

THE TURKISH PROBLEM.

The six great European powers seem at last to be really acting in harmony and with vigor to compel Turkish reform in Armenia.

But how is the Turk to work reform in Armenia? That country lies in Asia, near the Russian border and at a great distance from Constantinople. The essence of the reform demanded is that the Turk shall restrain the savagery of the ferocious Kurds whose country adjoins Armenia. But how is the Sultan or anybody else going to restrain the excesses of that savagely fanatical people without either killing them or stationing a great army permanently in Kurdistan?

It is a repetition of the old story. Ever since European civilization began to exact reform of the Porte the Turkish reply has uniformly been "non possumus"—we cannot. And the reply has usually been true.

Recognizing its truth civilization has been compelled little by little to reduce the territory of the Turk which he could not govern. It has shorn the Turkish Empire of Greece, Roumania, Roumelia, Servia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. It would have driven the Turk out of Europe long ago but for the fact that each of the great powers has been unwilling that any other should come into possession of Constantinople and the control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Now that the great powers are acting together they may perhaps find some way of adjusting this matter, though it is difficult to conjecture how. Should that point be solved the Turk will at last be driven out of Europe, where he has been an intruder, a menace and a cause of corruption in other nations since his conquest of Constantinople in the year 1453.

But to drive him out of Europe will not solve the present difficulty. The Sultan at Brussa would be as incapable as the Sultan at Constantinople of stopping the massacre of Armenians by Kurds. If reform is to be wrought in Armenia it would seem that the Turk must be shorn of power in Asia as well as in Europe, and that control there must pass into other and more civilized hands. But whose hands?

The country adjoins the Russian possessions, but the other powers would never consent that Russian control should be extended to the Mediterranean along the southern shore of the Black Sea. Yet the control of Asiatic Turkey from the west would be next to impossible, geographically, and considering the character of the country and its population its government would be a task not lightly to be undertaken by any Western nation with a budget to look after.

England has been mainly responsible for the Turk's retention of authority during the last three-quarters of a century. But for British interference the Ottoman power would have been broken on any one of several occasions. England is therefore the nation chiefly to be looked to now for a solution of these difficult problems. Yet England is placed in a position of peculiar embarrassment by the fact, which Lord Beaconsfield pointed out, that England is herself the greatest Mahometan power in the world, and in all she does relating to the "Commander of the Faithful"

must reckon with 57,000,000 Mahometan subjects of her own.

Europe is at one of the great crises of history. What solution the powers will find for the perplexing questions presented is a matter of anxious concern to all civilized men. The questions presented are those that involve the whole issue between enlightenment and fanatic ignorance, between advancing civilization and reactionary barbarism.