

Where Will the Sultan Go?

Assuming that the threatened collapse of the Turkish empire will take place, and that some one of the suggested schemes of partition will be carried out, we are still confronted with the question: What will become of the Sultan? It is true that the inquiry does not particularly interest ABDUL HAMID, for were his power once broken or even his palace guards unfaithful, he would undoubtedly meet with the fate of ABDUL AZIZ at the hands of his indignant subjects. But a successor will be found among OTHMAN'S descendants, and the six Christian States, which have undertaken to administer the Ottoman assets, will have to consider with what kind and measure of authority he shall be invested, and to what place of residence he shall be assigned. Shall he be allowed to keep a contracted temporal dominion, and, if so, where; or will he be suffered simply to retain his spiritual pretensions as the Pope of Islam, like the last representatives of the Abbassid caliphate? Even in the latter event, it will be difficult to decide upon his place of sojourn.

It used to be taken for granted that, when the Sultan had been driven from Europe and stripped of his outlying possessions, he would be permitted to retire to Broussa, the ancient capital of the Osmanli, whence he might rule the great peninsula of Anatolia with, perhaps, the exception of the specially Armenian provinces contiguous to Russian territory. But at the date of the Crimean war, or even as late as the last Russian-Turkish contest, very little was known

about the internal condition of Asia Minor, and the Western nations did not comprehend to what a hell on earth they would condemn the Armenian and Greek Christians, who are scattered all over that region, by establishing at Broussa the soured and humbled Sultan and the vindictive remnant of the European Turks. No such horrible sacrifice of subject Christian populations would now be tolerated by enlightened public opinion. A European Congress would recognize the duty of dealing with Anatolia as the Congress of Berlin dealt with Bosnia, and of averting the deadly outcome of religious and race antagonism through the firm, impartial administration of a European power. The same thing may be said of Syria, and even of the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris, for there are many Armenian and some Greek Christians in Mosul, Bagdad, and Bassorah.

The only parts of the Ottoman Empire where the population may be described as exclusively Mohammedan, and where, therefore, no precautions would need to be taken on the score of Moslem antipathy to Christians, are Arabia and Tripoli. But to Arabia the Sultan could not go. His pretensions to caliphal authority, based on a dubious transfer of Abbassid claims, which themselves were questionable, have always been eyed askance at Mecca, and at the first proof of military collapse on his part, would be scornfully rejected by the countrymen of the Prophet. In Tripoli, also, aside from the fact that Italy is counting on this section of North Africa as her share of the Ottoman estate, the Turkish Sultan would encounter bitter opposition from his coreligionists. Almost all the Tripolitan sheikhs are affiliated to the Senu-siya confraternity, which was founded by the austere Moslem reformer, SENUSI, and which has always repudiated the assumption of spiritual supremacy by the ruler at Constantinople.

There is, then, no considerable region where the Ottoman Sultan could, with any assurance of safety for his Christian subjects and of safety for himself, exercise for an extended period the combined functions of a temporal and spiritual potentate. Supposing, however, that he should renounce his claim to temporal rule, and fall back upon his caliphal rights, of which in the belief of millions of Moslems he cannot be divested, might not a place of refuge be allotted to him within the dominions of some Christian power which already numbers many Mohammedans among its subjects? There are four such powers, to wit, England, Russia, Austria, and France. But would England wish to place the head of what has been hitherto deemed orthodox Islam among the fifty million Mohammedans of India; would the Czar consider him a de-

sirable resident in the lately conquered Khanates of Central Asia; would Austria want him in the recently occupied provinces of Bosnia and the Herzegovina; would France welcome him to Algeria, the Moslem inhabitants of which are by no means reconciled to the rule of the unbeliever?

The more one thinks of it, the less easy does it seem to answer the question: How shall the Ottoman Sultan be disposed of? Perhaps it may be deemed expedient to treat him as NAPOLEON I. was treated after his first abdication in 1814; that is, to assign to him an income suited to his rank, and to give him possession of some island in full sovereignty, where he could lead a dignified existence and be out of harm's way. There is but little ground for fear that from such an Elba the deposed Turk would return.
