

THE ARMENIAN MASSACRES.

Another horror of great darkness overshadows the domains of the Turk. The accounts received in London of the massacre of Christians in Armenia exceed in atrocity and barbarism the descriptions given by Mr. McGahan of the butcheries in Bulgaria, which kindled a flame of popular wrath in England against Lord Beaconsfield's Turkish diplomacy, and carried Russia into her last campaign against the Sultan in Europe and Asia. The present recitals are unofficial and fragmentary, and possibly the details are exaggerated. Armenians are imaginative, like other races in the East, and they have the reputation like the Turks of being exceptionally mendacious. While official investigation by British and other consuls may tend to mitigate the earliest accounts of inhuman and barbarous slaughter of many thousands of men, women and children, it is probable that the worst has not yet been told. Meanwhile, Turkish denials from Constantinople are as ineffective as similar contradictions were in Bulgaria when accurate information of the horrors and atrocities there was suppressed by the unspeakable Turk.

At the close of General Melikoff's victorious campaign in Armenia a large section of the territory became Russianized. The Christians living in the conquered belt remained, and the Mahometans abandoned their possessions and immigrated into the unconquered territories. Russianized Armenia has been peaceful, quiet and prosperous to this day; but Turkish Armenia has remained under the most shocking conditions of misgovernment and Pacha despotism. The Christian subjects of the Turkish province would have emigrated across the line at the close of the war if it had not been for abject poverty of most of them and also for the inducements offered to them by the authorities to remain. They were promised good treatment and reforms in taxation; and they were encouraged by the Treaty of Berlin to look for an amelioration of their condition through British intervention. All these assurances have been of little avail for their protection. Kurds and Turcomans have constantly swooped upon the settled districts, preyed upon the villages and carried off flocks and herds, and not infrequently the young women. These wild tribes were not suppressed, and their depredations were accompanied by a ruinous system of taxation un-

der which Christian and Mahomedans were deprived of not less than one-seventh, and sometimes as much as one-fourth, of their incomes.

This new series of massacres is attributed by the Asiatic correspondents of the London press to the refusal of the Armenians to pay taxes on the ground that they had been impoverished by the Kurdish raids to such an extent as to render compliance with despotic law impossible. Turkish regulars were massed, and what was officially proclaimed as rebellion was suppressed with almost incredible barbarity. A defenceless population was tortured and slaughtered, and no mercy was shown to age or sex. When reasonable allowance is made for the embellishment of these recitals of atrocity by excited and imaginative narrators, it is fairly certain that one of the most appalling chapters of inhuman massacre and Pacha despotism has been added to the revolting history of Turkish rule in the East. It would be premature to consider what effect these terrible disclosures, if as fully confirmed in detail as were the Bulgarian massacres, may have upon the relations of European Powers with the Porte. It will be enough to say that the moral force of diplomacy ought to produce some result more substantial than a renewal of Turkish promises of amendment and reform.

Indeed, when the condition of Russianized Armenia is contrasted with that of Turkish Armenia, there is ample ground for regret on the part of any friend of civilization that the conquests of the last war were not considerably greater than they were. The country, according to all trustworthy accounts of travellers, is naturally rich, with a wide range of agricultural products and considerable mineral wealth. To undeveloped resources is added a peaceable population, superior in intelligence and thrift to that of other regions of Asiatic Turkey. Armenia needs peace, order and exemption from rapacious tax-gathering and the raiding of wild tribes. What hope can there be of better government and pacific progress so long as Turkish promises are made only to be broken?