

From the Memoirs of a Tartar

by

Arminius Vambéry
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Translated by David Mandler

(Vambéry wrote these “memoirs” at the beginning of the 1880s in German. His intention was to view the western world from the perspective of an eastern man and draw parallels between the two cultures. For this, he chose the literary form of the notes written by a Tartar traveler to Europe who wants to report to his fellow countrymen about the conditions in Europe. The first chapter, “The Jews,” can be found in Shofar, Spring 2007 (Vol. 25, No. 3).

II. The Aristocracy

In addition to the monarchs and statesmen, the aristocracy exercises great influence on the nations of the Frenghis. I was expected to believe that there were two kinds of aristocracy: aristocracy of money and aristocracy by birth. Nonetheless, what I found was that the people favored by fortune who became wealthy through their industry and cleverness were not regarded as equals by those who, by the mercy of God, came into this world with titles and wealth. The latter see their titles, rank, and position as inscribed in natural law as an inheritance given, with God’s grace, as a gift; moreover, this gift is rooted in blood and flesh, they think, and is inherited by successive generations and cannot be influenced or altered by human intentions or will. With their pretensions, these people resemble those of our coreligionists who, with their green turbans, claim to be the Prophet’s (Blessed Be his Name) descendants in various professions. But they are not always paid much attention to because their genealogical claims are strongly disputed and can be proved only in the rarest of cases. Only the simple peasants respect our Seidjs¹ and khodjas, who

¹More often transliterated as Sayyids, descendants of Mohammed’s daughter, Fatima, sometimes elevated to the special status of leaders or chiefs.

are mainly beggars or people of dubious character, while society assesses their value by the personal positions they occupy. Despite the great veneration due to God's emissary, this glorious light of the Universe, these so-called descendants, with the exception, perhaps, of the Koreists² in Mecca—enjoy no peculiar prerogatives at all.

In the Frenghi empire, different explanations are given regarding the existence of prerogatives by birth. Here, they tend to this bizarre outgrowth of the trunk with great care. A great number of books have been written by many great thinkers, establishing a scientific branch based on this, and in the country of the Frenghis, the aristocrat alludes to the thick volume of his genealogy in the same way as the Arab horse dealer does who tries to deceive his ignorant customer by showing the yellowed pages indicating the descent of his merchandise. The latter intends to prove the strengths of his animal by alluding to the fabulous fame of its mare and buck while the former believes that he inherited the acumen and good breeding of his relatives famous in the past. That it is possible for muscular and quick-footed horses to inherit their physical strength and maintain it, provided its existence is facilitated by smooth weather and adequate nourishment, is somewhat proven by the Arabian horses transferred to the plains of the Turkoman; but to argue that it is possible for humans to inherit mental capacities and acumen is a proposition that is very difficult to prove because human virtues do not originate in the physical but rather in the psychological and more or less depend on the kind of upbringing and circumstances of a person's life. It is rather strange that the eyes of the Frenghis, otherwise sharp, are so blind regarding this statement. They do not admit that the pride with which they regard their ancestors encapsulates not only their understandable veneration towards them, but also the justification of their advantages and prerogatives over people born in the dust. This error has become so entrenched in the West that not even the most advanced people can discard it, and only in the new world did it become possible to leave this profound error behind. That no aristocracy was able to develop and prosper with us, where tyranny could be maintained in its roughest and most oppressive form despite the wise and liberal decrees of our Prophet, could be ascribed to the following circumstance. Our tyrants in Asia, on this ancient ground of absolutism and tyranny, unfortunately felt themselves so secure that they

²The Koreish tribe, in control of the area of Mecca including the Kaba, opposed the rise of Islam as their income from trade and the pilgrimages was put in jeopardy. Having lost a battle against the Moslems at Medina in 630, they converted to Islam and retained their right to serve as guardians of the Kaba.

never felt the necessity to employ helpers or import into their country a ruling class with which to share their power and rather leant upon the solid and conservative religiosity of their subjects. All of this, however, was not possible in the country of the Frenghis. Europe, this daughter of Asia, developed more freely even in her early years, growing up with such characteristics—which we call indiscipline—that forced the rulers early on to employ helpers with whom to share their power over the masses. At first, these helpers were obedient tools; soon enough, they became convinced that they were essential and rebelled against their masters and demanded that their prerogatives and titles be inheritable just as the crown was so. Our Viziers, Khans, and Sirds never dared to behave in such a way, since our Sultans always wanted nothing more than servants who would carry out their orders with blind obedience and not officials cognizant of their personal rights. The Crown, in Asia, did not only emanate light but also flashes. The Frenghi rulers were unable to act in such a way; executions and appropriations of property did not become so fashionable with them, and the so-called born aristocracy grew out of a class with prerogatives and large wealth. In the past, when the rulers did not want to share power and went to war against these pushy fellow rulers, the people had to suffer a great deal from both sides and had to pay for the expenses with their animals and blood. Today, however, the situation has changed as the rulers unite with the aristocracy in their fight against the more educated masses before whom the idea of their legitimacy given by God's grace has become increasingly discredited. Contemporary Frenghis, alluding to their human rights, not only want to enjoy the ideals of equality and fraternity as slogans but also as palpable reality.

This idea is echoed by the entire Frenghi world, although, similar to other phenomena, it is more realized in the progressive West and fades away as we approach the eastern part of Europe and the empire of the East. The English, despite being the most freedom-loving nation of Europe, have been unable to leave their habits behind, and though their barons, lords, and princes enjoy no prerogatives worthy of enumeration, the magic enchantment of the past has not faded away from them, and the Brit who appears to be so proud, intrepid, and independent is overtaken by embarrassment and confusion when standing opposite an aristocrat who might condescend to address him or her. This mercantile nation endowed with such extraordinary pragmatic tendencies succeeded in elevating the value of the aristocracy by not allowing its members to come into the world without money since primogeniture is practiced, whereby only the first-born male inherits all the wealth while his siblings enter office or become traders or merchants without any titles. In addition, one must admit that the English aristocracy differs from its continental counterpart in that it

is profoundly patriotic, takes an active part in social affairs, is loath to occupy eminent positions merely because of its titles and dignities, and perpetually mixes with other parts of society, something that cannot be said about the Continental aristocracy. Anyhow, it appears that none of these advantages and their taking into account the demands of the age help English aristocracy, as rich bourgeois class has emerged alongside the trading power and industry of which has proliferated throughout the earth and whose treasures radiate such a light that eclipses even the ancient escutcheons. Nothing helps here: the past belongs to the aristocracy, the present and the future to bourgeois civil society. The former existed while the latter exists and will become more numerous. The English people, who had fought against being imposed upon by oligarchic restrictions for centuries, can only discover some sad memories in its aristocracy without any danger from it.

But the Frenghis living on the Continent are not so lucky. As the aristocracy often originated in dark eras with perpetual struggles and, thus, could only be seen as the reward of crude force and bloodshed, this class of prerogatives is represented in the eastern regions of Europe, and more precisely, is present most strongly in those parts where the fight was the longest between them and our coreligionists and blood-relatives. In Prussia, Poland and Austria-Hungary, compared to other parts of the population, the number of the aristocracy is the greatest. The Slavs and, more importantly, our virtuous Mongolian, Turkish, and Tartar ancestors are the reason that here so many mortals are born endowed by the grace of God with prerogatives who consider themselves to be better bred of better blood. Despite all parliamentary and constitutional comedy, the aristocracy still enjoys significant prerogatives, which are validated not necessarily by law but by the exercise of power and are suffered by the people with great patience. These noble lords are especially powerful in the army, which they proclaim to be the essential body of national defense although—as I will tell you later—the Frenghi people feels no desire to or necessity of attacking others or defending themselves and would rather live in peace with its neighbors. The aristocracy is charged with carrying out military diplomacy and becoming the heads of public administration, not because the commoners lack the appropriate talents, but rather because the Crown considers only them to be coequal and meritorious of being elevated into positions of dignity as individuals born with advantages by the grace of God and are, therefore, the most talented. No matter how many times I have encountered these people who acquired mental prowess and greatness, courage, and other advantages and prerogatives in the land of the Frenghis, I always became embarrassed and did not know whether I should wonder at the pride, bragging, ignorance and insignificance of these lords or at the narrow-minded-

ness, cowardliness or blindness of the Frenghis. For I must add that the born aristocracy is not in possession of those powers of the mind or those powers of the will and creativity that have made the Frenghis great and rulers over the entire world. It is natural that a person born into privileges and prerogatives will not exercise his mind so greatly and will not work so tirelessly as his fellow born in the dust, struggling through life over many obstacles who, thus, acquires more experiences and greater knowledge.

Only in abject poverty does a man's virtue ripens, and only fire purges gold and silver, as our sages tell us, and the fact that they were right becomes clear by seeing the Western aristocracy's level of education and abilities. These lords spend their youth in vain relaxation, and very few of them submit themselves to rigorous studying. If, however, they find themselves next to an eminent commoner who has risen as a result of his knowledge and work, they attempt to defend their supremacy by leaning against their family trees or pointing at the monsters featured in their escutcheons. On all fields of European thinking, in deeds and discoveries that have made the peculiar Frenghis great, it was the lower and middle classes, not the aristocracy, that have advanced the happiness of humanity. I ask you, thus, on what basis do the aristocrats call themselves the best and present themselves as such? We, in Asia, act much more reasonably. With us, only one's deeds ennoble, not inheritance, and only old age grants privileges according to natural laws, as our Sheiks, Risheffids, and Aksakhals earn their titles only on the basis of their hoary heads, which titles cannot be given to young men or children, showing similarity to how the German Graf title originally operated.

Although the Frenghis do not deny this state of affairs, the aristocracy has maintained its influence until this very day. They ridicule, judge, and make fun of this anomaly, yet they cannot sever themselves from these strong ties of prejudices in order to put an end to it. In England, in this shining nest of backwardness, the aristocracy yet mocks the free spirit, individualism, and healthy mind of these islanders in public life, and we find the image of strong, tall, and heavily laden camels led by small asses realized there. The French and the Italians became smarter earlier in this regard: they are impressed by the nobility only if it possesses wealth, disregarding the family tree like dry weeds. So much sadder is the situation in Germany where the Junkers, dressed in modern robes, still enjoy the pleasure-filled days of medieval times and create new justifications by winning the strongest assistance from precisely those who fall victim to their forcefulness. Just as the Persians mutually place the fetters upon themselves when attacked by some Turkoman *alaman* [robbers], not even concerning themselves with their numbers and strength, and follow them on foot all the way to the plains, so does the German people assist the work of

the aristocracy by weaving a wreath of wonder and veneration and placing it upon the bald and empty head of born aristocracy. They exhibit such levels of self-loathing that talented and extraordinary people find it the greatest reward to be made members of the born nobility. One can understand the personal error of a merchant, favored by fortune, wanting to place a crown upon his moneybag in order to make his empty head eminent, but that scientists and masters of culture find being admitted into the society of the do-nothing and puffing knights of darkness a reward is incomprehensible to my simple dervish mind. These German scientists and academicians appear to me in a similar light to some giants who want to shrink in order to be able to mix and play with pre-pubescent children. Unfortunately, the German is still an obedient tool in the hands of a tyrant and would willingly give up salvation for some insignificant titles, decorations or ribbons of some orders, valuing the multi-colored uniform over the plain robe of the independent commoner. If you were to ask me how this could be possible with a nation that has given so many great thinkers to the world and is at the leading edge of science in the West and the benevolence, emotional life, and love of work of which is on such a high level, I would point to its frequently mentioned geographical position and history. The sun begins its course in the East but the rays of freedom first appeared in the West, and because they advance with measured and calm steps, Germany was reached later. Thus, only later will they be able to make the characteristics that have survived the Middle Ages disappear. Naturally, the situation is worse to the east of Germany. In Poland, the nobility buried the country's independence. In Austria, where the aristocracy stands at the lowest level of cultivation compared to its counterparts, the great lords deceive themselves by thinking that they can build a barrier to the invading rays of modern light from the West. It was here that the outgrowths of nobility squeezed out of other European countries found their most secure harbor. And to the extent that the nationalistic feelings could not develop in Austrian aristocracy because of its ethnically dappled nature, selfishness has become deeply seated, and the phalanx of modern knights could preserve the luster of its armor the longest as it grouped around legitimacy as its utmost klenodium. But our brethren, the Hungarians, are seriously damaged by the aristocratic principle. There, the number of the aristocracy is in the hundreds of thousands; what is more, no middle class or bourgeois elements have developed, and it is difficult to see how this nation, without a head and legs but bereft of a body, can further develop. I have generally observed that the social outgrowth of the aristocracy does the best in the soil of ignorance and in the dark atmosphere of illiberality. The born aristocracy of freedom loving and enlightened nations performs

with conspicuous humility while where the masses are backward; it raises its head fearlessly and makes its distorted position known despite the laws.

But I found the following argumentation by which the aristocratic lords strove to justify their exceptional position, their prerogatives, and their right to exist the most amusing. According to them, God, as in the ranks of animals and plants, has endowed some races and species with advantages. They further believe that just as noble horses or vines seldom degenerate, so certain psychic and physical advantages are passed down in human families who were, thus, selected by Providence and placed at the forefront of society. They think that this relationship has existed universally and apply it to our Kirghiz black footed and white footed groups. The Frenghis forget that these groups do not constitute ethnic groups but rather certain dynasties, for each tribe only boasted of one white-footed family, which privilege could not be transferred to any other family. But the Indian caste system is not a good example either since the castes are strictly divided classes, preventing mobility between them, which does not allow for a renewal or strengthening through the power of the rulers. Only in its darkness and harmful nature does the Frenghi institution of aristocracy resemble that of the Brahmin, for while the latter believes itself to be eligible and suitable for priestly dignities only, the Frenghi nobles think that they are to shine in every branch of human thinking and endeavors and demand to fill all leadership positions. I think that this is a very sad loss of direction and a grave self-deception because where this kind of abuse is rampant and where high offices are exclusively in the hands of the nobility, the state suffers serious problems and the throne itself reposes on rotting legs. I have always been deeply offended and filled with doubts regarding the rationality of Frenghis when I saw a man of obscure origins but with talents and industriousness pushed back from public life by empty-headed aristocrats without any talent, and when I beheld how birth brings a blessing and good fortune to one and bitter disenchantment and slights to the other. Luckily, Allah provides justice everywhere, even amongst the unbelievers, for the governments where this inhumane habit rules have to come to their senses and follow the path of true emancipation or be consigned to perdition. Petrified conservatism, which deludes itself with the hopes that it can enchant the masses and throw sand into its eyes, cannot survive for long. Enlightenment is ever spreading. Vanity, laziness of the mind and other human frailties can serve as pillars of the born aristocracy and can keep the genies bottled up for a while especially in the east, but its end is near. Light is intensifying, and with it this inhumane vestige of a dark age must and shall perish.

III. General Education

You will wonder why I conceived of the idea of talking about general education in the land of the infidels where humanity has not yet been illuminated by the glorious light of the Koran. It would be vain to look for general education in the midst of the Frenghis, living in the night of disbelief, as conceived of by us: a way of life based upon divine dogmas as revealed in the rules and traditions comprised in the Koran. Nonetheless, since their social and political lives are governed by solid rules and greatly surpass our decaying world in their social order, it is worthwhile to treat their peculiar notions regarding cultivation and enlightenment.

While with us, education exclusively rests upon the observance of religious rules and on the habits and rituals sanctified by ancient eras, the Frenghis, ever since antiquity, have divided education into two spheres: the ethical and the intellectual.³ They nourish their intellect and their souls independently of one another, and since religion as an initiator of psychological refinement and ennoblement has been inoperative with them for a long time, the mind is developed in a lot less organized manner than with us. We resemble obedient children who unconditionally believe the words of their teacher. We are satisfied with the explanations about cause and effect inherited from ancient times. We do not search in the heights and depths after the secrets of creation, and both our contemplative way of life and our confidence in the omnipotent commands of Fate have made us as moony and idealistic as the Frenghis have become materialistic as a result of their perpetual chasing after worldly goods. In the West, many are ashamed of and even try to deny this spiritual orientation, yet I find that their efforts are in vain. They regard themselves as permanent inhabitants of this world and, for this, they have settled in rather comfortably; we, on the other hand, with our gazes perpetually turned towards heaven, regard ourselves as guests here and as such do not deem it worthwhile to decorate our apartments and to multiply the sources of our living. Just as this concept differs in these two worlds, so does the notion of general education. If we were to understand education to mean the knowledge of the natural world and the science of historical past, then we would be as an adolescent to a vigorous adult when compared to the Frenghis. May Allah forgive my transgressions, but I believe that regarding scientific cultivation, even in the era of our Caliphs,

³I translate the word “*szellemi*” here as intellectual since no single word in English equivalent to the Hungarian original exists that simultaneously means *spiritual*, *mental*, and *intellectual*. Where the context demands, either of the other two words will be used.

in our golden age when the light of the Muslim world illuminated the then pitch-dark barbarian Frenghi world, we were far behind the Frenghis of this present age. Even the intellectual giants of our past had no grasp of what has become the most rudimentary knowledge of today's Frenghis. Imagine, I have met some fourteen and sixteen-year-old Frenghis who categorized and stored away in their small minds facts about the surface and depth of the earth, about all sorts of animals, birds, fish, about the languages, habits, and religions of peoples from far and near. I have even encountered children who were better informed about secular things than our own scholar mullahs and Sheiks, not to mention our worldly rulers here in Turkestan, most of whom cannot even read or write. But even those Khans, Begs, and Pashas of the Islamic world who have become quite advanced in Frenghi education could find themselves blushing when encountering such a Frenghi boy, and if we wanted to quantitatively compare the number of elementary schools, high schools, and colleges or the levels of literacy in these two cultures, our intellectual backwardness would become frighteningly salient. Indeed, regarding schooling and secular studies, we in the Islamic world and in the East in general occupy a sad place. This, however, does not mean that we are intellectually deficient or unable to think and thus are uncultured or barbarians as the Frenghis frequently accuse. No, precisely the opposite! I do not intend to offer consolation or self-encouragement when I state that the Muslims in the East far surpass the Westerners in their mental prowess and inherent resourcefulness.⁴ Rather, I regard this as a peculiar gift of Allah to the believers, which diminishes the more we penetrate into the West. The Frenghi scientists and thinkers, who in their godless enthusiasm ascribe everything to the laws of nature, want to attribute our advantage, which they do not deny, to a warmer climate and to the rays of sun that ripen everything sooner. They claim that just as our fruits are more abundant, sweet and tasty, so do we develop our physical and mental abilities sooner and better. I do not wish to analyze this blasphemous argument, but I want to remark with great satisfaction that one may, indeed, find greater mental prowess and acuity in us than in the Frenghis. While we have many fourteen or sixteen-year-olds who are heads of their families or are able to conduct

⁴In his 1895 *A Magyarország Keletkezése es Gyarapodása (The Origins and Growth of the Hungarians)*, Vambéry repeats this claim by stating, "With the sharpness of his mind and intelligence the nomad Turk and in general the oriental is in many respects superior to that of the Western. Although the latter surpasses the former with his persistence and perseverance in accomplishing set goals, the eastern of all eras distinguishes himself with his mental endowments and natural wit" (my translation, p. 382).

long business trips as heads of their commercial enterprises, the Frenghis of the same age attend school and are as infantile and dependent as are our six to eight-year-old boys. The Frenghis ridicule us when our rulers appoint a person from the lowest segments of society to high and important positions and make them responsible for conducting highly important affairs of the state. It is quite frequent to find yesterday's servant and burden-carrier transformed into today's grand Vizier whose service in his new position is so exemplary as if he had been born and bred in the highest circles of society. The Frenghi plebeian behaves haplessly, lacking all self-confidence because he is devoid of the divine spark and of dignified manners. Indubitably, we thoroughly possess the precious stone of mental, intellectual, and spiritual⁵ advantages, yet we have failed to cut, polish, and merchandize it in our struggle for existence.

Considering moral education, in the realm of feelings and attributes of the heart, we incontrovertibly surpass the Frenghis, no matter how the latter praise their humanism, since our *merhameti* Islam or Muslim compassion greatly outshines them. As a dervish in Asia and a fakir in Europe, I have had the opportunity to witness compassion in these two worlds, and comparing the two, I have found that the Frenghis' benevolence is not directly correlated to their wealth and affluence, and that people with us, living in humble or poor circumstances, are more inclined to perform good deeds sincerely and surpass the West in the noble virtue of compassion. In any case, one should applaud those extremely rich Frenghis who establish humanitarian endowments when they give millions to open schools, hospitals, and poor houses or respect those philanthropist Frenghis who act in distant lands in order to liberate and enoble humanity regardless of color or creed. Moreover, this is the more praiseworthy considering the fact that Muslim compassion mostly extends towards fellow Muslims and does not provide as much help to people of different religions as the religious Christian does towards Muslims or heathens. But this virtuous performance of the Frenghis is restricted to a few benevolent and noble-thinking individuals and is not prevalent in society, whereas, thankfully, it is so in the Islamic world. In times past, when God's blessing along with power and wealth were ours, we also had famous philanthropists who lived humbly yet gave millions to construct roads, sewers, wheat or rye warehouses, hospitals, schools, etc., with the difference that they hoped to receive a *fatiha* (silent prayer) from the beneficiaries of their endowments, while many Freng-

⁵In this case, the Hungarian original "*szellemi*" cannot be reduced to one of the three meanings. Thus, I list all three.

his hope to receive the sparkling signs of imperial grace or the wonderment of the masses. This golden era has disappeared a long time ago, yet compassion and beneficence have survived even in impoverished circumstances. We still share our meager meals and dilapidated apartments eagerly with the needy because giving alms is one of the main pillars of our religion and, as experience has taught me, more people die of hunger in a major European city than in the entire Muslim world in years. Such examples in the obdurate and heartless Frenghi societies are but natural consequences of the greed and feverish money chasing, and, frequently, not even a spark of humanism appears in the wild orgies of miserliness. Horribly naked selfishness is much more at home with them than it ever was in Asia!

But even when it comes to tenderness, good manners and ethics, the palm of superiority could scarcely be extended to the Frenghis despite their frequent requests for it. That in Asia, people transgress less in their ethical or moral behavior than does the European is readily admitted to by those acquainted with our world. Family life is much purer with us than in the West where the repulsive cloacae of prostitution is not only accepted but is regulated by the authorities. We respect our elders more and value our thinkers more than in the West; but even the women find more protection with us; while the Frenghi women can travel alone in our midst without being disturbed, I would not advise any Muslim woman to travel alone in the West because the Frenghis frequently cannot even protect their own wives from being assaulted. Despite their poor appearance, many a Persian, Turk, or Arab, despite being illiterate, proves to be more polite, dignified, and well-brought-up than the European who exudes elegance and cultivation. Not only is this the case in the higher circles of our society in which etiquette and politeness frequently degenerate into servile submission, but also in the lowest social strata of the artisans and peasants. Anyone comparing the behavior of simple Persian or Arab peasants with their counterparts in the Western world would find my above assessment correct. German, French, and English peasants appear unpolished, hapless, slow, and graceless or clumsy compared to the peasants of Muslim Asia whose refined manners and speech have enchanted many a Frenghi traveler. The forms of ancient Asian culture have become imprinted deeper than the relatively younger European culture, and the reason the ancient culture has not elevated everywhere the people's moral standing or purged their morality is to be found in the rule of tyranny, which has been in force since antiquity.

The perpetual pressures under which our fellow countrymen live have spawned cunning and dishonesty everywhere. And just as snakes curl up when stepped upon, so do the people in their thinking without, however, damaging honesty in our lives, our families, and our more immediate society as I have

witnessed in the Frenghi world. With us, it is unheard of and impossible to find the phenomenon of a few individuals causing enormous amounts of damage to the masses, the unflinching exploitation of profit-chasing Europeans, or the heartless offenses against life and property. It was the Europeans who, in order to enrich themselves using fraudulent insurance claims, hid bombs on ships, endangering the lives of hundreds; others, induced by a desire to increase profits, poisoned the food supply of entire towns to exterminate their residents; still others spread false news, thereby casting thousands into poverty. Indeed, Asia has never been this low and vulgar! On the other hand, I do not want to conceal my opinion that only in the unification of the ethical and intellectual strands of education have I found the most effective means of defense against the wickedness and falseness of humanity, and color or religion notwithstanding, humanity can be ennobled only through high culture.

When I recall my sojourning with the totally primitive Turkomans—nomads who have heard little of Islam or other religions—and when I envision those ancient types of humanity who could distinguish between good and evil only with the help of their whims and individual apprehensions as governed merely by *Deb* (laws of habit) and still rarely transgressed morality, I imagine witnessing the first stage of cultural life. The second stage in Muslim culture is occupied by a somewhat progressive individual who is a transitional, half-finished creature, standing behind these nomads without being bested by his European counterpart, while the thoroughly educated Muslim should be viewed as occupying the highest stage if his ethical education keeps up with his intellectual one, and if modern science has completely illuminated him. If I were to measure the various levels of education among Frenghis with the same standards, I would find mostly similar results. There are no totally primitive uneducated Frenghis today. Here, people can be divided into uneducated, semi-educated, and totally educated individuals. The first are rough, uncouth, but are not devoid of a few pleasant characteristics that would remind us in their simplicity of cavemen. Almost everywhere, these people are used as blind tools in the hands of the ruling classes, and their enlightenment proceeds but very slowly. The semi-educated comprise the majority of the Frenghis, or even their totality, since the thoroughly educated make up such a vanishingly small percentage of the total population that they may be compared to the stars in the night, the lights of which are but pale, barely illuminating the sky without shedding any significant light onto the earth. Though they have begun the journey with increasing inclination, having the means of learning at their disposal in abundance, real and serious cultivation, humanity's real ennoblement is in its beginning stages even amidst the wealthy and powerful in Europe ruling the rest of humanity. What you see from the distance and find so attractive

is merely false gold, only the red glow of the rising sun but not the beaming rays that they want us to believe.

I find this deception, to which I also became a victim at first, totally natural. The incomparable greatness of a comfortable life, spread all over in the West, has enabled the middle class to take possession of all those formalities and means that, at first glance, make them appear to be refined creatures, enlightened by culture. In their clothing, manners, speech, and hand gestures, and in their treatment of people, and their short allusions to science and culture, one might take them to be perfect representatives of 19th century progressivism. In most cases, however, this is but a very thin exterior veil of culture covering their nonchalance, ignorance, and bestial nature. While culture may have lapped around them, they parade empty formalities, throw around morsels of musical, artistic, or literary culture, however, very quickly revealing their rough core and bestiality. To be honest, we should call these Europeans culture-beasts [*kultúrállatok*] who, in addition, impertinently boast, and look down upon us because we do not dress as elegantly, do not paint our faces, and cannot babble so much stupidity about novels or the theater. The culture-beast still occupies the highest positions in the cultural world in Europe and does not merely appear in the middle class. The circle of the greatest lords and the aristocracy, almost without exception, belongs to this crowd. A real cultured person is one whose interior has been reshaped by the modern spirit of the age. A Westerner we could choose as an example who is truly enlightened and bereft of prejudices is indeed a great rarity.

Thus, the Frenghis, I think, are not at all justified to regard themselves as demi-gods and to impress us with their general education. We have to admit, as we do so now, that they are on a better path and that their circumstances of climate and historical developments were more advantageous, enabling them to reach the goal more easily. The level of education can be discovered most easily by its geographical proliferation. The Eastern part of Europe, in its general education, is about a hundred years behind the Western part. Germans are the most academically oriented people in Europe, but the sad unbalance between cursory apprehension and deep comprehension is felt in every branch of political and civil circles. They resemble a youth who does not know his own strength and abilities and, glancing at his father or guardian standing in front of him at every step, cannot conceive of all the things he will accomplish. The French and the Italians are less well educated in the sciences, are less speculative, but are the more inclined for action. Yet, they are worthy representatives of European intellectual cultivation and as such surpass the Germans. The most perfect embodiment or quintessence of Frenghism are the English and the Americans who are, after all, one and the same nation. Al-

though the Germans surpass them on the scientific field, they are nonetheless at the forefront of European culture, for they are eminent in all those qualities that characterize a Frenghi: political freedoms, the spirit of entrepreneurship, indefatigableness, taking initiatives, perseverance, lack of sentimentality, daring thinking—all of which put them in a diametrically opposite position with the Easterners. I gradually experienced this when I progressed from the inner parts of Turkestan towards the sacred country of the English. I felt quite at home in many respects in Russia, the Austrian provinces and in the Eastern part of Germany. I found people less encumbered by problems, more garrulous and compassionate. They value time more, though, than we do, but they are not as economical with it as the English, and even though they move faster than we do, they do not run around as insanely and unreasonably after business as in England where I was ceaselessly pulled into the mad rush of humanity, pushed and shoved whenever I wanted to stop for a little to rest. Moreover, I swear by Allah, this is not life but rushing around, frenzied raging where even the birds compete in speed with humans.⁶

So, as I said, the spirit of cultivation is at home only in the West, and if one looks around with open eyes while traveling to the east from England, one will find the perpetual diminution of this spirit, and must conclude that, unfortunately, our world cannot keep itself isolated from it, as I will next prove with some examples.

⁶This description of life in Great Britain closely parallels Vambéry's characterization of his first experience in London in 1864 as he describes it in *The Story of My Struggles*. Clearly, his visits to London engendered a thoroughly mixed view of British social organization he, in theory, hails as the pinnacle of Western civilization. He writes, "Feelings of admiration and contempt, of delight and scorn alternated within me" (248). He identifies two areas of social life that made him criticize this pinnacle of Western social organization: "rigid society manners, utterly foreign to [him]" what he calls "the straitjacket of etiquette" and his "absolute horror...of the incessant hurrying, rushing, bustling crowds in the thoroughfares; the desperate effort to gain honour and riches, and the niggardly grudging of every minute of time" (p. 249).