Symbolic contrasts in the works of Pierre Loti

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THE SYMBOLIC CONTRASTS IN THE WORKS OF PIERRE LOTI

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1850 at Rochefort, a fishing community halfway between Bordeaux and Brest, Pierre Loti was the descendant of a long line of Huguenot fishermen. His was a happy childhood, spent in playing with his sister and her friends or in solitary rambling in the forest and fields which were so dear to him. Cherished were the hours spent in front of the fire in the living room of his home, hours passed in playing games with members of his family, in telling stories of far-away places, in reading from the Bible. He held stubbornly to his butterfly collections and toys, finding in them a sense of security and a means of prolonging his youth by keeping evidences of his childhood activities. A deep religious consciousness was instilled in him at an early age and he determined to become a minister. Given to dreaming, Loti was charmed by the tales of exotic countries told to him by his aunt and brother Gustave. The latter had visited far-away countries as a sailor and had brought home to his small brother souvenirs of his travels. A passion for the exotic, a desire for the unknown soon formed in Loti a restless ambition to travel and see the exciting places he had heard about so often.

His first formal education was in the public school at Rochefort, where he was unhappy and disliked by most of his classmates. In school all day, he longed for the day-by-
day security of his parents and home. Painfully shy and retiring, he had no wish to meet and associate with strangers. It was during the early years of his schooling that he became interested in the works of Taine, the nineteenth century French positivist who believed that it is the influences of la race, le milieu, and le moment which cause a man to produce works of a certain kind. Loti was also impressed at this time by Lamartine's Le Lac and the words of this French poet of the Romantic era brought to his conscience "le premier éveil de mes terreurs en présence de notre course au néant."\(^1\) Lamartine said: "Dans la nuit éternelle emportée sans retour,/Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'Océan des âges,/ Jeter l'ancre un seul jour?\(^2\) In these years Loti rejected his wish to become a minister. He decided that religion was hypocrisy and that those who professed a belief in God were just going through the motions of an automaton, motions that in reality meant nothing. He describes thus his disillusionment with religion: "l'ennui de certaines prédications du dimanche; le vide de ces prières préparées à l'avance, dites avec l'onction convenue et les gestes qu'il faut; et l'indifférence de ces gens endimanchés, qui venaient écouter,—comme j'ai senti de bonne heure,—et avec un chagrin profond, une déception cruelle—l'écoeurant formalisme de tout cela!—L'aspect même du temple


\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 19.
Deciding he could best satisfy his insatiable desire to visit unknown countries by becoming a sailor, Loti enrolled in a Paris lyceé which would offer him courses preparatory to naval school. Although he wanted to go to Paris to further his career, it was extremely difficult for him to break away from his family and the memories of his childhood. It was with anguished despair that he left his own room, his piano in the corner of the living room, his books and cats, all the material things he had always grasped for security, to face the long year ahead of him. Nor was he happy in Paris, being alone and not mixing with the other students. He felt himself in "un désert de pierre et un désert d'hommes." He missed the air and freedom of country life, the simple beings of a small town. With what joy, at the end of his year away, he returned to Rochefort to revisit his beloved woods, his home and the possessions so dear to him.

His next venture from home, to naval school at Brest, was less difficult, but no matter how long he traveled, how far he went, there was always something that pulled him back, mentally as well as physically, to Rochefort. One is reminded of Marcel Proust and his almond cooky when Loti tells of see-

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4 Ibid., p. 16.
ing on a stairway in Turkey a rainbow which reminds him of a rainbow he saw on a stairway in Rochefort. Loti was experiencing a "remembrance of things past" when in Japan he came upon a garden like one at his sister's house near Bordeaux, and when in Africa he saw women wearing the coiffe of women of Brittany.

Loti spent the rest of his days as a sailor, eventually becoming the commander of a small boat. He settled in one place for only a few months before resuming his travels. He married, but mentioned his wife in his works only in complaint of her failure to write him while he was on his voyages. He had, too, one son, Samuel.

In 1891 Loti was elected to the Académie Française. Because he was more often put out of France than in, he was not abreast of current affairs, and although a writer, he did little reading. Therefore, when he gave his speech on an original matter that all new members of the Académie must give, his information, although quite correct and new to him, was already known to all his fellow académiciens. These eminent men promptly laughed Loti into his seat and made him feel very ill at ease in the Académie ever after. Loti himself was frightened by the solemnity and austereness of the group and continually looked alarmed at its formal proceedings.

Loti died in 1923 in Rochefort of a cerebral hemorrhage after an illness of many months. His last request, made to his friend and biographer Claude Farrère, was that he be buried in the family plot on the Ile d'Oléron near Rochefort.

The old Loti was very similar to the young Loti. The
characteristics he had as a young man were like those he had as a child. He retained his initial shyness and his hesitancy to associate with strangers. As when a child he had collected useless souvenirs of his games, the elder Loti collected useless souvenirs of his travels. He never completely regained his lost faith, and he never lost his fear of death. In the pattern of his life, Loti seemed to be going around in circles. His activities were roughly thus: a dream of a far-away place, an ocean voyage to that or a similar place, a few months spent in the place, a return trip home, a growing restlessness at home, another dream, an ocean voyage—. This pattern did not lead anywhere; it had no evolution.

One wonders what forces beckoned this man to all parts of the earth, this man who could say "quelque petit hymne . . . me conseillant de ne pas partir. Tant d'autres, plus simples que moi, n'ont jamais quitté ce pays. . . . Peut-être, si j'avais fait comme eux. . . ." but who felt at the same time drawn by a magnetic force to exotic countries. He was drawn with a compulsion indicated by the words leur destinée in the following quotation, a quotation which again recalls Taine's la race, le milieu, and le moment explanation of the reason for men's actions: "Oh! vous qui vivez de la vie régulière de la famille, assis paisiblement chaque soir au foyer, ne jugez jamais les marins, les spahis, ceux qui leur destinée a jetés, avec des natures ardents, dans des condi-

tions d'existence anormales, sur la grande mer ou dans les lointains pays." According to Frédéric Mallet, French literary critic, Loti entered into a naval career because "il recherche le contraste, la nouveauté, des sensations, que la France ne peut pas lui donner!" But after he had seen the colorful and unusual countries and thus had seemingly satisfied his desire for the exotic, Loti might have spent his many vacations at home and have been willing to retire as an old man to his native land. But he did not. He felt continually compelled to travel. It was as though he were seeking something. He searched for a religion which would compensate for his lost Christianity. He sought primitive countries, the return-to-Nature idea propagated by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Rousseau. And he looked for sunny countries in an effort to escape the overcast skies of his own home.

In the consideration of Loti, the question is often raised: why did he write? In his own words, he wrote "... pour essayer de prolonger, au-delà de ma propre durée tout ce que j'ai été, tout ce que j'ai pleuré, tout ce que j'ai aimé." When he discovered he no longer believed in God he became terrified and thought that if a supposed Christian does not believe in God, there is for him no after life. He grew alarmed at the idea that when he would die there would be nothing left for him. He would be cast into an oblivion in

7 Mallet, Pierre Loti, p. 41.
8 Le roman d'un enfant (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1922), p. 239.
which he would never again feel anything or know anything or
do anything. Everything would be ended for him for as long
as time should last. And he would be forgotten by those left
on earth if he did not leave something to be remembered by.
So he decided to write of his life and travels to prolong
himself in the memory of others and thus create for himself
a life after death. "Avant de mourir, je voudrais les écrire,
ces souvenirs. . . . Il me semble qu’en les écrivant, je fixe-
erais un peu l’existence fugitive, je lutterais contre la
force aveugle qui nous emporte vers le néant." And in his
book Le livre de la pitié et de la mort, he states that "ce
besoin de lutter contre la mort est . . . la seul raison im-
materielle que l'on ait d'écrire."

Loti also wrote because he wanted success and glory
during his lifetime. Of a pessimistic nature, he sought fame
to compensate for his extreme shyness and to divert him from
his melancholy. He found all earthly happiness fade so rapidly
that the rapture he snatched at melted in his grasp. He felt
that " . . . le livre seul pouvait fixer dans une réalité
durable quelques parcelles de ce moi et de ce monde toujours
en fuite."

It is difficult to place Loti in any one literary
movement. He shows traits of the Romanticists in his choice
of subjects for his works—his life on the sea and the exotic

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10 Le livre de la pitié et de la mort (Paris: Calmann-
 Lévy, 192D), p. ii.
11 Gustave Lanson, Histoire de la littérature française
(Prints: Imp. Paul Brodard, 1890, p. 1070.
countries he visited. He writes of his desire to return to Nature, to the primitive, and laments the modernization of so many countries. His was the culte du moi of the solitary, melancholy Romantics. At the same time he is realistic in his descriptions. He describes the people he knew and the way of life he observed in the lands he visited, not the lands of his dreams.

Loti is perhaps best known for his style, and no consideration of him would be complete without a treatment of this aspect of his works. He has been called a word painter, a painter of the impressionistic school, so deftly does he sketch the rounded buildings of a Turkish city, the bustling life around a sidewalk cafe of Constantinople, the little men pulling passenger carts along a Japanese street wet with rain. All these images are combined with splashes of color—a bit of green in the forest, a liberal casting of blue on the water, a bright yellow to denote the sun of the Basque country—and the whole is mixed with the ever-present contrast between things black and white. Loti draws nothing intricately; he merely suggests. To suggest is the unique goal of his art. The verbs être and sembler appear over and over again, and, although they do not describe anything definite, no other verbs equal them in ability to suggest. Some of Loti's prose passages become quite poetic. Indeed, the reader is carried away on a wave of enchantment as he visualizes the white, rounded domes and the sparkling lights of Stamboul against the clear night sky. This scene and other similar ones are de-
scribed by Loti in a lyrical prose style that reminds one of such nineteenth-century poets as Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

One of the most characteristic devices of Loti's style is his continual use of contrast. These contrasts are seen in form, for he rarely mentions white without the word black or gives a picture of a bright, sunny day without immediately counteracting it with a vision of gloomy surroundings. The contrasts are also seen in the content of his works. He contrasts the bustling cities of nineteenth-century France with the quiet villages of nineteenth-century India or Morocco, and the exotic countries he has visited are put in contrast with the more ordinary scenes of most French provinces. He compares his youth with his old age and contrasts Christianity and paganism as seen in the countries he visited.

This thesis is a treatment of the contrasts in the writings of Pierre Loti. These contrasts are not merely superficial comparisons between two material objects. Each contrast between two material elements is a symbol for a contrast, in the mind of Loti, between two more abstract things. For example, in the following quotation, being asleep and being awake are parallel with life and death: "... on dirait les puissances du sommeil et de la mort se débattent contre celles du réveil et de la vie." Examples of the above-mentioned contrasts will be given, and, from the context in which they are used and from a knowledge of the nature of Loti himself, the symbolism in each contrast will be pointed out.

12Pierre Loti, Le Roman d'un spahi, p. 192.
CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM

One wonders why a man like Loti, so attached to his home, would want to travel so far away from it. His era was, of course, that of France's great colonial expansion, and his attention was naturally drawn to the remote places of the world. Too, he was especially impressed by the exotic stories brought back by those who had visited these places, and he decided to set out to discover the lands for himself, to escape what he considered the banality of his native land. After visiting these places, he could have returned to his home and lived there for the rest of his life. But he continued his restless wanderings over the face of the earth, and the reader begins to ask himself why. After having read all the works of Loti, one is convinced that his entire life was a search. Whether he was seeking one thing or many things, it is difficult to say, but certainly the search to recapture his lost belief in God played a prominent role in his journeys. Wherever he went, he was aware of the religious observances of the native peoples. He found a curious mixture, in Europe, in the Orient, and in Africa, of Christianity and paganism. In the following paragraphs, the contrast between these two elements will be made evident.

Although, according to Loti, the Western Europeans have often sadly failed to live up to Christian precepts, they
found it unpardonable of the Turks not to have accepted that religion. Loti observed that the Turks had a great religious tolerance, accepting people of all faiths, not just their own. He wished that the French Catholics who criticized the Turks could talk to the nuns and priests who had been in Turkey and hear about how these people learned that "... toutes les manifestations extérieures du culte sont largement protégées chez eux, et que les processions, les bannières, interdites en France, circulent librement dans les rues de Constantinople, où les Turcs sont les premiers à les saluer au passage." \(^1\)

Loti found another type of pagan religion in the ancestor worship of the Japanese. "Leur culte le plus sérieux semble être celui des ancêtres défunts ... ils ont, dans chaque famille, un autel parfumé, devant lequel on prie ... sans cependant croire absolument à l'immortalité de l'âme et à la persistance du moi humain comme l'entendent nos religions occidentales." \(^2\) Loti remarked how much happier these people seemed to be than the inhabitants of Western Europe with their profaned Christianity. The following quotation describes the happiness of some Japanese youths, simple people, content in the religion that has been the tradition of their ancestors for centuries: "Et tout cela, c'était de la beauté, de la vie: enthousiasme des jeunes, des braves, des simples, pour

\(^1\)Les alliés qu'il nous faudrait (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1919), p. 52.

des idées simples aussi, mais superbement généreuses—et sans
doute éternelles, malgré l'effort d'une secte moderne pour
les détruire.\textsuperscript{3}

In Morocco, as well as Tahiti, Loti's friends worshiped pagan idols and believed in many gods. These people were content. They had all they wanted in life—their homes, Nature, and love for one another.

But it was in India that Loti was most aware of the difference between Christianity and paganism and where he came closer than at any other time in his adult life to believing in a Supernatural Being. Because Christianity had escaped him, he went to India, as a sort of last resort, to seek the religion of her people—to find a way to prolong himself after his death. \textit{Les sages}, the leaders of the pagan religion\textsuperscript{4} Loti found in India, said that Christianity is wonderful if one believes in it. If he does believe in it, he should carefully guard it. But if one cannot accept Christianity, he should go to \textit{les sages}. They promise to give him a religion more abstract and more difficult than Christianity, but one which will lead its believer to the same good. Loti marveled thus: "... leur enseignement gagne du terrain d'heure en
heur dans mon âme, d'abord inattentive ou revoltee. Déjà, ils ont déséquilibré l'être que j'étais; il semble qu'ils

\textsuperscript{3}La troisième jeunesse de Madame Prune (Paris: Calmann-
Lévy, 1905), p. 205.

\textsuperscript{4}This religion is related to Brahmanism, the doctrine of the world as illusion.
aient entamé mon individualité intime, pour commencer de la fondre, comme la leur, dans la grande âme universelle." In writing some letters, which were published posthumously in the volume Correspondance inédite, he said that the pagan religion he found in India gave him, for a short while, at least, peace in his soul.

Loti's home associations, indeed, all his associations in France, were among extremely religious people, people of the Christian religion. And there were times when he felt almost a part of the religion of his relatives and associates. When his cherished Aunt Claire was dying, his mother had faith that she would live. He said her faith was the only thing that gave him hope. Loti was again exposed to a Christian attitude towards death on reading a letter written by his dying brother:

Je meurs en Dieu, dans la foi et le repentir; mes péchés sont rouges comme la cramoisi, mais il me blanchera; du reste, n'a-t-il pas dit: Quiconque croit en moi aura la vie? O Dieu! mon père, oui, je crois en toi.... et mes prières ardentes montent vers ton fils afin qu'il intercède pour moi et qu'il m'aide à traverser la sombre vallée de l'ombre de la mort. O Dieu, j'ai péché; mais tu es un père de pardon et d'amour. Aie pitié, Seigneur, reçois-moi comme un de tes enfants, car je crois et quiconque croit sera sauvé. O amis chéris, la mort est douce en Dieu; elle se présente à moi sans m'effrayer, je la contemple venir. Car ce n'est point une séparation, ne serons-nous pas tous éternellement réunis?

Loti's Christian religious experiences were not limited to his homeland. He occasionally had such experiences abroad,


too. He vividly describes the death in the desert of the
to o. H e vividly describes the death in the desert of the
hero of his book Le roman d'un spahi. He makes the man, who,
like himself, has been a skeptic most of his life, embrace
Christianity just before dying.

Alors, des larmes coulèrent sur ses joues bronzées;
ses prières d'autrefois lui revinrent à la mémoire, et
lui . . . se mit à prier . . . il prit dans ses mains
une médaille de la Vierge . . . il eut la force de la
porter à ses lèvres, et il l'embrassa avec un immense
amour. Il pria de toute son âme cette Vierge . . . il
était tout illuminé des illusions radieuses de ceux qui
vont mourir, --et, tout haut, dans le silence écrasant
de cette solitude, sa voix qui s'éteignait répétait ces
mots éternels de la mort: 'Au revoir, au revoir dans le
ciel!'"7

Loti found a semblance of belief in the Holy Land. Seeing
the native peasant women in their unquestioning faith, he
himself began to be drawn into a sort of semi-belief. Speak-
ing of one of these women, he observed: "Mais la mère qui
m'accompagne dans ces caveaux . . . a réussi à faire passer
momentanément en moi sa conviction ardente . . . me voici,
devant ces débris, ému autant qu'elle même et, pour un temps,
je ne doute plus."8 The effect produced on him from time to
time when he was with these people was this: " . . . le Christ,
qui me retient, moi, aussi, à cette place, comme elle dans
un recueillement vague, [est] encore très doux."9

In contrast with the brief moments of almost-belief
experienced by Loti were the more frequent periods in which

7Le roman d'un spahi, p. 346.
9Ibid., p. 63.
he felt disillusioned with Christianity and thought that it could offer him nothing. Even though the first shadows of doubt about the existence of God began to come into his mind when he was ten years old, he eagerly awaited the taking of his first Communion. He hoped that at this time his faltering belief would be strengthened and that he would experience a real communion with God. Disappointment weighed on him when, after the ceremony was over, he did not feel any different than before. He expressed thus his opinion of his Communion:

"Cette première Communion, sur laquelle j'avais fondé tant d'espoir, ne fut qu'une simple formalité accomplie avec respect et rien de plus. Après la cérémonie, quand je me retrouvai dans la rue de Rivoli... j'avais dans le coeur cette impression de vide affreux que, tant d'années après, je devais retrouver plus définitive encore à Jérusalem.\[10\]

Several years before going to India, Loti went to the Holy Land in search of his lost faith. But there again he met disillusionment. Expecting to find much worship and reverence in the birth-place of Christ, he was shocked when he found just the contrary. Pictures of Queen Victoria and the Emperor of Austria adorned the walls of holy places. There were hundreds of tourists swarming through Bethlehem, going too fast to really be able to see or contemplate anything, wanting to be able to say they had been there.

"... on nous l'avaid dit: 'Jérusalem, la Galilée... le

\[10\]Prime jeunesse, p. 208.
Christ n'y est plus' . . . Et, en effet, dans toute cette Terre Sainte, nous n'avons guère trouvé que la profanation, ou bien le vide et la mort. "And, in spite of the temporary faith he found in Jerusalem, he left the Holy Land" . . . sans y avoir aperçu la lueur que j'avais souhaitée, sans y avoir trouvé même un instant de recueillement véritable. "

He expressed thus a resignation toward his apparent inability to believe in God: "Mais, pour adorer sans comprendre, comme ces simples qui viennent ici, et qui sont les sages, les logiques de ce monde,—il faut sans doute une intuition et un élan de coeur qu'ils ont encore et que je n'ai plus."

When Ramuntcho, in the book of the same title, goes to the convent to take Gracieuse away with him, he expects to find her anxious to leave with him. She does not go with him, however, as she is quite content with her present position. In Ramuntcho's eyes, her existence is a living death. Her Christian religion is depriving her of contacts with the outside world. She can see her family only infrequently and she can never marry.

*     *     *

Finding a mingling of Christianity and paganism in the countries he visited, Loti himself was torn between the two.

12Jérusalem, p. 184.
13Ibid., p. 218.
He was torn, also, between belief and disbelief. Striving first for a belief in God,\textsuperscript{14} he later resigned himself to the impossibility of Christianity for him. Stumbling, quite by accident, on the pagan belief of les sages in India, he felt himself closer to a Supreme Being than he had since that time long ago when he had lost his religion. The possibilities of this pagan faith attracted him when Christianity had failed him.

For Loti, Christianity, with its next to impossible idealism, symbolized the unattainable. Paganism, which he found in the simpler countries of the world and which was practiced by people living close to Nature, symbolized the attainable.

\textsuperscript{14}Loti believed Christianity could work for some people. He said that those who believed in God were the truly happy of this world. To them the terrors of solitude and the passage of time were unknown.
CHAPTER III

THE PRIMITIVE AND THE MODERN

One of the most frequently recurring contrasts seen in the works of Loti is that between primitive and modern civilizations. As he visited countries such as Japan, Turkey, or Morocco, he noticed the slow infiltration into a quiet, peaceful town of highways or large factories. Gazing with scorn at the tourists from Cooks' who had come to profane the Holy Land, he turned to what he hoped would be the calm forests of India, only to discover it impossible to find any dwelling place but a European-style hotel in the midst of a booming city. He wanted to be in the part of India where the tourists were fewer and where the English influence was less. One is reminded of Rousseau when Loti strove desperately for a return to nature in Turkey with his friend Rarahu, and when he spent so much time in reminiscence of his childhood games in the woods near his home. Terrified by the congested sidewalks of Paris, bewildered by the enormous activity in the harbor of a Japanese town, Loti's whole life was, indeed, a search for the lost times of simple, unembellished living. It was, in addition, a search for the hardworking people who were content with what they had and who were not always striving for material success.

Stating that he had no affection for Occidental Europe
where he had found nothing but deceptions, declaring his horror of civilization, expressing his desire and need for peace and rest, Loti turned to what he believed to be the calm, pastoral countries of the world to seek the solitude and the simple life which had eluded him in Europe. In his works he contrasts unfavorably modern countries with more primitive ones. He mentions often the European influence in the Oriental countries. This influence which tended to modernize them spoiled them. It made them lose their individual character. "Vivent les pays qui ont conservé leur couleur, leur musique et leurs bardes."\(^1\)

Returning to Japan after fifteen years' absence, Loti noted that the Occidental influence had taken hold since his departure from that country. In place of the quiet villages and peaceful countryside, everywhere he looked he saw the smoke of more and more factories. The once inactive harbor of Nagasaki was teeming with huge boats, and one saw everywhere Europeans and Americans. In the houses there was electricity instead of the old alcohol lamps, and somehow the city seemed to have surrounded the houses that had once been in the country. One could no longer escape the bustling throngs of people.

In like manner, Loti was disappointed, on coming back to Turkey after fifteen years' absence, to find it modernized. Mingled with the poor, tiny houses on narrow streets and the tall, whitewashed towers of an ancient mosque were the square,

gray, modern buildings and the ugly, black factories of Europe. With the hum of the factories mingled the bustle and murmur of thousands of European tourists. With rare exceptions, people no longer wore their Turkish costumes. "... Stamboul, plus que jamais, lui produisit l'effet d'une ville qui s'en va, qui piteusement s'occidentalise, et plonge dans la banalité, l'agitation, la laideur ... il s'écoeurera au milieu du grouillement des foules qui, de ce côté, n'a point de cesse ... tous les bas quartiers sont déjà minés par le 'progrès' ... Le mauvais souffle d'Occident a passé aussi sur la ville des Khalifes." Loti describes Galata as "... la partie de Constantinople la plus ulcérée par le perpétuel contact des paquebots, et par les gens qu'ils amènent, et par la pacotille moderne qu'ils vomissent sans trêve sur la ville des Khalifes."^ He paints the commercial scene at the docks of Constantinople thus: "L'air est plein du bruit des machines ... Cette foule mouillée, qui hurle et se coudoie c'est un méli-mélo de costumes turcs et de loques européens." Loti talked to some Turkish friends of his, and asked them if they remembered the Turkey of old times with her legends and simple way of life. He said to them: "... vous dormiez depuis des siècles d'un si tranquille sommeil, gardées par les traditions et les dogmes! Mais soudain le mauvais enchanteur, qui est le souffle d'Occident, a passé sur vous et rompu le charme, et toutes en


mêmes temps vous vous éveillez; vous vous éveillez au mal de vivre, à la souffrance de savoir.⁵

In the desert, in a valley which ought to be quiet, he found workmen who, with the help of machines, were building a highway. On arriving at Gava, after many days traversing the Sahara, Loti had the impression of entering a different world, the world of machines and buildings and people: "Et maintenant . . . il va falloir rentrer un peu dans le courant de ce siècle. Ce sera, il nous semble, avec une lassitude plus profonde, avec un plus définitif découragement, que les petits mirages nouveaux, les amusantes petites choses du jour et l'art des villes en fonte de fer auront peine à secouer encore."⁶

When Loti came to the United States in 1912 to direct the play La fille du ciel which he had written in collaboration with Judith Gautier, he conceded our mechanical ingenuity but declared it too one-sided. We need, he said, to read more, to think more, in order to offset our materialism. Our Western civilization was hateful to him, and he shrank from it, just as he shrank from modernization in all countries, considering it too hustling, ugly, and harsh.

Loti contrasts with the modern countries the small, secluded villages and peaceful countryside, unspoiled by the European influx of progress, that he was still able to find.

On arriving in Morocco, he was aware of less modernization and of a quieter, more peaceful life than in France and

⁵Les désenchantées, pp. 184-185.
⁶La Galilée, p. 209.
other parts of Europe. Here men still used animals for transpor-
tation instead of cars, and the roads were as yet little
traveled. He experienced a sensation of great space, of free-
dom, in a small village in the midst of the great African
plain, and he could forget the mechanized country, France, from
which he had come, the bustle of too many people in too crowded
places.

His picture of Tahiti is similar to that of Diderot's
in the latter's Supplement au voyage de Bougainville in which
he exalts the liberty and happiness of the savages. Loti
wished he could live the rest of his days "dans ce pays où
la misère est inconnue et le travail inutile, où chacun a sa
place au soleil et a l'ombre, sa place dans l'eau et sa nour-
riture dans les bois. . . ."

He found in Turkey, too, the quiet, simple life un-
known to those who have never ventured from their city mono-
polized by factories:

. . . il faut les considérer . . . comme un peuple qui re-
tarde de quelques siècles sur le nôtre. . . . Leurs petites
villes immobilisées de l'intérieur, leurs villages . . .
leurs campagnes sont les derniers refuges non seulement du
calme, mais de toutes les vertus patriarcales qui, de plus
en plus, s'effacent de notre monde moderne: loyauté, hon-
nêté . . . vénération des enfants pour les parents poussée à un
dégré que nous ne connaissons plus . . . hospitalité et
respect . . . pour les hôtes . . . douceur pour tout . . .
tolérance religieuse sans bornes . . . foi sereine. . . .
Dès qu'on a quitté, pour arriver chez eux, notre Occident
de doute et de cynisme, de tapage et de ferraille, on se
sent comme baigné de paix et de confiance, on croit avoir
avoir remonté le cours des temps jusque vers on ne sait
quelle époque imprecise, voisine peut-être de l'âge

197-198.
One day in Turkey he came upon a forest left savage, untouched by man, and he remarked that one would never find such a scene in the Occident. Loti discovered he was still able to go from the busy, noisy quarters of Turkey to quieter streets, something, he said again, one could no longer do in Europe: "... je chemine ensuite dans Galata, qui est en pleine fête, et enfin, quittant cette rue bruyante, je m'arrête au bord de l'eau, à l'entrée d'un pont qu'on ne voit pas finir, mais qui s'en va se perdre au loin dans l'obscurité confuse. Là, tout change brusquement, comme change un décor de fée au coup de sifflet des machinistes. Plus de foule, ni de lumières, ni de tapage." Loti depicts thus a Turkish château in the midst of a secluded wood which was surrounded by a humming city: "... cet isolement de la vie extérieure... cet espace vide, magnifique et obscur, que gardaient les sentinelles, et ce silence, ce silence lourd, au milieu d'une des villes du monde où le roulement des voitures est le plus fiévreux et le plus continu." In describing Constantinople, Loti shows how much happier were its natives who had clung to their old way of living than were the Europeans who had adopted the new progress:

... comme on se sentait là au milieu d'un monde heureux, resté presque à l'âge d'or,--pour avoir su toujours modérer ses désirs, craindre les changements et garder sa foi! Parmi ces gens assis là sous les arbres, satisfaits avec la minuscule tasse de café qui coûte un sou, et le narguilé berceur, la plupart étaient des artisans, mais qui travail-
ent pour leur compte, chacun de son petit métier d'autrefois, dans sa maisonnette ou en plein air. Combien ils plaindraient les pauvres ouvriers en troupe de nos pays de 'progrès', qui s'épuisent dans l'usine effroyable pour enrichir le maître! Combien leur paraîtraient surprenantes et dignes de pitié les vociférations avinées de nos bourses du travail.

In Japan the setting of the house of Madame Chrysanthème's mother is in a primitive place, away from the town, and Loti remarked that sitting in the house at night he could hear not the town noises but rather those of the country. Of a bustling city of Japan he says: "Nagasaki, malgré ses lampes électriques et la fumée de ses usines, est encore, au fond une ville très lointaine, séparée de nous par des milliers de lieues, par des temps et des âges... Si son port est ouvert à tous les navires et à toutes les importations d'Occident, du côté de la montagne elle a gardé ses petites rues des siècles passés, sa ceinture de vieux temples et de vieux tombeaux."¹²

In Jerusalem, in spite of his disappointment on seeing the tourists so profane the monuments and memories of Jesus as to make them meaningless, Loti rejoiced at the calm countryside nearly barren of cities and stranger to factories, saying, "La vie pastorale est ici retrouvée, la vie biblique, dans toute sa simplicité et sa grandeur."¹³ The desert around Jerusalem represented for Loti a place of solitude and peace away from the modern world, in which he felt trapped. In the

¹¹Les désenchantées, p. 165.
¹²La troisième jeunesse, pp. 29-30.
¹³Jérusalem, p. 6.
desert there was "une paix spéciale . . . non profanée." As far as one could see in the desert, there was not a house, not a person on the sand, not a boat on the sea, and Loti began to hope that "après l'épuisement des races, la nature verte lentement s'étendra pour resserrer ses forêts primitives."15

In his books with French settings (Ramuntcho, Pêcheur d'Islande), Loti chose for discussion the Basque country and Brittany, the provinces which have conserved their ancient customs and which have been less impregnated by the modern world. In these provinces the people still wear their native costumes and live simple lives in their small stone houses in the country.

Loti's contrast between primitivism and modernization extends from a comparison of the primitive and modern cities and countries themselves to a comparison of the people who live in them. Here again the contrast is on the side of the simple, less modern element, the people who demand little from life. For Loti, basically, was this kind of person himself. Seeking the exotic corners of the earth, he was always disappointed when he found them and was always pulled back, physically and mentally, to his quiet restful home at Rochefort. When he was very young, his family was poor and he was always grateful for this poverty, saying that it taught him respect for the simple things of life. "... parmi les hommes élevés aux champs, parmi les marins, parmi les fils de pêcheurs qui ont grandis...

15 La Galilée, p. 29.
dans la barque paternelle au milieu des dangers de la mer, on rencontre des hommes qui rêvent, vrais poètes muets, qui peuvent tout comprendre." Daniel Mornet, French literary historian, says of him: "Il a repris le rêve de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, l'idylle du bon sauvage ... il a évoqué des pêcheurs bretons, des contrabandiers basques, des fillettes tahitiennes et des mousmées japonaises. Il y a cherché une forme simple et paisible de l'amour."17

In Japan Loti found simple people among the Japanese peasant women. The noise and confusion of the city had not as yet penetrated their humble homes in the country. They had, he observed, an appreciation for the greatness of nature, for the calm of the forests, for the great silences of the outdoors, Finding them more reserved towards strangers than were the women of the Occident or even the Japanese women accustomed to living in cities, he considered them more honest and more refined than their city counterparts. These people had preserved their simple life in spite of the coming from the West of modern machines and modern ideas. In describing some young Japanese people at the wharf of a seacoast town enthusiastically greeting friends getting off a boat, Loti says: "Et tout cela, c'était de la beauté, de la vie: enthousiasme des jeunes, des braves, des simples, pour des idées simples aussi, mais superbe-ment généreuses--et sans doute éternelles, malgré l'effort d'une secte moderne pour les détruire."18

16Le roman d'un spahi, p. 33.
18La troisième jeunesse, p. 205.
Pluie d'Avril, a friend of Madame Prune, Loti says her simple, daily activities gave him a feeling that he was still in the Japan of former times, of simple living.

In traveling through the Holy Land, Loti came upon an old man and a beast walking along a road. They were poor and the animal had obviously not had enough to eat for some time. Contrasting them with the tourists from Cooks' or with himself and his party, all well-dressed and traversing the desert comfortably and with speed on their horses, Loti envied the old Arab with his animal, thinking how free he was. They could go where they wished and they were responsible for no one but themselves. Nothing in the great barren desert hindered their view or their journey. On seeing some peasants fall to their knees in worship in Jerusalem, Loti remarked that it is the simple people of the world who, unencumbered by the fast living of cities or the profane ideas of modernization, are best able to worship God without fear of committing heresy. He observed thus: "Mais pour adorer sans comprendre, comme ces simples qui viennent ici, et qui sont les sages, les logiques de ce monde,--il faut sans doute une intuition et un élan du coeur qu'ils ont encore et que je n'ai plus."  

In Turkey Loti's friend Rarahu was the epitome of his idea of les gens simples. She had lived all her life in the country and was extremely shy among strangers. She wore simple clothing and had about her a fresh, clean look, untainted by

19Jérusalem, p. 218.
contact with the hustling crowds of the city. She asked for nothing in life but the peace of her present existence. Then came to Turkey the French sailors and with them their lust for money and their desire for material fortune. Rarahu and her kind were spoiled on coming in contact with these people. They had lost their direction in life and had become bewildered as to which was more important—peace or money. Again in Constantinople Loti found some girls who had been sheltered from the influx of progress into Turkey and who scorned the modernization of Western civilization. One of these girls later wrote to Loti: "... je suis au fond une petite barbare. Quelque chose restera toujours en moi de la fille des libres espaces, qui jadis galopait à cheval... ou dansait dans la lumière." 20

Walking along a country road in the Basque country, Loti encountered an old woman, in tattered clothing and bent with the years, on her way to church. Because she had difficulty walking on the steep, cobbled road, Loti was on the point of going to help her when he saw her kneel in front of a cross to pray. After she got up and continued on her way some distance, a small boy ran down the road to meet her, crying, "Grand'maman! Grand'maman!" The two embraced and walked away, hand in hand. Loti was left alone. He decided that it was not this simple, old peasant woman with her faith in God and her beloved grandson who needed to be pitied. It was rather himself, lonely, and without a faith, well-dressed and

20 Les désenchantées, p. 40.
educated though he might be, who needed sympathy.

In addition to his contrasts between the tranquility of primitive societies and the hubbub and upheaval of modern societies, Loti contrasts the modern warfare of supposedly civilized nations with the more backward methods used by primitive countries. He does this slightly differently than he treats the topics of cities versus villages or poor, simple people versus modern, educated ones. In his treatment of warfare among these societies, it is the civilized nation which becomes savage and the primitive nation that is civilized or at least humane. In this context, the word "savage" assumes a pejorative connotation and the word "civilization" for the first time takes on some laudable meaning.

Before the first World War, Soissons, a town in northern France, was a calm, sleepy place which still retained its old customs and where one could see ancient houses and old-fashioned hotels situated around small town squares planted with flowers. During the war, this little village was constantly bombarded and was soon partially destroyed, its peace disrupted and its inhabitants left without homes.

Into Tahiti, where before no blood had ever flowed and where there had been peace, came the "civilized" Germans with their modern fighting equipment, their ruthless methods of warfare and their intentions of civilizing the primitive country they were entering.

In methods of warfare, the Turks were much more civilized, says Loti, than the Germans. The former always let their enemy know when they were going to attack a hospital camp so
that it could be evacuated, while their opponents seemed to take especial delight in attacking hospital units and ambulances. In Les alliés qu'il nous faudrait, Loti draws a picture of some Turks helping some enemy French soldiers to land after they had been bombed on a ship and severely wounded. These French soldiers were treated like brothers by their enemies the Turks. The German forces, however, left the wounded, even their own, after they had completed an attack.

* * *

Thus Loti traveled away from the modernization of his own country to the far countries of the earth in search of a sort of Eden where he could seclude himself in a solitary wood or in a restful town. He discovered that modern ideas and machines had penetrated even to such far-removed places as Tahiti and India. However, he did find, in part, what he was seeking—the untainted forests of India and Turkey, the barren deserts of Africa, and the simple farm dwellers everywhere. In his works he always contrasts the primitive civilization of the Orient with the modern civilization of France and other Western European countries, the uncomplicated peoples of small towns and hamlets with the sophisticated ones of larger cities.

Loti does not contrast primitivism and modernization just to show his reader the differences between the life of the primitive Tahitians or the less modern Moroccans and the kind of life one lives among crowds of people and under the
influence of mechanization. In the contrasts, primitivism and modernization stand for a contrast between two other, immaterial ideas. Primitivism, for example, represents a belief in God, or at least in some Power greater than man. Loti states that in primitive surroundings he was more ready to accept the existence of God than he was when in modern surroundings.

Primitivism also represents happiness. Loti watched from afar the peasants of the Orient and even of France and thought how happy they must be. They had never had many material possessions and so did not long for them. They were content with their small farms and homely houses and were not constantly striving to attain riches they could never have.

Modernization, on the other hand, brings about disbelief. In Japan, the people had kept their pious beliefs for centuries, but as the modern influence from the West slowly filtered in, the temples became noticeably less frequented by young people. Soon only the older ones were left to worship. Loti saw in the Holy Land sacred things become profane by the coming of the visitors from the West. Again in the Holy Land, educated people, mostly tourists, looked with skepticism on the believers praying to God. Taught by their modern worlds to accept nothing they could not understand, they were unable to accept unquestioningly the existence of a Supreme Being. They were led to believe in monuments such as pieces of stone that Jesus may or may not have sat upon. These monuments, for them, stood for nothing beyond their physical existence.

Modernization creates also anxiety and worry. Loti
found that the people of the United States did not have enough
time to think and meditate, because they lived too fast a pace
in the midst of their factories and huge cities. They were
too worried about making money and not enough concerned with
the less material pleasures of life. In his travels Loti
found the people of modern civilizations restless to keep on
with their tremendous building, to continue their manufactur­
ing, and to increase their commerce with other modern countries.
These people, he found, had no time for walks in the country
or long evenings spent at home with their families. Their
constant worries were money and how to make more of it, build­
ing super roadways to shorten the distance between cities,
and inventing a rapid means of transportation to carry to
other parts of the world the goods produced in their factories.

However, in spite of discovering that modernization
was slowly consuming many remnants of the tranquil, restful
life he had hoped to find in his travels, Loti was relieved
that he had found a few places still secluded and untainted by
modern civilization. "Je commence," he said, "à espérer que
le monde est moins civilisé qu'on ne se le figure généralement
et qu'on peut encore trouver de bonnes aubaines dans les pays
inexplorés qui abondent."²¹

²¹Correspondance inédite (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1929),
p. 90.
CHAPTER IV

THE PAYS DU SOLEIL AND THE PAYS SOMBRES

Mais si, désabusé des larmes et du rire,
Altéré de l'oubli de ce monde agité,
Tu veux, ne sachant plus pardonner ou maudire,
Goûter une suprême et morne volupté,

Viens! Le Soleil te parle en paroles sublimes;
Dans sa flamme implacable absorbe-toi sans fin;
Et retourne à pas lents vers les cités infimes,
Le coeur trempé sept fois dans le néant divin.¹

Although he certainly could not be termed a Sun-worshiper, Pierre Loti found himself irresistibly attracted by the sun all his life. The sun, for him, changed the aspect of things and his mood depended entirely on it. When it was sunny, he was optimistic about his life and his future, and when the sun did not shine, he was pessimistic. Too, when he was living in a country where the sun habitually shone, he was happier than when living in a country which was perpetually rainy and sunless. In his work, Loti always contrasts the sunny countries with the sunless ones and expresses the different effects the two kinds of climates had on his moods. He discusses the weather as well as the kind of sea one finds in the two kinds of countries and the people who live there. For Loti les pays du soleil are Africa, India, Turkey, and the Basque country in France, while les pays sombres are Belgium and Japan abroad.

and Brittany, Savoie and Paris in France.

Loti's first arrival in Japan was marked by a long ride in a rickshaw in the pouring rain. He had vivid memories of running at night with Madame Chrysanthème along streets so shiny with rain that he could see lights reflected on them. He tells of walking in the countryside around Nagasaki and becoming drenched with rain. He describes Madame Prune's flowers, water-laden after a heavy rain storm. Everywhere in Japan, it seemed to him, he encountered overcast skies and dampness. He compares a storm in Japan to the life of the Japanese. The storm is severe in its long duration and its toll of lives and crops. The life of a Japanese is severe in its long working hours and little pay. The storm ravages the hand of nature. The hard life led by the Japanese ravages the man himself. Loti never understood the moods of the Japanese and the stormy climate of their country made him glad to leave for warmer climes. Although some may call Japan the Land of the Rising Sun, Loti found there only gloom and disappointment.

Although he does not describe Belgium often in his works, this country is classified by Loti as a pays sombre. When he takes his reader to Belgium, it is always raining. Most of his scenes in Belgium are in time of war, and Loti describes a muddy battlefield and tells of French soldiers driving through the countryside under a heavy sky.

Savoie, in contrast with Africa where he had just been on a naval voyage, was classified by Loti as a pays sombre.
A feeling of lethargy took hold of him at Annecy and he turned his thoughts to Africa and its bright sun where, he said, he had lived a full life. He had a feeling of sadness at going back to France and actually felt dépaysé. He was unhappy under the leaden, colorless sky and had little ambition for activity of any kind. Another time before entering Savoie he had spent some time in sunny Algiers and was happy and content there. When he received word that he was going back to Savoie to spend some time, the sun in Algiers suddenly disappeared and he spent three hours in a melancholy walk under a gray sky.

Upon returning to Brittany after spending several years in warm, sunny countries, Loti said: "J'ai repris depuis ce matin mon existence pâle et monotone."\(^2\) Returning to Brittany from a voyage to Morocco, he lamented: "Les semaines passent vite, toutes semblables, tristes, incolorées, et je n'ai plus le courage de rien, même plus d'écrire. Je revois, comme très lointain dans le passé, mes jours de soleil, de liberté et d'amour."\(^3\) When he was in Brittany, Loti was always longing to be somewhere else. In Brest he spoke of being away from everything he loved including the sun—"Le Soleil . . . mon Dieu."

After passing a few weeks at the home of friends in Brittany and at his own home in Rochefort, he was given an assignment on a small boat that would keep him in the waters

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 113.
around Brest the better part of a year. Bemoaning his fate, which seemed determined to keep him in what he considered one of the gloomiest parts of France, he said: "... un an, au moins, avant de pouvoir chercher un peu de vie réelle du côté de l'Orient et du soleil!" The following quotation expresses how Loti felt under the gray, stormy sky of Brittany: "Le semblant d'été ... est parti lui aussi; ce matin nous sommes retombés en hiver, avec un temps gris et presque froid: tu sais que cela ne contribue pas à me rendre gai et à me faire envisager l'avenir sous des couleurs attrayantes."

One is reminded of Gide's search for a Supreme Being in Africa when Loti says, concerning his reasons for turning his back on the darker, gloomier countries to seek the bright sunny ones: "Il m'a toujours attiré irrésistiblement, ce soleil; je l'ai cherché toute ma vie, partout, dans tous les pays de la terre. Encore plus que l'amour, il change les aspects de toute chose, et j'oublie tout pour lui quand il parait. Et dans certaines contrées de l'Orient, dans le grand ciel éternellement bleu ... que je me suis senti le plus étrangement près de sa personnalité dévorante. Il est mon Dieu; je le personnifie et l'adore dans sa forme la plus ancienne et par suite la plus vraie."

In Africa, land of sun and heat, Loti said he felt less

4Ibid., p. 121.
5Un jeune officier, p. 40-41.
fear of death. "Il lui semblait . . . que dans cette humidité bienfaisante, la mort serait moins cruelle," he writes of his hero Jean Peyrol, and indeed this sentiment was also Loti's. He rejoiced in the bright sun of the desert in Africa and he gazed with wonder at the deep blue of the sky. In painting for his reader a scene of men and animals in the desert, he reflected on how much happier these creatures must be with the great African sun pouring down on them than they would be in a country such as Brittany with the rain constantly pelting them. Back in Rochefort, Loti expressed thus his feelings at being away from Africa: "Les longues courses à cheval, et la vie plus libre, et la grande lumière, et les horizons démesurés, tout cela manque, quand on s'y est habitué et qu'on ne l'a plus; dans la tranquillité du foyer, on éprouve quelque chose comme le besoin du soleil devorant et de l'éternelle chaleur, le regret du désert, la nostalgie du sable." Hot, humid, full of bright colors, India was on Loti's list of sunny countries. He went there as a skeptic and with no belief in God, but under the beating sun of the remote Indian desert he began to believe, more fully then he ever had in his life before, in a God. Under the instruction of les sages, a name given to a religious order in India, he was told and began to believe "tu es essentiellement Dieu. Si tu pouvais graver en ton coeur cette vérité, tu verrais tomber d'elles-mêmes les

7Le roman d'un spahi, p. 57.
8Ibid., p. 276.
limitations illusoires qui produisent la tristesse et les souffrances, les désirs de l'être séparé."9 It has been agreed by most critics that Loti, as a result of his education,10 lost his early belief in God. However, the teachings of these people of India, Loti said, made more of an impression on him and stayed with him longer than any of his other attempts to find the answer to his eternal question: Is there a God?

Turkey, with her bright sun, was very dear to Loti. She was, in fact, almost his second home. He was always happy in this country and yearned constantly for it when he was away. In his descriptions of Turkey there was light everywhere. The white rounded dome of a mosque reflected the dazzling morning sun, and the fields outside Constantinople spread endlessly under a clear, bright sky. The following quotation describes the ever-presence of sun and of light:

Mais le blanc . . . des chaux dominait tout; il semblait éclairer et renvoyer de la lumière atténuée vers le profond ciel qui en était déjà rempli. Nul part n'existaient d'ombres dures, ni de contours accusés, ni de couleurs sombres; sur cette blancheur de tout, des êtres vivants, qui se mouvaient avec lenteur, ne faisaient passer que des teintes claires, étrangement claires, fraîches comme dans des visions terrestres; tout était adouci et fondu dans de la tranquille lumière; il n'y avait de noir que tous ces grands yeux de rêveurs.11

The sea, with which Loti, as an officer of the Navy, was as familiar as he was the dry land, changes in his works to suit the place it is found. The colors he uses in describ-

9 L'Inde, p. 452.
10 His education included a study of Ernest Renan, Auguste Comte, Hippolyte Taine.
11 L'exilée, pp. 196-197.
ing the sea in the various parts of the world are in keeping with the kind of climate typical of that locale. Off the coast of Brittany the sea is habitually stormy and rough and it is often black with rain pelting down on it. Off the shores of such countries as India, Africa and Turkey, the sea is nearly always calm and is brilliant with red and golden hues.

Loti observed a difference in the people who lived in the overcast climates and those who inhabit the more torrid regions. The former are unhappy and pessimistic. The women of sunless Brittany, for example, are weighted down with the fear that their husbands, brothers or sons will not come back from their yearly fishing trips to far-away and dangerous waters. They are poor people for the most part and live in small stone houses with dirt floors and no heat. They have little to look forward to each day except much hard work and constant worry. Their troubles are augmented by the gloomy countryside they face each day. The Africans Loti knew, on the other hand, also poor and often without enough to eat, were happy anyway. He describes an African woman sitting on the door-step of her mud house watching her scantily clothed baby playing in the dusty yard. Both were content with their activities of the moment and were happily soaking up the hot, soothing sun.

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Les pays du soleil symbolized for Loti a belief in a Supreme Being. He stated that he wanted to die in a sunny
country such as India or Africa where he felt close to some Power greater than himself. He said that in Africa and in India he was closer than at any other time in his adult life to believing in God.

Les pays du soleil likewise symbolized happiness and a minimum of worry. While in sunny countries he was happier and less depressed by care and anxiety than during his stays in cloudy countries. In the former he was able to forget, for a time, that his life there was only temporary and he could live for the moment, for the day, only.

Les pays sombres, on the other hand, symbolized a lack of faith for Loti. It was in a pays sombre (Brittany) where he lost his faith in God and it was in such a country (Japan) where he noticed an increasing disinterest in religious matters among the young people. On visiting a Japanese temple one day, he noticed that most of the worshipers were older people and he stated that the young of this country were losing faith.

Les pays sombres symbolized also care and worry. It was in these countries that Loti was oppressed by feelings of gloom and gave himself up to long periods of despair. He was constantly worried about death--his own and the more imminent ones of his relatives. In the pays sombres that he visited abroad, he lamented the depressing weather and the rapid passage of time, the latter of which brought him closer to his death. His pleasures in these countries were spoiled by his constant fear that they would end.

Thus, for Loti, life in les pays sombres was just an
existence. It was necessary for him to go to the pays du soleil in search of a real life, in order to find happiness.
CHAPTER V

THE EAST AND THE WEST

One of the most obvious contrasts in the works of Loti is his treatment of the age-old theme of "East is east and west is west." There is a world of difference, he declared, between the Orient and the Occident. Between these two poles there is an "... opposition d'énigmes, brouillamini de croyances, chaos ... au sien duquel s'élève, glacial comme la mort, le matérialisme issu de la science."¹ This difference was great enough to suppress all understanding, all rapport, between the two peoples.

It was while he was in Japan that Loti was most aware of the differences between East and West. "Entre ce japon et nous, les différences des origines creusent un grand abîme."² Observing the physical characteristics of an important Japanese town, Loti remarked: "Nagasaki, malgré ses lampes électriques et la fumée de ses usines, est encore, au fond, une ville très lointaine, séparée de nous par des milliers de lieues, par des temps et des âges."³ This quotation points out the mingling of modern inventions from the West with the calm traditions of the East. He even found nature in Japan different from Western nature: "Les herbes très délicates, les mousses, toute

³La troisième jeunesse, p. 29.
l'exquise flore sauvage d'ici, apportent leur charme intime à ces arrangements qui ne seraient guère que prétentieux chez nous.\(^4\)

The barriers between East and West were paramount in the peoples of these two parts of the world.

La race jaune et la nôtre sont les deux pôles de l'espèce humaine; il y a des divergences extrêmes jusque dans nos façons de percevoir les objets extérieurs, et nos notions sur les choses essentielles sont souvent inverses. Nous ne pouvons jamais pénétrer complètement une intelligence japonaise ou chinoise... nous nous sentons arrêtés par des barrières cérébrales infranchissables; ces gens-là sentent et pensent au rebours de nous-mêmes.\(^5\) The Japanese peasant is less friendly to strangers than is his counterpart in the Occident and is more refined. "... la toute petite... paysanne japonaise, n'importe où on aille la chercher, même dans les recoins les plus perdus des campagnes... est incontestablement beaucoup plus affinée que notre paysanne d'Occident."\(^6\) The Japanese, Loti found, had a hatred and a distrust for those people coming to their country from the Occident. He thought that perhaps this attitude, "l'attitude de plus en plus arrogante qu' affectent les Nippons d'aujourd'hui vis-à-vis des étrangers..."\(^7\) might be caused, in part, by a lack of understanding between the two peoples, by the centuries-old differences in their traditions of religion and family. At any rate, he noticed that "sous l'amabilité obséquieuse de ce peuple, il y a un vieux fond de haine con-

\(^{4}\text{Ibid.}, p. 85.\)

\(^{5}\text{L'exilée}, p. 229.\)

\(^{6}\text{Ibid.}, p. 267.\)

\(^{7}\text{La troisième jeunesse}, pp. 111-112.\)
Upon remarking the differences that separated the peoples of Turkey from those of the West, Loti described the meeting but not mingling of east and west, of "ces deux rives qui se regardent, l'Europe et l'Asie . . . ." In Les désenchantées André Léhry tries to talk Djénane, one of his Turkish friends, into returning to France with him. She replies: "Vous . . . peut-être trouveriez-vous le bonheur là-bas, parce que vous avez dans le sang des hérédités occidentales . . . . Mais moi, mais Zeyneb, mais Mélek, quitter notre Turquie! Non." When André leaves Turkey, he arranges to have Djénane meet him for a day on a near-by island where his boat will dock to pick up some more passengers. She fails to come and André is greatly disappointed in her, saying that if her affections for him were as great as she had said, she would have come to meet him. Here Loti intervenes and says: "Il oubliait que c'était une Orientale, plus excessive en tout qu'une Européene, et d'ailleurs bien indéchiffable." He observed that "l'amour d'une musulmane pour une étranger n'a d'autre issue que la fruïte ou la mort." Loti describes the customers in the sidewalk cafes of Constantinople and observes that the rich pashas and the poor peasants mix indifferently. He exclaims:

9Les désenchantées, p. 7.
10Ibid., p. 185.  
11Ibid., p. 332.
12Ibid., p. 339.
"O Égalité! inconnue à notre nation démocratique, à nos républiques occidentales!" After having spent some time in Turkey, he wrote the following in a letter to his French friend Plumkett: "Les Orientaux, mon cher ami, savent seuls être chez eux; dans vos logis d'Europe, ouverts à tous venants, vous êtes comme on est ici dans la rue... vous ne connaissez point cette inviolabilité de l'intérieur, ni le charme de ce mystère."

In India Loti concluded that "entre nous, il y a la différence essentielle des races, des hérédités, des religions... nous ne parlons pas le même langue, et cette obligation de passer par une tierce personne est un obstacle... qui suffit à tout arrêter."

In his play L'île du rêve, Loti mentions some of the differences between East and West as seen in Tahiti. His friend Mahenu tells him the following: "Loti, le même Dieu ne nous a pas créés,/ Bien loin l'une de l'autre il a mis nos patries." And a little further on, Loti replies: "Mon pays est si loin de cette île odorante!" Although they are talking of the relative geographical positions of their countries, they are also talking of the distance between the countries

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14Ibid., p. 182.
15L'Inde, p. 72.
17Loc. cit.
created by differences in customs and religions. These differences they go on to discuss in succeeding lines. Mahenu later wants to follow Loti to France, but the queen of her country tells her it is impossible for her to do so. In the queen's speech, which follows, she illustrates the idea that the peoples of the two parts of the world can never mingle:

Les fleurs de nos pays se fanent sur la terre
D'exil et perdent leurs attraits.
Il leur faut le soleil, le parfum, le mystère,
L'enchantement de nos fôrets.
Ici, tes grands yeux purs ont des clartés sereines,
Là-bas leur flamme s'éteindra. 18

And thus it was that Loti remarked, "combien sont dissemblables ... les différentes races humaines ... . Entre les deux égarés qui s'aiment, reste toujours la barrière des hérédités et des éducatons, l'abîme des choses qui ne peuvent être comprises." 19

In his contrast between East and West, Loti seems to say that he can never get to know anyone really well, that he is perpetually solitary and alone. Although some people call all their acquaintances friends, Loti felt that his friendships did not last because there can never be complete understanding between two people. He said "ce charme des amitiés nouvelles ... passe si vite et ne laisse rien après lui. . . ." 20 One almost has to be in love with a person to understand him, he said, and for Loti even love ended in death or in flight.

18 Ibid., p. 28.
20 Journal intime, p. 245.
CHAPTER VI

THE EXOTIC AND THE BANAL

We have had occasion to mention in preceding chapters Loti’s desire to travel. Another reason for his attraction to travel was his longing for the exotic. For Loti, the search for the exotic was a sort of life principle, as it was with the artist Gauguin. He was distance-mad and the passion for distance quelled frequently in him all the attraction of home. It was as though he were compelled by some magnetic power outside his own will to travel. Whatever was foreign was poetic to Loti. He is considered by many critics as a great representative of exoticism in French literature, following the earlier pattern set by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand and Fromentin. He infused the spirit of the exotic into such men as Claude Farrère and Francis de Croisset. Loti contrasts the exotic element he found in his travels with the banality of his home and family.

When Loti was still a small boy, his brother went away to sea and traveled to many far-distant lands. He sent home letters, which Loti read, telling of the strange things he had seen and of the unusual people he had met in these different places. When he returned home from his voyages, he brought souvenirs from the countries he had visited and told strange stories of what he had done there. His small brother was intrigued by the stories he heard and fascinated by the pic-
tures he saw in books of the foreign places. Loti began to
dream of the places his brother told about and to wonder what
they would be like in reality. Planning until this time to
become a minister, he now decided to be a missionary instead so
he could travel. After doubts began to creep into his mind
about his faith and he had given up his idea of entering the
religious life, he chose the naval profession, again, partially,
to enable him to travel to the places he had so often dreamed
of seeing.

Loti classified Japan as an exotic country, one which
was completely different from anything he had ever seen. His
reaction was as follows as he entered the port of Nagasaki:
"Quel pays que ce Japon, où tout est bizarrerie, contraste!"¹
His first impression of Japan as an exotic country was streng­
thened when he was deposited by his rickshaw driver at an
odd-looking tea house where he was invited to enter and told
to sit on the floor. Here he waited for a long time for some­
one to appear, with nothing to look at but the wooden screens
that formed the inside walls of the house. Presently, several
Japanese women entered; some served him a curious lunch of rice
while others danced for him. He was impressed by the unusual
but colorful kimonos and the heavily made-up faces of the women.
Their faces were coated with a thick, white, paste-like sub­
stance. Their eyebrows were startlingly black against the
white background, and their lips made a bright red line across
the lower part of their faces. Walking in the Japanese gar-

¹Japoneries, p. 40.
dens of Madame Prune, Loti noticed the delicate flowers and the oriental pagodas, so different from the gorse and stone houses of his home in France. Intoxicated with the exotic beauty of the countryside and the exciting strangeness of the people, he remarked "... dans de pays, je ne pourrais rien prendre au sérieux. ...").

Turkey was unique to Loti because here again everything was unlike his homeland. Physically the towns were unusual, with their domed mosques and their dazzling-white buildings. The oriental dress of the people also gave him a feeling of being in a world different from his own.

Exciting, too, was life among the natives of hot, northern Africa. In the blazing glare of the strong sun, things took on a novel perspective to the man so used to rain and gloom. The markets of Morocco, with their teeming throngs and lively colors, as well as the sands of the desert, appeared to him as objects in a dream.

Even in France, in the Basque country, Loti found an element of the unusual—the smuggling of goods between France and Spain. He wrote of all this in his book *Ramuntcho*, in which the main character is probably Loti himself. He, like his creator, is fascinated by the dangerous and the unknown, as well as by far-away places.

When dreaming of these distant countries as a boy, Loti looked upon his home and family as extremely commonplace.

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2 *La troisième jeunesse*, p. 70.
Seeing the same places, meeting the same people were to him, at the time, monotonous and dull. When he saw the sailors coming back to Rochefort from their yearly fishing voyages, he had a yearning for a life other than his own. He longed for the unknown and felt almost a captive in his present life.

"Hélas!" he lamented, "quelle tristesse souvent, et quel ennui monotone attendent au pays le retour de ces exilés!" It was Loti's speculation that if he had not been brought up in such a strict household and such a colorless family, he would perhaps not have had such a desire to visit remote and colorful places.

Oddly enough, when it was time for Loti to leave Rochefort and go to Paris to study for a year, he was reluctant to part. He had never been away from home before and, commonplace as home first seemed to him, he was nonetheless a little wary of venturing to places of which he knew nothing. In Paris he was bored. He found no thrills in the bouquinistes along the Seine or in the great monuments like Notre Dame and the Pantheon. He soon grew tired of the tall stone buildings, the only view he had from his dormitory window. He longed for new faces in place of those he saw in school every day. He missed his family and friends and he wished he had taken with him relics (butterfly collections, bits of clothing) of his

3 Le roman d'un spahi, p. 276.

4 He gives one a picture of his sombre parents who, dressed in dark colors, every night quietly and diligently read the Bible in a dimly lighted room.
childhood days. Even when he was traveling to far-off lands, he always came back mentally to his home.

With the exception of his own home, it can be seen in Loti's works that the more banal a country became to him and the longer he had to become used to it, the happier he was there. Stepping off the boat in Japan or Turkey, arriving in Morroco or Brittany, Loti was immediately aware of the exoticism in these countries. But he was not happy in these places until they became more familiar to him. He was never completely happy in Japan because he never fully understood the people and their customs. Likewise, in India, he stated "... ici, comme partout, j'aurai été le perpétuel étranger, le perpétuel errant, qui ne sait qu'amuser ses yeux aux aspects des êtres et des choses." He was happiest, away from home in Turkey. He felt himself as one with the natives and participated actively in their way of life, something he did not do most places he went. In Turkey he seldom thought of his home. Indeed, it was while at home that he longed for Turkey.

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Thus is presented the picture of Pierre Loti, bored with his home, longing to travel and to visit the unknown places of the world. He found beauty, to be sure, in these places. He also found sadness, because his thoughts were more

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5 Or he was happy insofar as a man can be whose only true pleasure is found in travel itself, in new sights and new faces.

6 L'Inde, p. 134.
often in Rochefort than they were in Morocco or Tahiti or India. He found no lasting joy of living in his surrender to the lure of distant places, because he could never completely adopt the new way of life presented to him. In keeping with the inconsistency of his own nature, Loti said it was a fresh and deeper wrench each time he had to leave home, although earlier he had proclaimed his ennui at home and his longing for travel. He loved his home, had a sense of well-being there, and remarked what a fatal thing it was, his desire to always leave. In his own words, Loti expressed how he was torn between his compulsion to travel and his desire to stay home: "... je ne sais ce que je veux, je voudrais ne jamais quitter mes parents chéris, et je voudrais courir le monde en vrai bohémien."7

From this chapter, it can be seen that the exotic brought for the most part unhappiness and anxieties to Loti. It therefore symbolizes le souci. On the other hand, the more banal symbolizes a type of bonheur. It was only when a country became familiar that Loti could look upon it as a peaceful place.

7Correspondance inédite, p. 89.
CHAPTER VII

YOUTH AND OLD AGE

One of the reasons Loti wrote was to recall to himself and to make known to his readers the memories of his childhood and his youth. As an adult he was always wanting to return to his youth and to perpetuate its memories. He thought back with regret to the time of his childhood when life had been so peaceful for him and he had been perfectly happy. He often found himself lamenting that this portion of his life was gone forever. For him the end of his youth was comparable to the end of his life. In June of 1881 he wrote "et quand je verrai finir ma jeunesse . . . il est possible que je fasse finir ma vie du même coup." At this time he had no children in whom he would be able, as an old man, to see his youth being relived, and he saw no point in prolonging his own life after his youth. For him the passing of his youth brought only old age after which there was nothing but death. Loti, who remained in part a child all his life, contrasts youth with old age, the idyllic simplicity and carefreeness of the former period with the cares and anxieties of the latter.

According to Loti, the ideal state of existence was that of eternal youth. "... j'aurais voulu plus que jamais rester un enfant," he said, and he greatly admired men who had somehow avoided aging, at least mentally. The son of one of his

1Journal intime, p. 255.
2Le roman d'un enfant, p. 225.
closest friends, Max Barthou, was such a person. He knew how to remain a child, a thing rare enough nowadays, said Loti.

"Reste enfant, tout ce que cela dénote, non seulement de fraîcheur, mais de modestie, de discernement, de sens juste et clair... il avait su se garder simple, naturel, au foyer familial." Max later changed, however. He grew away from his family, becoming less dependent on them. He grew up, losing his childlike delight in simple things, and wanted to go to war. He was granted his wish but was killed almost the minute he arrived on the field of battle. Thus, explains Loti, the passing of the childhood of Max brought about his immediate death.

Loti was still young when he went to Turkey for the first time. During this first séjour he wandered through the undisturbed forests, plains, and simple towns with his beloved Azizadjé, and he seldom thought of death or of the passage of time. He and his Turkish friend lived a perilous life as only the very young can do. They met secretly at first, then lived together in secret. Loti would sneak off the boat after hours and quietly row to shore where Azizadjé would be waiting for him. She risked her security every time she stealthily crept back to the harem where she was a favorite wife of Abeddin. Theirs was an idyllic life untroubled by the cares of more mature people. They had a simple but comfortable place to live and little need of money. When Loti left Turkey at the

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end of his five-month stay there, it was with the intention of returning within a year. "Nous sommes jeunes," he told Aziyadé, "et la vie est longue devant nos yeux."  

The next time he touched Turkish soil was, however, fifteen years later. Haunted by the memory of Aziyadé, he felt he must return to find out what had become of her. During the time of his absence he had, in spite of himself, grown up and matured. He had seen much of the world and had become disillusioned by some of the things he had seen and the people he had met. In Turkey he found that Aziyadé had died three years after he had left and that some of their mutual friends were now slow to recognize him and reluctant to be friendly to one who had failed to keep his promise to a loved one. Loti noticed at this time that there were many physical changes in Turkey. There were larger cities and more modern buildings. There were more people living a faster life. On seeing the new Turkey, unhappy that he was no longer received in a friendly manner by his former friends, he had the feeling that his youth and old times had disappeared for good. All these things gave him "le sentiment que mon histoire d'amour et de jeunesse est bien enfouie dans le passé, dans la poussière, que j'en chercherai en vain la trace ensevelie. . . ." In his book Les désenchantées, Loti describes the life of three Turkish girls whom André Léhry, the main character of the book, knows during

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4Un jeune officier, p. 220.
5Fantôme, p. 63.
his second trip to that country. The attitude toward life of these three girls is contrasted with that of Léhry. The former are given little freedom to choose their husbands and live a sheltered and carefully supervised life, the custom among upper-class Turkish families of the day. However, they are optimistic about their future and hold high hopes of some day improving their situation. André, on the other hand, older than the girls, is less optimistic about their and his own future. He is increasingly aware of his accumulating years and he feels less and less sure of himself and of the impression he is making on other people.

When he was in Japan, Loti noticed the seemingly eternal youth of the Japanese people. He even entitled one of his books to exemplify this observation—La troisième jeunesse de Madame Prune. And indeed Madame Prune was gifted with eternal youth. She did not grow old, even in appearance, until just before she died. For this reason, says Loti, she was happy even in the later years of her life for she was not troubled by fears of growing old or approaching death. Again in Japan, Loti describes thus some lively Japanese youths at the wharf meeting a boat: "Et tout cela, c'était de la beauté, de la vie: enthousiasme des jeunes, des braves, des simples."6 This is an attitude typical of the young of this country—carefree, enthusiastic, living for the moment, with no worries about tomorrow.

In his writing, Loti speaks of jeunesse and vie together,

6La troisième jeunesse, p. 205.
as if the one were the same as the other. This element of his style is seen in the above quotation as well as in the following, in which he speaks of his sister: "elle incarnait la vie, la charme et la jeunesse." \(^7\) In like manner, the words vieillesse and mort often appear together, as in the following quotation: "La hantise du déroulement inexorable de la vie avec l'inévitable vieillesse et la mort au terme de tout . . . poursuit Loti jusque dans les ivresses de l'amour et la contemplation des plus somptueux paysages." \(^8\)

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La jeunesse, for Loti, represented life. His fear of death was less when he was young because he still had many years ahead of him to live. However, it was not enough just to be young, according to him. One must take advantage of his youth and be active while he can. Loti could never bear to be inactive. Stationed as a commanding officer of a reserve ship, he requested a transfer to active duty. At another time Loti was unhappy in and resigned the post of secretary of the Majorité d'un poste de guerre which corresponded, in part, to the position of l'État-Major d'un corps d'armée. It was primarily a desk job and Loti found nothing but ennui in the sameness of each day. His restless energy and active curiosity

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\(^7\)Prime jeunesse, p. 29.

drove him to the far points of the world. When his second book, *Le mariage de Loti*, had a great success and was highly praised by critics, Loti expressed thus his reaction to this praise: "... une telle gloire me touche peu; la jeunesse et la force physique sont, pour moi, les seuls biens de ce monde." In *Les désenchantées*, André Léhry is in the process of writing a book describing the Turkish women and their lives. The three Turkish women who are his friends want him to make it a book describing the almost prison-like lives they have had to live and imploring the sympathy of the world for these women. Léhry says: "Non, pas de mort, dans ce livre; mais au contraire, si possible, de la jeunesse et de la vie." Although he was always yearning for youth, Loti believed in its fragility. He considered it as fragile and as fleeting as life itself.

*La vieillesse* for Loti symbolized death. Stating that his life might as well be over after his youth had ended, he spent a great deal of time in his old age meditating on and fearing death. As an old man, he stated, he could not be as active as he had been in his youth, and he lamented this enforced inactivity. On his second voyage to Turkey, he remarked: "... j'en avais le sentiment ce matin qu'on ensevelit aujourd'hui ma jeunesse."  

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9 *Journal intime*, p. 118.
CHAPTER VIII

BLACK AND WHITE

Probably the most obvious contrast in Loti's writings is that between *le blanc et le noir*. Of all the colors he uses, black and white occur most often. So prevalent are these contrasts in the early books that one scarcely reads a paragraph without finding several of them. They become fewer and fewer in the later works and have nearly disappeared by the time of *Un jeune officier pauvre* in 1923. The contrasts between black and white mentioned together are then replaced by the mention of black and white separately, the one without the other, yet in direct contrast to a similar treatment of the other somewhere else. They occur in both the form and the content, and in this chapter, will be treated first as seen in the style of Loti. Then the meanings of various contrasts will be analyzed and the symbolism in them will be explained. For, although Loti presents the images of things black and white as they are, for him they represent something more than themselves in tangible form.

In the following paragraphs the examples given of the contrast as seen in Loti's style are not symbolic as one generally finds them. They are cited merely to show the reader how they are treated. The two hues black and white are mentioned most often together, usually in the same sentence and sometimes in the same clause or phrase. However, as stated
above, one does find white occasionally mentioned without the occurrence of black or black without the occurrence of white. The subject-matter of these contrasts can be divided into several categories and for the sake of convenience they will be treated in these categories.

The first category concerns Nature and her products. Loti was impressed by some birds he saw on the ocean. They are depicted with "deniers blancs et noirs," and he describes the sea gulls in his book Mon frère Yves as white with a black checkerboard design on them. A great lover of cats, Loti always gave his pets black and white hues in painting them. In the torrid climate of the Africa of his Roman d'un spahi Loti puts crabs with pincers of an ivory white in the midst of a group of Negroes, and in Jerusalem he depicts the following scene: "Très noires, nos ombres, qui se promènent sur les blanches pierres peuplées de lézards." The weather is another element of Nature that Loti uses as a backdrop for his contrasts between black and white. The beauty and eeriness of a rainstorm is depicted thus: "Toute la chaîne du Monténégro était cachée derrière un rideau noir, sur lequel on voyait se dessiner de temps à autre les zigzags de lumière blanche de la foudre." The motion of a snowstorm becomes real to the reader as he sees in his

1^Fantôme, p. 52.
2^Jérusalem, p. 152.
3^Fleurs, p. 230.
mind's eye that "... le vent de neige continue de tout remuer dans le grand noir du dehors."\(^4\) On the sea, in *Mon frère Yves*, Loti describes the scene he sees as a storm disappears and the sun comes out again: "... on voyait le rideau noir s'éloigner lentement, contineur sa marche trainante sur la mer ... les voiles, les bois du navire, les tentes retrouvaient leur blancheur sous ce soleil."\(^5\) In another storm at sea, Loti describes the sky and water thus: "Le ciel était très noir ... nous nous heurtions dans notre marche à d'énormes masses d'eau, qui s'enroulaient en volutes à crêtes blanches."\(^6\) The same storm, getting worse, appeared to Loti thus: "À part la mer qui gardait encore sa mauvaise blancheur de bave et d'écume, tout devenait plus noir."\(^7\) And then, Loti simply describes Nature unmoving, peaceful, still. He sketches the countryside in the evening after a snowstorm with "la neige sous le ciel noir."\(^8\) Elsewhere he depicts "le ciel noir. La blancheur des neiges du Liban ... ."\(^9\) From cold weather Loti takes his reader to warmer seasons and draws a forest scene where there is "... une sorte de bassin ... où la gerbe d'eau ... bouillonne et se tourmente, toute blanche d'écume entre des rochers noirs."\(^10\)

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\(^4\) *La grande barbarie* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1915), p. 44.
\(^7\) *Ibid.*., p. 128.  
\(^8\) *La grande barbarie*, p. 17.  
\(^9\) *La Galilée*, p. 196.  
\(^10\) *L'exilée*, p. 217.
He describes some cyprus trees on one side of his walks outside Constantinople with "ramures blanches comme les ossements secs, aux feuillages presque noirs." And in Constantinople at a sidewalk cafe sheltered from the sun, "... le bonhomme à barbe blanche leur servit du café dans ses vieilles tasses bleues, là, dehors, devant la triste Mer Noire." In Jerusalem he remarked "... dans tout ce blanc de montagne, les oliviers se dessinent en taches noires, les cyprès en larmes noires." Turning to the more horrible in his descriptions of Nature, Loti paints a dead African after a battle: "La cervelle du roi nègre jaillit au dehors en bouille blanche."

The second class into which the contrasts between black and white can be divided is that of people and the clothing they wear. There is nothing unusual in the wearing of black and white clothes--older people in France wear these colors all the time. The unusual is that Loti was so struck by the two colors. In his travels he must have seen clothing of all colors, but he rarely mentioned any but black and white. First of all, just the clothing itself is discussed. In Morroco Loti saw "des messieurs ... tout de blanc cravatés, tout de noir vêtus ... ." In the Arabian Desert he encountered "un

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11 Les désenchantées, p. 100.
12 Ibid., p. 260.
13 Jérusalem, p. 197.
14 Le roman d'un spahi, p. 341.
moine à chevreux blancs et à vêtements noirs." In Brittany he came upon peasants with "des baties de velours noir . . . sur d'épaisses semelles d'une blancheur immaculée," and inside a farmhouse in Brittany he saw some people with white clothing against the black walls and ceiling. After one of his terms of duty in the Navy, Loti went to visit the family of Yves in Toulven, Brittany. There, at the baptism of the small son of Yves, Loti remarked the costume of Anne, Yves' sister-in-law: "Anne est vêtue d'un costume de drap noir . . . et, débordant sur ses épaules, une colerette blanche." Walking along a country road in the Basque country, he encountered a mourning mother, dressed in black with white hair. In the Holy Land Loti came upon natives wearing the "habitu­elles grandes raies noires et blanches de manteaux syriens." In Japan at a ball one evening he saw some women wearing white dresses with black figures sewn on them. He describes another Japanese woman who wore a "robe de crépon noir, d'un noir mort et profond comme le voile de la nuit, avec un blason blanc au milieu du dos." He also saw during his stay in Japan "deux bonhommes en robe de mousseline blanche et un petit haut-de­forme de crin noir!" In Africa Loti saw Negro dancers wear-

16 *Le désert*, p. 49.
17 *Fleurs*, p. 136.
18 *Mon frère*, p. 177.
19 *La Galilée*, p. 28.
20 *La troisième jeunesse*, p. 55. 21 Ibid., p. 190.
ing tall turbans, white with a black horn on each side.

There is also a contrast between black and white in the clothing people wear and the color of the skin next to it. Loti describes some African Negroes "avec de grands bras noirs qui tranchaient sur la blancheur de leurs longues robes."\(^{22}\)

In Tahiti there are boat rowers who "portent tous la tradition-elle chemise en gaye de soie blanche, ouverte sur leur poitrine basanée: impassibles, noircis de soleil, ils ont l'air d'être en bronze avec des dents de porcelaine."\(^{23}\)

The contrast between black and white is seen in descriptions of human skin and other parts of the human body. In *Le roman d'un spahi*, Loti describes black men and white men working side by side. In the same book, the reader is aware of the whiteness of Jean Peyrol, hero of the book, as contrasted with the blackness of Fatou-gaye, his mistress. Looking into the eyes of his beloved Aziyadé, Loti remarked that "entre ces longs cils noirs, on voyait ses prunelles remuer sur de l'émail blanc."\(^{24}\)

The third category in which is found the contrast between black and white in the style of Loti is that of buildings and the rooms and furnishings one finds in them. In Africa, for example, Loti found himself in a tent "à moustiquaire très blanche et une étroite couchette de nègre."\(^{25}\) And another time

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\(^{22}\) *Le roman d'un spahi*, p. 299.

\(^{23}\) *L'exilée*, p. 186.

\(^{24}\) *Fleurs*, p. 80.

\(^{25}\) *Un jeune officier*, p. 80.
he was "dans la grande salle blanche, ouvert au vent du soir . . . ." In Japan Loti described an altar "sur lequel tombent de larges blasons noirs d'un vélum blanc." Also in Japan Loti described two statues of bulls, decorations in a home, the one white with a white cord around its neck, the other all black. In a church of Nagasaki, Loti saw some statues "vêtus de blanc, et coiffés d'un casque noir." In Jerusalem, Loti describes a mosque decorated with "un peu de blanc, un peu de vert, un peu de noir." In La hyène enragée, which takes place in Belgium, there is very little contrast between black and white, but there is much mention of white alone. Loti paints the ruins of a white church, and the white-clad nurses in a hospital. On entering the Breton home of the parents of Yves' wife, Loti found it hard to adjust to the dim lights. "Ces chandeliers n'éclairent pas loin et il y a dans cette chaumière des recoins noirs; on voit se mouvoir de grandes choses . . . blanches, qui sont les coiffes à larges ailes et les colletterettes plissées des femmes."

As has been mentioned, not all the contrasts between black and white are symbolic. However, those that are can be divided into several categories, different from those used to

26 Le roman d'un spahi, p. 36.
27 La troisième jeunesse, p. 244.
28 Japoneries, p. 57.
29 Jérusalem, p. 69.
30 Mon frère, p. 173.
illustrate the contrasts in the style of Loti. In these symbolic contrasts, too, one finds black and white mentioned together and sometimes mentioned alone but in direct contrast with a similar mention of their opposites someplace else.

Some of the contrasts between black and white are symbols for happiness and unhappiness. The death at sea of Loti's brother was the first real sorrow of his life. The previous chapter in the book in which Loti described hearing the news of his brother's death is a happy one. It concerns the pleasant anticipation of the Viaud family at the prospect of the eldest son's coming home after three years' absence in the navy. It contains many references to things white—the flowers in the garden, the coiffes of the women, the cats frolicking in the house. The chapter dealing with news of the death also opens on a happy note. Outdoors, Loti remarks the beauty of the day, the brightly-colored flowers by the front door of his home. Breathing in the fresh scent of summer air, he suddenly notices a little, withered woman, clad all in black, standing a few feet away gazing at him. She comes to him and tells of the death of his brother. The day suddenly darkens; Loti enters the house which appears to him cold and gloomy, and spends days in melancholy despair. Another time, in Japan, Loti describes a religious celebration at which he saw "... d'énormes donjons noirs ... ces foules toutes blanches, toutes en mousseline blanche ... ."\(^{31}\) The crowds in white clothing of course

\(^{31}\) *La troisième jeunesse*, p. 162.
represent the happy element of people enjoying themselves on a holiday. The black dungeons bring to mind times that were not always happy, times when people were imprisoned and were not able to enjoy a celebration such as these people were enjoying. Loti himself stated that darkness and the word black were associated in his mind with unhappiness: "J' éprouvai une mélan­cholie vague, parce qu'il commençait à faire noir."\(^3^2\)

Another category into which the symbolic contrasts between black and white can be put is that of belief and disbelief. In referring to belief, Loti often makes churches and chapels white in color. He describes a chapel he encountered in a wood in the Basque country: "Dans les masses noires de ses bois, on distingue un point, un petit triangle blanc: c'est la chapelle."\(^3^3\) Of course it is the white chapel which represents belief. The black woods, as a symbol of disbelief, are surrounding and slowly consuming the element of belief. In Ramuntcho, the hero goes to a convent to get his beloved one whose family has sent her there because she would not marry the man they had chosen for her. Ramuntcho thinks she must be very unhappy there. While in the convent, he notices the white walls of the room he is in as contrasted with the black robes the nuns are wearing. Again, the white walls symbolize belief for Loti. They are the walls of a building in which one is supposed to live close to God. The black robes of the nuns symbolize the closely guarded, almost prison-like life their

\(^{32}\)Fleurs, p. 8. \(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 226.
wearers lead. For Loti these robes symbolize his doubt that God exists and the restraint put upon the nuns by their re-
ligion. In describing a village where he felt very near Christ, Loti paints "... pauvres villages tout blancs ... les pavés, blancs aussi ... haute coiffe blanche."  
In this quotation white is synonymous with a belief in the exist-
ence of God. In the following quotation, black is synonymous with disbelief: "Et j'aurais voulu suivre, imiter l'évolution intime de son âme revenant peu à peu du fond des abîmes froids et noirs."

In Jerusalem Loti saw an "... ensemble noirâtre et triste, au milieu de cet Orient coloré." This procession was of Russian women on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These women, Loti said, had nothing so wonderful in their country as the birthplace of Christ. In watching some people in Jeru-

salem, Loti noticed "... l'évêque des Syréens, longue barbe blanche sous une cagoule noire ... ." The white beard, on a man of the church, represents belief. The penitent's hood, showing a deviation from the will of God, represents disbelief.

Another category in which the symbolic contrasts can be put is that of the primitive and the modern. In Brittany, Loti describes the small, poor, white villages with white

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34 Ibid., p. 114.
35 Reflets, p. 16.
36 Jérusalem, p. 50.
37 Ibid., p. 58.
sidewalks and with inhabitants wearing the white *coiffes* of the Breton women. In the warm climate of calm Tahiti, Loti says: "Le soir je vais roder dans les villages . . . vêtu comme les indigènes d'une longue tunique blanche."\(^{38}\) Here he is associating white with the natives of the country, not with the foreigners, and with the simple lives lived by these natives. On the other hand, black symbolizes modernization and the infiltration of Europeans and their ideas of progress into the simple countries. In the desert, Loti perceived a city which looked white from a distance but as he approached it and was able to make out the modern buildings and the smoke from the factories, he discovered that the city was in reality black. In Africa, remarking the clothing and decorations of some visitors to the country, Loti stated: "Ce ruban noir représente l'oppression étrangère."\(^{39}\)

The contrast between black and white is also symbolic for the contrast Loti makes between life and death. A tangible connection between life and the color white is seen in the following quotation: "Sur la fin\(^{40}\) elles mettaient pour lui aux grilles d'une fenêtre, un imperceptible signal blanc qui signifiait: elle vit toujours."\(^{41}\) Another correspondence between the color black and the element of death is seen when Loti

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\(^{38}\) *Un jeune officier*, p. 81.

\(^{39}\) *Fleurs*, p. 295.

\(^{40}\) The word "fin" refers to the end of the life of Mélek, one of Loti's three Turkish friends.

\(^{41}\) *Les désenchantées*, p. 386.
frequently mentions the wearing of black clothes after someone had died. True, this is not an original observation, but his mentioning it so much shows it had some significance for him. He habitually uses black when referring to things connected with death. For example, in Turkey, André Léhry sees in the distance "une frange noire; les cyprès des grands cimetières."\(^{42}\) He describes in a similar manner a walk to the cemetery outside Constantinople where Aziyadé is buried: "Un long trajet, à la file, à travers les vieux quartiers fantastiques, pour arriver enfin en dehors des murs, dans la solitude funèbre, dans les grands cimetières, à cette saison pleine de corbeaux, sous les cyprès noirs."\(^{43}\) In describing one of his Turkish friends, Loti says: "... elle ne sera qu'une forme noire ... elle est comme morte."\(^{44}\) Black is also symbolic of death in the following quotation: "... ce qui est vrai, c'est ce noir caché derrière. Ce qui est éternel, ce qui est souverain, ce qui ne commence ni ne finit, c'est ce noir, ce vide noir, où jamais, jamais, aux siècles des siècles, ne s'arrêtera la chute silencieuses des mondes."\(^{45}\) In India he looked at some pagan statues and was struck by the black emptiness behind them, in physical space. This blackness represented for him the eternal nothingness after death.

In Ramuntcho, Loti makes much of the black costumes of the nuns in a convent Ramuntcho visits. The existence of these nuns, he thinks, is a living death. He broods over what a

\(^{42}\)Ibid., p. 306.  \(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 301.  \(^{44}\)Ibid., p. 38.  \\
\(^{45}\)L'Inde, p. 5.
dull and unhappy life they must lead, unable to come and go at will and completely denied the outside world and its events.

One sees death and life after death contrasted in a part of his book Jérusalem: "Elle est d'une tristesse et d'une charme infinis . . . l'Enceinte Sacrée . . . avec ses quelques cyprès, qui y tracent comme des larmes noires, avec ses kiosques, ses mirhabs, ses portiques de marbre blanc . . . ." One judges that the black cypress trees in the enclosure represent death, whereas the white doors lead the way to a life after death. It must be realized, however, that Loti was not saying there is a life after death. He merely seemed to say that the doors represent the way to such a life if there is a life after death. He was at this time still searching for God and for something beyond the grave. In Jerusalem, where he was for a long time deluded into a semblance of faith, he said he was happy and had his moments of almost-belief "... en attendant que le néant me réapparaisse, plus noir, demain." Freedom and servitude are symbolized, too, in Loti's contrasts between black and white. Les désenchantées is a treatise on the hope for emancipation of the Turkish women of Loti's time. Djénane, the heroine of the book, is determined to break away from the Turkish tradition of parental authority in the choice of a husband in an effort to live as she wishes.

On first encountering the three Turkish girls who were later to become his good friends, André Léhry, hero of the

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46 Jérusalem, p. 96. 47 Ibid., p. 221.
book, notices "... trois formes féminines, qui étaient toutes noires ... une petite main gantée de blanc sortit des voiles sombres ... "48 The black dresses of the girls probably represent their slavery. The white gloved hand of one of them stands for their hope of eventual emancipation.

In the following two quotations, one sees Léhry's three Turkish friends dressed in black against the background of white. Here again the black dresses of the three girls probably stand for slavery. The white background, in each case an element of nature, represents the way to freedom. Once, when they were walking in the country, "le vent glacé s'engouffrait dans les soies noires; il coupait les respirations. L'eau du Bosphore ... était blanche."49 Later, the three girls form "... trois petites silhouettes noires ... sur les dalles blanches ... "50

However, after campaigning, unsuccessfully, for freedom, Djénane finally decides she must resign herself to the prison-like harem of her husband. Accordingly, when spring comes and the other girls start to wear white dresses and veils, Djénane retains her black clothing. Her black form makes a startling contrast between the white-clad figures of her two Turkish friends Zeyneb and Mélek. "Elles s'en allaient ... Zeyneb et Mélek drapées de soies ... blanches, marchant de chaque côté de Djénane toujours en élégie noire."51

We have already had occasion to speak of the contrast

50Ibid., p. 143. 51Ibid., p. 262.
between les pays du soleil and les pays sombres. However, no specific relationship was drawn between them and the colors black and white. The color white is used in reference to the pays du soleil. Algeria, in hot Africa, Loti paints completely white "in its great heat. After a rainstorm in Turkey, Loti suddenly found himself exceedingly warm, and he looked up, startled "au grand éclat blanc du soleil de midi . . . ."52 Returning to Constantinople, during the same walk on which he discovered the above, he noticed the following:

Mais le blanc . . . des chaux dominait tout; il semblait éclairer et renvoyer de la lumière atténuée vers le profond ciel doré qui en était déjà rempli. Nul part n'existait d'ombres dures, ni de contours accusés, ni de couleurs sombres; sur cette blancheur de tout, les êtres vivants, qui se mouvaient avec lenteur, ne faisaient passer que des teintes claires, étrangement claires, fraîches comme dans des visions non terrestres; tout était adouci et fondu dans de la tranquille lumière; il n'y avait de noir que tous ces grands yeux de rêveurs."53

Loti describes in India, another pays du soleil: "... des haies d'arbustes à fleurs blanches au soleil . . . la floraison . . . des arbustes . . . en blanc."54

Loti uses black when he speaks of les pays sombres. In Brittany, the sky is black in a gathering storm off the coast. The countryside and sky in Japan become black in the frequent rainstorms.

There are times when the contrast is not between black and white but between lightness and darkness. In this category either the word "black" or "white" may be mentioned, and

52 L'exilée, p. 208. 53 Ibid., pp. 196-97. 54 L'Inde, p. 105.
its contrasting element will be a group of words indicating lightness or darkness. Or the contrast may simply be between words indicating the light and the dark, with no mention of the words "black" or "white." For example, words like "light" and "pale" and "luminous" are used in connection with sunny countries, while words such as "dark" and "somber" and "gloomy" are used in reference to les pays sombres.

Loti uses such a contrast when comparing the kind ruler of Belgium with the merciless ruler of Germany during the first World War. He paints "... ces deux souverains situés pour ainsi dire aux deux pôles de l'humanité, celui d'ici au pôle lumineux, l'autre au pôle noir ... ." It is interesting to note here that it is the kind ruler at the light pole, the ruthless one at the black pole.

At another time, on approaching the equator after a storm, Loti noticed the black sky disappear and a light sky reappear suddenly, more startling than ever after the darkness of a storm. In the same region, Loti remarked the black mass of an island on the pale colored water. Off the coast of Brest, he describes thus the sea in a gathering storm: "Autour de nous, des milliers d'écueils, des têtes noires qui se dressaient partout au milieu de cet autre remuement argenté que les lames faisaient ... ." In Saint-Pol-de-Léon, the Breton

55Belgium.
56Germany.
57La grande barbarie, p. 31.
58Mon frère, p. 224.
birthplace of his friend Yves, Loti paints a sunny, bright
day in an habitually foggy region. He sees "un beau jour
d'été à Saint-Pol-de-Léon, c'est-à-dire une chose rare dans
cette région de brumes: une espèce de rayonnement mélancolique
répandu sur tout; la vieille ville du moyen âge comme réveillée
de son morne sommeil dans le brouillard, et rajeunie; le vieux
granit se chauffant au soleil; le clocher de Creizker . . .
baignant dans le ciel bleu, en pleine lumière . . . ."\textsuperscript{59}

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Here, then, are the contrasts between black and white
in the works of Pierre Loti. First, there are those contrasts
which are not symbolic. The reader's attention is drawn to
them simply by seeing the two words mentioned so consistently,
and so often together. After first becoming aware of the exist-
ence of the antitheses between the two colors, the reader soon
finds mention of black and white which are symbolic. As has
been seen in the above paragraphs setting white against black
is equivalent to contrasts between happiness and unhappiness,
belief and disbelief, the primitive and the modern, life and
death, freedom and slavery, and \textit{les pays du soleil} and \textit{les pays
sombres}. It has been discovered, in addition, that the anti-
theses between white and black may develop into that between the
light and the dark. It will be noticed, moreover, that for the
most part, the symbolism in the opposites black and white is

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., p. 5.
nearly the same as the symbolism in the individual contrasts treated separately in each chapter of this thesis.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Happy as a child, Loti became increasingly less so the older he grew. Brought up in an extremely pious protestant atmosphere and clutching his deep faith in God during the early years of his life, he gradually began to lose that faith until, as an adult, he had become an agnostic. At first content at home, he became more and more restless, on hearing stories of far-away places, until he felt an uncontrollable desire to travel. This desire to travel was linked with his desire to regain his faith in a Supreme Power. However, he was only disappointed and dissatisfied at what he found in the remote countries of the world. In spite of a life spent in seeking for a justification for Faith, Loti died at the age of seventy-three without ever having found it.

Just as his life was full of contrasts, so were his writings. The elements he chose to contrast are not unusual ones. Certainly youth and old age are commonplace enough for writers, and nearly everyone, at one time or another, is aware of the different religions existing in the world. The passion for the exotic was prevalent among the early Romantics, and writers from time immemorial have lamented the coming of progress into the more primitive areas. Loti, however, carried his use of antithesis to extremes. He has treated thoroughly
at least seven, and they form a striking element of his pro-
liptic work which includes thirty-eight books, four plays (and
one translation), and two volumes of letters. With the excep-
tion of the one between black and white, the casual reader would
not be aware of the contrasts. One must read several of Loti's
works in order to discover the contrasts and to grasp their
real significance.

As has already been pointed out, in contrasting material
things, our author is frequently using them as symbols for the
immaterial. From this thesis it has been seen that belief and
disbelief are represented by the contrasts between paganism and
Christianity, primitivism and modernization, sunny countries and
somber countries, and white and black. Happiness and unhappiness
are symbolized by primitivism and modernization, sunny countries
and somber countries, the banal and the exotic, and white and
black. The attainable and unattainable are denoted by the
contrast between paganism and Christianity, and the solitude
of man is shown in the theme of East and West. Life and death
are represented by youth and old age, white and black.

It was typical of Loti to say he wanted one thing and
to state in the same book or even the same chapter that he
wanted just the opposite. For example, he yearned for far-away
places. He was insufferably bored at home and could scarcely
wait until he could get away. Yet, when his wish had become
accomplished fact, he was still unhappy and thought only of his
home. And thus it was that he said: "... je ne sais ce que
je veux, je voudrais ne jamais quitter mes parents chéris, et
Loti longed for sunny countries, said he felt healthier and had more peace of mind in such places. Still, something pulled him ever back to Rochefort and its gloom and mists. He gives no evidence of ever having intended to remain in Turkey with Aziyadé, or in Tahiti with Rarahu, or in Japan with Madame Chrysanthème. He always wanted to take them back to France with him. Perhaps his feelings concerning the bright countries of the world were similar to those of Thomas Mann when the latter found himself in the South, near

... the sun of Homer, the climate wherein human culture came to flower ... But after a while it is too much for me, I reach a point where I begin to find it dull. The burning void of the sky, day after day, weighs one down; the high coloration, the enormous naïveté of the unrefracted light—they do, I dare say, induce light-heartedness, a carefree mood born of immunity from down-pours and other meteorological caprices. But slowly, slowly, there makes itself felt a lack: the deeper, more complex needs of the northern soul remain unsatisfied. You are left barren."^2

Even Leconte de Lisle advises against too much sun:

Homme, si le coeur plein de joie on d'amertume,
Tu passais vers midi dans les champs radieux,
Fuis! la Nature est vide et le Soleil consume:
Rien n'est vivant ici, rien n'est triste ou joyeux.\(^3\)

The older he grew the more conscious Loti became of the rapid passage of time—he saw each day carrying him closer and closer to his death. Old age held for Loti a terror he did not

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1Correspondance inédite, p. 89.


think he could surmount. He began to brook about death and soon became terrified thinking that with no belief there could be no after-life for him. He turned to writing, partially, to be sure, to describe his adventures, but primarily to record his life, to leave some tangible evidence of his existence. Then, he felt, all would not be lost. When he died, he would still live on in his works and thus in the memory of other people.

He despaired of the life he had lived, feeling he had not lived as fully or accomplished as much as one must in order to be remembered by others. However, there were those among his friends who envied him because he, in their opinion, was one of few people who knew how to live fully and profitably. "Vous désespérez de la vie," said one of his friends to him, "et vous avez trouvé le seul moyen de vivre: avoir des émotions et savoir les faire partager."

Claude Farrère, in his biography of Loti, said of him: "Comme j'ai besoin que cet homme m'aide à vivre, ou par son oeuvre ou par son être!"

It has been said that the difference between Pierre Loti and the modern world in the difference between the Orient and the Occident. As there can be no bridge between Loti and the modern world, so there can be none between the East and the West. In the following quotation Loti expresses his own inability to bridge the void that separated him from the East.

4Une jeune officier, p. 181.

Perhaps this is the same void that separated him from the faith he tried so hard to find and from the seclusion he sought. "Entre nous, il y a la différence essentielle des races, des hérédités, des religions... nous ne parlons pas la même langue, et cette obligation de passer par une tierce personne est un obstacle... qui suffit à tout arrêter."^6

Among all the others, the contrast between black and white stands out as the most important. Perhaps the meaning of the antitheses in Loti's works can best be understood by an examination of this contrast. The use of black and white, the constant shifting back and forth between the light and the dark, indicate a confusion in Loti's own mind. He was always wavering between belief and disbelief, happiness and unhappiness, delight for life and fear of death, the joy of youth and the impending terror of old age. He cringed with distaste when living in modern societies and longed to go to more primitive places. Thus the colors black and white fused together in Loti to form gray: "... la nuance grise de mon papier... est teintée à peu près comme mes idées."^7

With rare exceptions, one has the feeling that this preoccupation with antitheses leaves the contrasts not quite definite but mingled together into a sort of gray. Except for the one between the black and the white, none stand out clearly and definitely. Possibly because most of these elements were

^6L'Inde, p. 72.

^7Un jeune officier, p. 126.
unconsciously contrasted, they are as vague and difficult to find in Loti's works as they must have been in his own mind.
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