

A PLEA FOR THE TURKS.

I have read the articles on "The Turks and the Eastern Question" with a good deal of interest, but with less of satisfaction. As an epitome of history they are probably truthful enough, as far as they go; but they are manifestly one-sided. Their author has taken a brief against the Turks, and opposition to them is manifestly a labour of love. This animus against them takes distinct and striking form in the concluding words of the last article. He says, in effect there, "the Turks are devils, to the Devil with them."

Now, partizanship of this decided kind has ever, and rightly, been deemed aside from the calm, impartial judgment which should govern the true historian. Not only what can be said against, but also what can be said for, a people, or an individual, should be equally borne in mind by the man who would write history. I look in vain for this impartiality in Mr. Bray's articles.

I am not a worshipper of the Turk. In common with Mr. Bray, I have a hearty detestation of the many abominable qualities which he undoubtedly possesses. He is brutal, and fanatical, and lazy. But this does not exhaust his description, and notwithstanding my abhorrence of the evil side of him, I have a not unfounded confidence that he is capable of better things. Let us not forget that we cannot with absolute impunity cast stones even at the Turk. Our house, too, is of a somewhat transparent texture. There are transactions in the history of John Bull, and qualities in him, which could be singled out and pilloried as worthy of the most violent indignation. Nevertheless, he would hardly like to be coupled with the Devil.

These articles, in dealing with the past history of the Turks, fail to give that prominence to the really admirable qualities they have displayed, which a fair criticism demands. A short sentence in the paragraph relating to the time of the great Malek Shah gives scanty admission to the fact that good government and real human advancement were possible even under the Turk; and that all his time was not spent in the sacking of conquered cities, and the devastating of prostrate countries. The fact is, the historical expanse which lies before the student in this department of history has not only its rugged and painful aspects, but also its flowering valleys, its lofty eminences, and its glory-crowned summits. At the time of the Crusades, Christian Europe compared very unfavourably with Mohammedan Turkey. Having all the fanaticism and cruelty of the Ottomans, the Christians lacked the splendid civilization, the profound learning and polished manners of the followers of Mahomet; and while Christian Europe was torn in pieces by the ferocious contests of feudal robbers, there were order, and peace, and impartial justice throughout the dominions of the Sultan. And no fair-minded student of history can deny that Europe came away from its contact with the East deeply indebted for an impetus to its own civilization and refinement, the value of which cannot easily be computed. The tables, it is true, are somewhat turned now, but why deny to the Turk the possibility of a revival of former virtues, a return to his ancient manhood?

Then, with regard to his more recent history, I very much question the correctness of Mr. Bray's estimate. Here, again, he has borne in mind too prominently that he is the plaintiff's attorney, and has given too much emphasis to the partisan accounts which have from time to time reached us of Turkish misrule. I do not deny the fact of misrule; but it is impossible that it can have been of the unexceptionally abominable character which Mr. Bray would imply. Every now and then there has leaked out, even from anti-Turkish sources, evidence that matters have been very much exaggerated. The Russians themselves, when they got into Bulgaria, were fain to confess that they found the Bulgarians much better off than they expected. They were fairly prosperous, and even wealthy. They had their schools and freedom of worship, and were by no means in the desperate condition they had been represented to be in. And as to the now famous, or, I suppose I should say, infamous atrocities, people of Mr. Bray's way of thinking seem to forget that it is not the Turks alone who will do terribly harsh and bloody things in suppression of insurrection. In his article in the last issue of the SPECTATOR on "The Irish and Orangeism," Mr. Bray tells us a harrowing tale of long-continued English misrule in Ireland. We can bring nothing worse than this against the Turk. England, however, has eventually mended her ways.—why say that the Turk has not, and never will? He has done better in times past, and may do better again.

Once more, as to the question of slavery, the continuance of which Mr. Bray lays entirely at the door of Turkey. Is it so very long ago that Christian England and Christian America removed this stain from their escutcheon? Besides, slavery in the East, notwithstanding its abuses, is far from being an unmitigated evil. It partakes largely of the patriarchal spirit, the slave being more an humble member of the family, than simply the property of his master. And, after all, it is quite a question which is the most a slave, the servant who is the lifelong property and care of his master, or the servant whose connection with his employer continues only during the prime of his strength and skill, and is then of the most artificial and heartless nature.

Mr. Bray, while admitting that he is altogether anti-Turk, denies that he is altogether pro-Russian. As to this, one cannot help feeling that if the Russians never have a more indifferent friend than he, they will do well.

I am afraid (to make a reference to an admirable article of Mr. Bray's of some week or two since) his views on this Eastern question are decidedly "lopsided," and since the SPECTATOR disclaims party spirit, and professes to view all matters under the sun from an impartial and independent point of view, he will, I hope, pardon my presuming to differ from him, and venturing to submit to his paper some proportion of the difference.

He as good as says, then, that England, and England alone, is responsible for the late war, with all its horrors, and that but for England Christian wrongs in Turkey would long since have been righted. And this, because she would not join in the Berlin note. Now, I do not wish to defend in toto the policy of the Beaconsfield government in this Eastern matter. Mistakes were possible, and no doubt have been committed. But I do repudiate, most strongly, the monstrous assumption that England, as represented by its present government, had otherwise than deeply at heart the interests of the Christian subjects of Turkey. She refrained, however, from playing into the hands of Turkey's

great enemy. Prussia would have been only too glad to have had England's heavy hand with her in the grateful work of demolition. And then we should have seen played over again the Austro-Prussian tragical farce over plundered Denmark, and the probability is that deluded England would in the end have found herself shelved entirely out of Turkey, and the laughing-stock of Europe.

Mr. Gladstone, with all his great qualities, is no match for the astute and unprincipled diplomats of continental Europe. They would have worked upon his impetuously generous nature, and plunged him and England into the veriest pickle that ever nation became immersed in.

So the English people as a whole have judged, and it will be found that their instinct was a true one.

We see how pure and sincere were Russia's motives in the cool manner in which she proposed to wipe out Turkey altogether, in the sole interest of Russia.

It is very easy for detractors of Lord Beaconsfield to decry him as "Mystic" and "Adventurer," but under his management of her foreign affairs, England has been spared the contempt and sneers which were showered upon her during Mr. Gladstone's regime. She has more than regained her former position as one of the foremost of civilized powers, and what she says is listened to and regarded. For this, thanks to Lord Beaconsfield.

And now a concluding word as to the Turks. Mr. Bray, much as he hates them, was compelled to admit that the late contest showed them to be possessed of a stamina which no one gave them credit for. Surely a people who could shew the splendid patriotism and bravery which they displayed in that unequal fight are by no means played out.

Then, and only then, have a people arrived at the end of their tether when they have lost all love of country, and have not the heart and pluck to fight for themselves. To wish the destruction of Turkey, simply because of her non-Christian religion, is utterly unworthy of any rational Christian. In proportion to her light, Turkey may be just as far advanced as Russia, or as England herself.

The Turks have proved themselves men, in God's name give them a man's chance.

TURK.

DISRAELI—BEACONSFIELD.

A contemporary has published a verbatim report of the close of Mr. Disraeli's first speech in the House of Commons; here it is. It was made in 1837, in reply to an attack of O'Connell upon Sir F. Burdett for deserting the Liberal cause:—

"I stand here to-night, sir—(here the noise in the House became so general that the hon. gentleman could not proceed for some time; when the confusion had somewhat subsided, he said:) I stand here to-night, sir, not formally, but in some degree virtually, the representative of a considerable number of members of Parliament. (Bursts of laughter.) Now, why smile? (Continued laughter.) Why envy me? (Here the laughter became general.) Why should I not have a tale to unfold to-night? (Roars of laughter.) Do you forget that band of 158—those ingenuous and inexperienced youths to whose unsophisticated minds the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in those tones of winning pathos—(excessive laughter, and loud cries of "Question")—Now, a considerable misconception exists in the minds of many members on this side of the House as to the conduct of Her Majesty's Government with regard to these elections, and I wish to remove it. I will not twit the noble lord opposite with opinions which are not ascribable to him, or to his more immediate supporters, but which were expressed by the more popular section of his party some few months back. (Question, question.) About that time, sir, when the bell of our cathedral announced the death of the monarch—(Oh, oh! and much laughter)—we all read then, sir—(groans and cries of "Oh!")—we all read—laughter and great interruption)—I know nothing which to me is more delightful than to show courtesy to a new member, particularly if he happens to appeal to me from the party opposed to myself. (Hear, hear.) At that time we read that it was the death-knell of Toryism, that the doom of that party was sealed, that their funeral obsequies were about to be consummated. (Laughter.) We were told that, with the dissolution of that much-vilified Parliament which the right hon. baronet had called together, the hopes and prospects of the Tories would be thrown for ever to the winds—(laughter)—and that affairs were again brought exactly to what they were at the period when the hurried Mr. Hudson rushed into the chambers of the Vatican. (Immense laughter.) I do not impute these sanguine hopes to the noble lord himself particularly, because I remember that, shortly afterwards, the noble lord, as if to check the new and sanguine expectations of his followers, came forward with a manifesto informing them that the Tories could not expire in a moment, but the Ministry in a reform parliament might depend upon having a working majority of 100, which was to be extended upon great occasions to 125 and 130. Now, Sir—(Question, question)—this is the question, and I am going to ask the noble lord for our instruction. (Oh, oh! and great interruption.) We only wish to know this simple fact, whether the great occasion on which the working majority was to increase from 100 to 125 or 130, is upon the question of an election ballot?—(cheers and groans)—and whether the Grenville Act has not been given forth to the people that it is impossible that an impartial tribunal can be obtained in this House? (Oh, oh! Question question.) If hon. members think it is fair thus to interrupt me, I will submit. (Great laughter.) I would not act so to anyone, that is all I can say. (Laughter, and cries of "Go on.") But I beg simply to ask—(Oh! and loud laughter.) Nothing is so easy as to laugh. (Roars of laughter.) I really wish to place before the House what is our position. When we remember all this—when we remember all that, in spite of the support of the hon. gentleman, the member for Dublin, and his well-disciplined phalanx of patriots, and, in spite of all this, we remember the amatory eclogue—(roars of laughter)—the old loves and new loves that took place between the noble lord, the Tityrus of the Treasury Bench, and the learned Daphne of Liskeard—(loud laughter, and cries of "Question")—which appeared as a fresh instance of the *amoris redintegratio*—(excessive laughter)—when we remember at the same time that, with emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, on the one hand a triumphant nation, on the other a groaning people, and notwithstanding the noble lord, secure on the pedestal of power, may wield in one hand the keys of St. Peter,