

The most recent book of this sort is *The Gift-Wife*, by Mr. Rupert Hughes.

"The Gift-Wife"

The hero is not merely a normal human being; he has rather more than the average mentality, and in

his chosen profession, surgery, he has already achieved a reputation far beyond his years. He has, however, the besetting sin of intemperence. At long intervals of periodic recurrence, he takes a first drink, follows it up with others, and then knows absolutely nothing further of what he says and does, whom he meets and where he goes until he wakes up, days or it may be weeks later in strange and extraordinary surroundings. When the story opens, we are introduced to this man in a French railway carriage. He is saddled with the responsibility of a small child whom he is taking home to her widowed mother in America. To his horror, he feels the periodic thirst coming upon him and he knows that the child's fate depends upon the outcome of the race between train and steamer on the one hand and his appetite on the other. Of course, his appetite conquers or we should have no story. When he recovers consciousness, he finds himself in a Turkish harem under the gentle ministrations of the second wife of a local magnate. How he got there, what extraordinary or ridiculous or unlawful acts he may have committed on the way, and at what point of his mad ramblings he lost the child are some of the problems that he has to solve. Conditions are further complicated by two additional circumstances: first, he is penniless; and secondly, he rather rashly falls in love with the Turk's wife. Now here, thanks to this device of making the factor of the unusual an intermittent and transitory thing, we get a most extraordinary situation from which a perfectly normal young

man extricates himself in a straightforward and logical way. The Turk's wife, by the way, happens to be one of those undesired additions to a household that would be possible nowhere excepting in the Orient. She is a slave-girl, a present from the Sultan, and as such could not be refused. But since she was not wanted her veil has never been lifted from her face and she has remained, according to the convenient euphemism of the land, a "gift-wife." Incidentally, Mr. Hughes should be congratulated for his success in transferring to paper the somewhat elusive feelings and impressions that a foreigner receives upon his first plunge into Turkish environments. In the chapters on Constantinople, for instance, although done in an impressionistic way, he does not fall behind the truth and the vividness of Mr. Crawford's *Paul Patoff*.