

I never saw any place the position of which struck me as so magnificent as that of Constantine. It is built on a high plateau round which rushes a rapid river called the Rhumel. It is called by the Arabs Belad-el-Haoua (the city of the air). Constantine is divided into two distinct towns of which I need not say that the Arab is the only one which is interesting. The streets are excessively narrow. The different trades live each in their separate quarters: there is one for shoemakers, another for workers in leather, another for jewellers, and so on for bakers, butchers, and all other trades (...). We walked through a narrow passage just behind our hotel (Hotel d'Orient) and came into a court round which were a number of little rooms in which were squatted the weavers of burnouses and haïks. It is estimated that more than thirty thousand burnouses and sixty thousand thirty haïks are annually woven in Constantine alone. The dearest and most beautiful are the gandouras which are a mixture of silk and wool; they are only worn by the higher classes (...). Leaving the burnous court we walked on to the Chose Bazaar where every description of bright coloured leather shoe and slipper (rihyia or babouche) was being embroidered. It is impossible to describe in words the beauty of these eastern bazaars.