

THE MAN WHO KILLED TEN THOUSAND

How the Sultan of Turkey Rules His Barbaric Land.

IN THE IMPERIAL HAREM

His Is the Most Absolute Autocracy in the World.

One of the most interesting personalities in the world just now is the Sultan of Turkey, who permitted or ordered the massacre of 10,000 Armenian Christians the other day.

The Sultan never writes, the Sultan never reads, the Sultan never confers with any living soul, though even his limited education and, indeed, the unlimited number of ministers, secretaries, counselors at his beck and call would suggest his doing so.

He just sits down, nods or shakes his head respectively and trembles. The following is a faithful description of Abdul Hamid's official life, furnished by the secretary of one of the great European embassies:

"The Sultan is an early riser," says this authority. "He breakfasts in the harem and then proceeds at once to the room in his own palace, which for the ensuing day he may wish to use as a sort of library. If it pleases him to receive his ministers in the bath, a few dozen slaves will carry his collections of stuffed birds and impaled beetles thither; if he desires to hold his morning session in the hall of the ambassadors, his feathered and multilegged friends, without which Hamid's existence would be a blank, are deposited on the priceless carpets and consols that furnish the grand salon.

HOW HE GOVERNS.

"Office hours begin the moment the first secretary of the palace, Sureya Pasha, is admitted to His Majesty's presence. He finds the Pasha seated, or more often lounging on an ottoman or sofa at the side of his favorite cockatoo, whose pranks amuse him for hours at a time. If polly chooses to be ugly, the secretary may at once proceed with his business; if the bird is sportfully inclined—why, let the slave wait. The secretary bows low three times before his master, then sits down on a cushion placed at a respectful distance on the floor and lights a cigarette.

"The secretary brings with him a voluminous report, containing a synopsis of all the questions of the day and the work before the different ministers of state, with propositions and information regarding the execution of orders previously given attached. The Sultan listens passively to the recital, while playing with polly. If anything strikes him favorably in the line of a proposal Abdul Hamid nods, and the recording secretary, who has been watching him, motions his colleague to stop a moment to allow him to make a note of the Imperial assent, which is equivalent to the promulgation of the irade. An irade allows no discussion; it is never recalled; to criticise it would be lese majeste of the rankiest sort.

"Mind," said the attache, my informant, "the secretary-reader submits but a brief outline of the proposals, and the Sultan, when indorsing it, often knows nothing about the details of execution, and probably cares less. For that reason, and for no other, are such official atrocities as the Armenian massacre possible. The Pasha really knows very little about them. The governor of some distance province, for instance, telegraphs that his territory is in a state of insurrection. The minister of the interior thinks the rebels should be suppressed at short notice. His opinion is repeated to the Sultan, who concurs with it by a simple nod, as we have seen. Result: The governor receives permission, in the form of an Imperial irade, to re-establish order as best he sees fit. And he may see fit to murder a cityful. If, instead of nodding, the Sultan shakes his head, the proposal or executive report is doomed to oblivion.

"Sureya is followed by another official, who reads to His Majesty extracts from all the important dispatches received during the night, and, that being over, Abdul Hamid thinks himself qualified to discuss things with his ministers. He discusses, and the ministers submit quietly.

"When the Sultan has got through questioning the gentlemen, they are conducted into an inner room of the palace, so they may deliberate on the matters of state just 'discussed' with His Majesty in eminently one sided manner. One part of the wall of the council chamber has been removed by order of Abdul Hamid, who replaced the brick and mortar by a transparent screen, not noticeable from the debating floor. Sometimes, when the spirit of work moves him, or else fear of conspiracy, the Sultan listens to the deliberations unbeknown to anybody but the cherefeddin aga, the chief of the eunuchs, in whom he has the utmost confidence. If what he hears displeases him, something unpleasant is likely to happen forthwith."

AN ABSOLUTE AUTOCRAT.

It will be granted that Alexander III. of Russia was an exceedingly mild mannered ruler compared with Abdul Hamid. The Russian potentates of our times shrink from bloodshed to the extent of permitting

capital punishment only at very rare intervals. The Sultan, standing himself in eternal fear of the silk cord and poison, thinks nothing of having 10,000 men, women and children butchered if his own life and comfort may be insured thereby or if the massacre promises to guarantee the safe collection of taxes in the future or the payment of overdue moneys owing to the soldiery and army officers.

The Sultan seldom works after the mid-day meal, except in the midst of winter, when the weather keeps him from his usual outings, alternately undertaken on foot, by carriage or in a little electric boat on the artificial lake in the palace grounds. During the hot season he usually spends the entire afternoon in the harem, fast asleep.

The harem, under Abdul Hamid, is not the festive institution of old, that ate up the revenues of all the Asiatic provinces of the empire and sent Mourad V, the present Sultan's brother, to an insane asylum. Quantity has given way to quality in the matter of odaliskues as well as of display, for Abdul saves his money. He has only one real wife (Sultana), the mother of seven children—four boys and three girls—whom he keeps in right royal style. The quantity of slave girls kept for his benefit varies between 150 and 200—all extremely young. When they reach their 16th summer Abdul has no further use for them, and either sells them or presents them to his friends or officials. As long as a girl remains in the imperial harem she lives on the fat of the land, of course, owns the most enticing toilets, diamonds and even a little money. Abdul Hamid is a kind master, and it is said of him that he treats his favorites in true fatherly fashion, looking after their welfare even after he has tired of them. He must have a good memory, too, for the chief eunuch claims that His Majesty never forgets a slave's name—a fact of which the odaliskues are very proud.

LIKES MODERN DANCING.

One of the chief innovations introduced by Abdul immediately after his ascension to the throne, seventeen years ago, was that he made it a point to dine with his wife, daughters and chief slave girls at least four times per week. His predecessors had never "lowered" themselves so far as to break bread in the harem.

All the odaliskues must understand music and dancing, for Abdul is very fond of the piano and the guitar. In respect to dancing, he is a shade worse even than the average London music hall fiend. Oriental dancing has no more charm for him—he craves European sensational steps, and the newer and the more extravagant the better. If the high kickers of all nations knew their business they would seek an engagement with Abdul Hamid forthwith. French comedy, and especially operatta and burlesque, are also in high favor with the Padishah, who often engages whole troops for special performances, which he attends with the great dignitaries of the Crown as guests and the entire harem in well screened boxes.

The chief objects of interest that enter into Abdul Hamid's official life are: European politics, fires in Constantinople and keeping cholera at a distance. Fires are as numerous in the Turkish capital as dogs. They are regular occurrences, due principally to the imprudence of private individuals and the use of brasiers in place of stoves or grates. The least current of air sends the live coals flying in a Turkish house. The coals are heaped up in a little red pyramid, and ignite carpets and draperies in a jiffy, the flames spreading from one house to another until, perhaps, a whole street is consumed. As the Yildiz Palace towers high above the whole area of Constantinople, the Sultan has the best possible opportunity for satisfying his craving for fires. He has read a good deal about American methods of fighting fires and endeavors to utilize his knowledge to the advantage of suffering subjects. To this end he has given orders to call him instantly whenever a fire occurs. He then climbs to the roof of the palace with a number of adjutants, whom he dispatches with orders to the firemen on swift horses.

AFRAID OF CHOLERA.

The fear of cholera was inoculated in his mind by a dervish, in whose memory Europe should erect a statue or two, for all the sanitary improvements, such as they are, of which European Turkey boasts, were ordered to forestall the realization of the holy man's prophecy, that Abdul Hamid would die during a cholera epidemic.

But the strongest influence in Abdul Hamid's life is his constant fear of secret assassination. The bloody and disgraceful factors that made his succession possible, the murder of his uncle, Sultan Abdul Aziz, the dethronement of his brother, who stepped over his relative's mutilated corpse to snatch the crown, are formidable warnings, never to be forgotten. He trusts nobody outright, with the exception, perhaps, of the chief eunuch, not even his foster mother, whose enormous allowance of \$750,000 per year he cut off in an evil hour, when the spirit of economy beset him. He makes her taste every meal, every drink he partakes of, it is true, but there have been assassins who, in their passion for an enemy's life, forgot even the precautions for their own.

Summing up, I should pronounce Abdul Hamid a man of good intentions, spoiled by inherent indolence, moral cowardice and inordinate selfishness.