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## **St. Sophia, once Christian Cathedral of Byzantium, now Mohammedan Mosque, Constantinople**

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210  
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*Meadville, Pa., New York, N. Y.,  
Chicago, Ill., London, England.*

V7181 T. St. Sophia, once Christian Cathedral of Byzantium, now Mohammedan Mosque, Constantinople.

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ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE,  
TURKEY

We are in the oldest part of the oldest quarter of Constantinople, the southeast section of Stamboul near Seraglio Point. The greater part of Stamboul is now behind us. It is one of the most famous buildings in the world that stands there guarded by four Moslem minarets, but the exterior has been so changed that one who did not know its history might not imagine it had ever been the most splendid Christian church in the whole world. Those twin buttresses of red and white masonry were erected long ago to support the walls after they had been weakened by an earthquake. The buildings that cling closely to the lower walls are additions made at various times by Moslem masters of the city, for use as lecture and library rooms, dispensaries and infirmaries. From those minarets a muezzin five times each day chants the call to prayer.

Almost sixteen hundred years ago this ground where we stand was at the heart of the capital city of the vast Roman Empire, which meant then the whole of civilized Europe and parts of Asia and Africa, with a considerable border of pagan lands. The Emperor Constantine in the year 324 made Christianity the established religion of the realm. Constantine built a church here, close by his own palace. Justinian in the sixth century replaced it with this building. Though of course repairs and alterations have left only parts of the actual structure of Justinian's time, that great central dome and the semicircular apse at the left still retain the character of the sixth century church where St. Gregory used to pray, and where important Church councils were held in early days.

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6571