

Argonauts and the Trojan war, have echoed the world's debate, may again be shaken by a struggle of Titans surpassing aught that Xerxes or Alexander, Belisarius or Chosroes, Moslem or crusader, ever witnessed.

Constantinople at present is in a state of fearful disorganization. It has at all times a polyglot population of Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Levantines of many kinds. Quite recently the turbulent Kurds have been flocking to the capital to dispose of their ill-gotten gains, or to spend it in profligate pleasures. These furnish tinder for a most disastrous explosion.

The Turkish Empire is infected with an ineradicable taint—that of barbaric and ruthless cruelty. From the days of Mohammed, its government has been one of terror—the stern rule of the sword. “The Turk is simply an aboriginal savage encamped on the ruins of civilization which he destroyed.”

Abdul Hamid, the present Sultan, in cold, calculating, remorseless cruelty, is the worst persecutor in history. Brought up in the seclusion and sensualities of the seraglio, his early years were spent in riotous excess. The then reigning Sultan, Abdul Aziz, lavished on harem favourites and costly palaces the resources of the Empire, and brought the nation to the verge of bankruptcy. The deposed Abdul ended his life by suicide. Murad, his successor, went mad, and Abdul Hamid was called to the rocking throne, 1876. The responsibilities of power seem to have converted him from an idle profligate into the most conspicuous embodiment in Europe of personal and despotic rule.

The saying of Louis XIV., “L’etat c’est moi,” a mere hyperbole in his case, is a sober verity in that of the Sultan. For the monstrous abuses and slaughters

and cruelties of his reign he must be personally responsible, except in so far as it was physically impossible for any man to administer such a demoralized empire of 40,000,000 of people.

A recent writer thus describes the physical appearance of “The Shadow of God on Earth,” as he is modestly designated: “The Sultan is the most wretched, pinched-up little sovereign I ever saw. A most unhappy-looking man, of dark complexion, with a look of absolute terror in his large Eastern eyes. People say he is nervous, and no wonder, considering the fate of his predecessor. All I can say is that his eyes haunted me for days, as of one gazing at some unknown horror. So emaciated and unnatural is his appearance that were he a European we should pronounce him in a swift decline. How all the fabled state of the Oriental potentate palls before such a lesson in royal misery! The poorest beggar in his dominions is happier than he!”

It is through the jealousies of the great powers, rather than through the statesmanship of its Sultan, that the Empire has not long since gone to pieces. The barbaric profusion of wealth in the palace contrasts strongly with the poverty of the nation and starvation of the army.

During much of his reign, the Turkish soldiers have been housed like cattle, clothed like paupers, fed like convicts, and paid—well, not paid at all, for months at a time.

The stolid fatalism of the Turk is perhaps a substitute for courage. When the passes of the Balkans were forced, and the Russian troops swept up to the very gates of Stamboul, the Sultan refused to take flight to Brousa, on the Asiatic shore, and when the conquering Russians demanded surrender of his fleet, he declared that