names. What a pity that nowadays this custom has ceased to exist — it would be so fine if Ignatiev<sup>13</sup> could spend here a few years, within these walls dating back to Belizarius time! We rode a long time outside the town at the foot of the walls. Each moment we encountered, in the moats of Gypsy encampments and all around the town outside its walls, cypress groves: Turkish graveyards in which among turbaned grave pillars the cows graze quietly. The heat was horrible until we entered again a cold city through the Adrianople Gate in order to visit the most interesting and, according to my opinion, the nicest building in Stamboul: today's the Kahriyeh Djamisi, formerly the church of the Chora Monastery, built by Maria Ducas, the Emperor Alexander Comnenus' mother-in-law, nearly one hundred years earlier than the Saint Sophia. The church in a pure Roman style contains inside unusually beautiful mosaics representing the life of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Virgin Mary [...], nicely curved stone friezes. In one word, it is, according to me, still more interesting than the Saint Sophia and no doubt the most interesting object to be visited in Stamboul although it has been little known by the foreigners. Then we rode to the arms bazaar, called *Bezestan*. [...] Our return on horseback to the hotel was dangerous because my

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<sup>13</sup> Ignatiev Nikolai Pavlovich (1837–1909), Russian diplomat in Pekin and Constantinople, main author of the peace treaty of San-Stephano.



horse terribly reared and skided on atrociously uneven pavement while Andrzej with the dragoman, madly galloping across the bridge, overthrew a certain Turk. Fortunately enough they did not injure him and the Turk did not even get angry.

They did not flay us at the hotel although it was an exquisite hotel such that are rare in the world. Yesterday at 4 o'clock we left Stamboul and from that moment our travel goes swimmingly, we admire the landscape of sea and of small islands. [...]

Saturday, May 5, 1883

We are on the deck of "Minerva" in the Channel of Chio, not a long way behind Smyrna, at 9 o'clock p.m. during a very strong khamsin (sirocco) which continues from the very morning what in May has not been remembered even by the oldest people. It is true that also here quite excessive heats prevailing since a few days followed an unusually cold weather.

My Dearest,

[...] Yesterday at 5 o'clock p.m. we arrived at the island Mytilene, formerly Lesbos, the richest (after Crete) island of the Egean Sea, the motherland of Saphona, then the cradle of the Greek lyric poetry. [...] it is ideally beautiful. We went ashore owing to the break of two hours, in the port of the city Kastro. [...] Kastro is amphitheatrically situated in gardens and olive and cypress groves. It has two ports (an old Roman port and a new one) and, at the promontory, a picturesque old castle guarded by a Turkish post. [...] But the Turks did not allow us to visit the castle fortress. With their well-known diplomacy they told us, rascals, that we may visit the castle to-morrow although they knew that our ship had to leave soon. [...] At 5 o'clock we entered Smyrna, a very commercial city, having 200,000 inhabitants, second in the Ottoman empire after Stamboul.

On the ship deck, May 6, on Sunday

[...] We went for six hours to Smyrna [...] the heat was excessive, the khamsin was terribly blowing from the very morning, and it was not easy to breathe. We have to climb up Pagus, a 500 feet high mountain dominating Smyrna, on the summit of which there are ruins of an uninteresting Genoese castle, a bit beneath the rests of a Roman amphitheater, and a Stadion in which Saint Policarp, bishop of

Smyrna (one of the seven churches mentioned in the *Revelation of Saint John*) was martyred. A high cypress indicates up to present the place of his martyrdom. [...]

At last we reached the summit but there we had no more strength to go farther on to the Roman relics and Saint Policarp's cypress. So we go to the restaurant "Champs Elysées" in Smyrna. [...] We returned to the ship the early evening. [...] In the city we saw many interesting attires of Armenian women: they wear black small caps shaped like the Scottish ones, and some of them are beautiful.

Monday, May 7, in open sea between Rhodes and Cyprus

Yesterday at 5 o'clock p.m. we disembarked at Rhodes. [...]

Tuesday, May 8, 1883

Fortunately enough, we reached Cyprus, the port of Larnaka. The sea is smooth. We shall lie at anchor here up to 4 o'clock p.m. [...]

Already at 8 o'clock a.m. there came Lloyd's agent to the ship. Your mother and uncle Konstanty bought from them two barrels of a Cyprus wine. About 11 o'clock a.m. we went, the whole lot of us, by boat to Larnaka. The port city is called Marina, and a bit further on there is the old town of Larnaka. This is one of most ill-looking cities on Cyprus, it resembles Alexandria a bit; rare palm trees appear from snow-white houses. There was shadow nowhere, and the temperature was +40 R. However, the air was light. [...] The streets were very clean, all of them bearing English names, no inscription in Turkish or Greek can be seen. They have even a copper coin with the inscription *Cyprus* and with the [Queen's] Victoria [image] on the reverse. [...] I enclose here an ear of barley and a violet flower of a big tree, called *fior d'Amore*. For this island is the Venus' motherland, famous of her temples, *statuettes of terracotta*, excavated here, and of treasures at Kurium, excavated by an American consul, Cesnal, and sent over to America.

Anyway, women possessing a very dark skin, are ugly, and one who wants to look for better views and more worthy rivals of Venus and of Cathrine Cornaro, the last queen of Cyprus, should go to the centre of the island, to Nicosia. [...] We visited a Greek church of Saint Lazarius with a beautiful stone tower in Eastern Gothic style. We were shown a *crypte* in the church in which there was one day Saint Lasarius's corpse. Going farther on we met, between Marina and Larnaka, a Catholic cloister of Saint Joseph Sisters who possess here schools and a foundlings' house. [...] You can imagine our surprise when the first sister that we met in the gate appeared to be Polish, a Lithuanian woman from Vilno, Róża Zieniewicz, called Salomea in the convent. [...]