

19TH CENTURY AMERICAN'S VIEW OF ARMENIANS

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"It is often very difficult to distinguish a Jew, an Armenian, a Turk or a Greek, one from the other. To do so you must be very observant. You want to know the man first. The genteel haughtiness of the Turk will soon enable you to tell that the man you are addressing has not the cunning subtleness of the Greek. His manner distinguishes him from the Albanian, Jew or Arab.

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"The Armenians are the sharpest people in the world. They are the Yankees of the Orient, with much additional acuteness. They are divided, also; some, as will appear, lean to the Catholic faith, and some to their own Church; and both away from the Greek orthodoxy.

The Levanters—the descendants of the French, the Italians, the German and other settlers of European origin are also among the shrewdest of people. They are a class by themselves, and mingle very little with the Greeks or the Armenians.

It is a mooted question as to which race is paramount for sharpness, or, as we call it, smartness. I will not attempt to debate that question. Certainly, the Turkish is not the one, although it is the ruling power. The Frank or the Levantine is not the one; nor the Greek, nor the Jew. It is a common saying, and has some basis of fact: that it takes the wit of four Turks to over-reach one Frank; two Franks to cheat one Greek; two Greeks to cheat one Jew, and six Jews to cheat one Armenian, but when the Persian, the Kurd, and the Croat, the Dervish, the Gypsy, the Eunuch and "hamal" (porter), which we have endeavored to photograph come into view, the Armenian will take the prize.

" Whether it is from a lack of conscience, or because he has more enterprise, or because he has

been thrown like the Hebrew, on his own resources in his wanderings from his native land—it is certain that wherever he is, whether as the Prime Minister of Egypt, or Secretary of the Treasury in America—I mean Governor Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, of Armenian-Hungarian descent—the shrewdness of this race gives them grace, humor, eloquence, genius, and above all, intrepidity in self-seeking, or, in one word, smartness. The Armenians have never been intimidated by threats, and therefore they are successful.

“The hamal is generally an Armenian. To see him moving with dignified Samsonian strength and stride amongst the various pen-venders, sugar-mongers and obscure menders of things, who howl all the day about their wares or trades, is one of the interesting sights—if not sounds—of the Metropolis. He wears a loose gray jacket with white sleeves, gray gaiters and red belt. He carries fabulous loads upon his shoulders. I have seen him carry pianos, and even carriages up-hill on his back. One needs to observe a hamal going up the hill of Pera, to understand what the Bible means in its Oriental metaphor, when it says, “Bear ye—one another's burdens.” When his fete day comes along, a high festive time results. He makes strange music with an old pipe, and dances along the streets of Pera as an elephant among crockery.”

