

# TURKEY AND

# THE ARMENIANS

The Present Anti-Turkish Agitation Merely a Continuation of the Armenian Policy.

## THE SULTAN'S TOLERANCE

Abdul Hamid Treats Mohammedan and Christians on a Footing of Perfect Equality.

## SENSATIONAL ATROCITIES.

[SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE HERALD.]

CONSTANTINOPLE, Dec. 31, 1894.—The excitement that has prevailed here for some time past regarding the alleged atrocities committed in Armenia by the Turkish authorities is now subsiding, and the general opinion prevails that this affair has been greatly exaggerated, and that there has been no real justification whatever for it.

The present troubles commenced some eighteen months ago, and can be traced as far back as the year 1842, when the Armenians living in that section of the country made appeals to Bishop Gobat, of Jerusalem, for redress from their imaginary ill treatment by the Turkish authorities. Ever since that time these people have been endeavoring to create sympathy abroad by spreading false reports concerning the alleged ill treatment they received from the Turks.

Similar sensational and untruthful reports of acts of cruelty said to have been committed by the Turkish authorities on their Christian subjects have often been put in circulation. It was on the strength of such exaggerated reports that war was declared in 1829, and later in 1854. The latter war, that of the Crimea, caused the loss to the Allied Powers of over half a million of men. To similar tales was also due the last war between Russia and Turkey, in 1877-78.

### FIVE MILLION CHRISTIANS.

The adherents of the two great religious creeds of the Turkish dominions in Europe and Asia as laid down by the treaty of Berlin, signed on July 13, 1878, are estimated to consist of over sixteen million Mohammedans and over five million Christians (two and a half millions of whom are Armenians), or in all of upward of twenty-two million inhabitants.

The Mohammedans form the vast majority in Asia, but only one-half of the population in Europe. There are no less than seven non-Mohammedan creeds recognized by the Turkish government. These consist of the Latins, Franks or Catholics, who use the Roman Liturgy (who are mostly the descendants of the Genoese and Venetian settlers in the Empire, and converts among the Armenians, Bulgarians and others), Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, United Chaldeans, Maronites (under a Patriarch at Kanobin in Mount Lebanon), Protestants (consisting of converts chiefly among the Armenians), and Jews.

All these seven religious denominations are invested with the privilege of possessing their own ecclesiastical rule, and the bishops and patriarchs of the Greeks and Armenians, and the Chacham-Baschl or High Rabbi of the Jews, possess, in consequence of their functions, considerable influence and power.

The Mohammedan clergy are subordinate to the Sheik-ul-Islam, their offices are hereditary and they can only be removed by an Imperial decree. A priesthood does really not exist, as any officer of State can be called to perform the rites, and even any member of the congregation who has a good voice and is of reputable character may be desired to take the place of the Imam, and either recite verses of the Koran or lead the prayers.

The Koran constitutes the code of law and charter of rights as likewise the religious guide of the followers of Mohammed.

The Armenians belong to the Indo-European race, and were considered in older times as being the most capable people of all the Circassian race.

### ARMENIANS IN EUROPE.

They possessed in the second to the fifth century before Christ a national dynasty. The latest estimates place the total number of Armenians at over four millions, of which number 2,500,000 belong to the Ottoman Empire, 1,300,000 belong to Russia, 25,000 to Austria and 150,000 belong to Persia.

Of the above numbers 400,000 Armenians reside in Europe, 200,000 of whom are in Constantinople alone and 25,000 in India.

The present position of the Armenian question, according to reports circulating among the highest members of the diplomatic corps accredited to this Court and based upon facts, is that the Turkish government was disinclined to have Consuls appointed on the Commission of Inquiry into the alleged massacres, but finally it was agreed that the Consuls of Great Britain, of France and of Russia, residing at Erzeroum, in Armenia, should each select a representative to accompany the Turkish Commissioners and lend their aid in the investigations.

### THE SULTAN'S CHARACTER.

The Sultan is described to me, by an impartial judge and one who has had frequent opportunity of forming a correct opinion, as being a very kind hearted man, endowed with high principles, a most shrewd observer of the political situation in Europe and in every way a most competent and just ruler over his subjects irrespective of their religious beliefs.

The Sultan has appointed upward of seven-

persons of the Christian faith to the highest political civil officers in his Empire, and upward of one hundred of the highest officers in the army who come into daily contact with His Majesty are Christians.

In consideration of the foregoing facts it is hardly credible that the Sultan would in any way countenance the alleged atrocities, or that, if true, he would hesitate to punish the guilty parties. These sensational reports emanate

generally from abroad and in a great measure from Armenians settled in the United States, who are for the most part inspired by bad motives.

#### THE REGION OF SASSOUN.

The region of Sassoun is described to your correspondent by an Englishman who travelled through this section of the country as being extremely cold in winter and at times almost impassable.

The villages round about there are situated on ground upward of 4,000 feet above the sea level, and mountains upward of 8,000 to 10,000 feet must be traversed before one can ever reach them. The cold is so severe as to oblige the inhabitants during several months of the winter to dig holes in the ground in which they and their cattle live, half buried alive until milder weather sets in.

I am told, even if the commission sets out at the present time, there is no chance of its arriving in this section of the country and opening its investigations before the middle or end of March, and that then several months must elapse before these investigations can be closed.

It was upon these same plains that Xenophon suffered great loss of life by the inclemency of the weather, causing him great embarrassments in his campaign.

#### MR. CAILLARD'S TESTIMONY.

[From the London Daily Telegraph.]

A representative of an agency has had an interview with Mr. Vincent Caillard, President of the Council of Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt, who is on a short visit to London from Constantinople. In the course of the interview Mr. Caillard said:—

"It is grossly unfair to attempt to get up an agitation among the British public beforehand, and to throw discredit upon the inquiry to be undertaken by this commission. I think that a strong appeal should be made to the sense of fair play of the British public, and that they should be urged to decline to listen to only one side, without reserving their judgment until they have heard the other. \* \* \*

"It is stated that the Armenians are a submissive and Christian people, and it is important that it should be known how far this is true. It so happens that in this very district of Sassoun the Ottoman Public Debt Administration met with great trouble some years ago on the establishment of salt works, which were intended simply for the convenience of the population itself, and with regard to which I cannot do better than quote to you the official report of the Director Generale of the Ceded Revenues to the Council of the Administration, of which I am president. The report says:—

"The Direction Generale takes note [constate] that the salt works of Sassoun were closed, some five or six years back, in consequence of the turbulent conduct of the inhabitants of that caza, who often pillaged the works, drove away our personnel, and even killed the soldiers specially charged with the protection of the salt works."

"The population which committed these outrages was an Armenian one."

"One thing must be borne in mind, and that is that if atrocities have been committed it would be absolutely unjust to charge the Turkish government with having countenanced or covered the perpetration of these outrages. Any one intimately acquainted with the Turkish government, as I am, knows perfectly well that it would do nothing of the kind, and that if the soldiery have indulged in horrible excesses the guilty parties will most certainly be punished. It is quite a mistake to think that the Sultan is an inhuman man, or that any outrages are committed with his approval—either direct or indirect."

#### INVESTIGATING ARMENIA.

#### A Report from the Commission Expected by the End of April.

[BY CABLE TO THE HERALD.]

LONDON, Jan. 19, 1895.—The Armenian Commission left Erzeroum on Tuesday for Sassoun, and the Foreign Office expects to receive a report therefrom by the end of April. In the meantime, the Porte positively declines to assist in the conduct of an independent inquiry, and there is probably no hope that any such investigation will be made.

The press correspondents who started a short time ago for Sassoun have reached Erzeroum, but they have been refused permission by the authorities there to proceed any further, presumably having been ordered to do so by the government at Constantinople. So strict are the authorities at Erzeroum that even one correspondent who was for a long time employed in Constantinople in assisting to organize the new Turkish postal service and also well known to the leading officials as decidedly pro-Turkish in his opinions has been warned away. The Porte is not disposed to expel any of these correspondents, but has instructed the Erzeroum officials to inform them that they pursue their venture at their own personal risk. The official reason assigned for this action is that the correspondents cannot be trusted and would naturally color their reports in accordance with the bias of their respective papers.

#### ENGLAND GETTING TIRED OF ARMENIA.

In the meantime the anti-Turkish agitation is flagging throughout England. The latest canard afloat is that the Porte has recalled the Turkish Ambassador in London, because he has not watched with sufficient closeness the plottings of England and Russia against Turkey in regard to Armenia. This report has been officially denied, but the Sultan is getting the credit of having "jumped" on Rustem Pasha, all the same, and he is also credited with having issued an order to the Governors of Jerusalem and Beyrout, removing the restrictions upon Jews trading in Syria, and declaring they shall enjoy the same rights, religious and otherwise, as any of the other peoples in the Empire.

A despatch from Rome says the Sultan recently wrote to the Pope that the current reports of massacres in Armenia were untrue, and that His Holiness would aid the cause of justice by intervening with the Powers. The Pope is said to have answered that he would be unable to act before the commission of inquiry should report. The despatch comes from an untrustworthy source, and apparently is a rehash of a paragraph published by Al Makatam in Cairo four days ago.