

## OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

### HOW THE TURKS TOOK CONSTANTINOPLE.

FOUR Turkish sultans reigned between the wretched Bajazet and the conqueror of Constantinople.

Amurath II., last of the four, having died at Adrianople in 1451, his son Mahomet, crossing rapidly to Europe, was crowned second sultan of that name. He was a terrible compound of fine literary taste with revolting cruelty and lust. One of his very first acts after he became sultan was to cause his infant brother to be drowned, while the baby's mother was congratulating him on his accession.

The throne of the Eastern Empire was then filled by Constantine Palæologus, no unworthy wearer of the purple. Limb after limb had been lopped from the great trunk. There was still life in the heart, though it throbbed with feeble pulses; but now came the mortal thrust.

After more than a year of busy preparation, seventy thousand Turks, commanded by Mahomet II. in person, sat down, in the spring of 1453, before Constantinople. Their lines stretched across the landward or western side of the triangle on which the city was built. A double wall, and a great ditch one hundred feet deep, lay in their front; and within this rampart the Emperor Constantine marshalled his little band of defenders. A little band indeed it was, for scarcely six thousand out of a population of more than one hundred thousand souls would arm for the defence of the city; and western Christendom was so dull or careless that, with the exception of two thousand mercenaries under Giustiniani, a noble of Genoa, these had no foreign aid. The harbor of the Golden Horn, guarded by a strong chain across its mouth, sheltered fourteen galleys. The Turkish fleet consisted of three hundred and twenty vessels of different sizes.

The siege began. On both sides cannon and muskets of a rude kind were used. One great gun deserves special notice. It was cast by a European brass-founder at Adrianople, and threw a stone ball of six hundred pounds to the distance of a mile. But such cannon could be fired only six or seven times a day. Lances and arrows flew thick from both lines, and heavy stones from the *ballista*, filled up the pauses of the cannonade.

At first fortune seemed to smile on the besieged. A vigorous assault of the Turks upon the walls was repulsed, and the wooden tower they had used in the attack was burned.

One day, in the middle of April, the watchman of the besieged saw the white sails of five ships gleaming on the southward horizon. They came from Chios, carrying to the beleaguered city fresh troops, wheat, wine and oil. The Greeks, with anxious hearts, crowded the seaward wall. A swarm of Turkish boats pushed out to meet the daring barques, and curving in a crescent shape, awaited their approach. Mahomet, riding by the edge of the sea, with cries and gestures urged his

sailors to the attack. Three times the Turks endeavoured to board the enemy, but as often the flotilla reeled back in confusion, shattered with cannon-shot and scorched with Greek fire, while the waters were strewn with the floating wreck of those vessels which were crushed by collision with the heavy Christian galleys. Steadily onward came the five ships, safe into the harbor of the Golden Horn. The Turkish Admiral was doomed by the furious sultan to be impaled, but the sentence was commuted to one hundred blows with a golden bar, which, we are told, Mahomet himself administered with a right good will.

Then came the turning point of the siege. The sultan, feeling that his attack by land must be seconded by sea, formed a bold plan. It was to convey a part of his fleet overland from the Propontis, and launch them in the upper end of the harbor. The distance was six miles; but by means of rollers running on a tramway of greased planks, eighty of the Turkish vessels were carried over the rugged ground in one night. A floating battery was then made, from which the Turkish cannon began to play with fearful effect on the weakest side of the city.

When the attack had lasted for seven weeks, a broad gap was to be seen in the central rampart. Many attempts at negotiation had come to nothing, for Constantine refused to give up the city, and nothing else would satisfy the sultan. At last a day was fixed for the grand assault. At daybreak the long lines of Turks made their attack. When the strength of the Christians was almost exhausted in endless strife with the swarms of irregular troops who led the way, the terrible Janissaries advanced. The storm grew louder, the rattle of the Turkish drums mingling with the thunder of the ordnance. Just then the brave Giustiniani, defending the great breach, was wounded; and when, after this loss, the defence grew slacker, a body of Turks, following the Janissary Hassan, clambered over the ruined wall into the city. Amid the rush, Constantine Palæologus, last of the Cæsars, fell dead, sabred by an unknown hand; and with him fell the Eastern Empire.

At noon on the same day Mahomet summoned the Moslems to prayer in the Church of St. Sophia—thus establishing the rites of Islam where Christian worship had been held ever since the days of Constantine the Great.—*Willis's "Events in History."*

#### GENTLENESS.

WHEN I meet you everywhere, boys—on the street, in the cars, on the boat, at your own houses, or at school—I see a great many things in you to admire. You are earnest, you are merry, you are full of happy life, you are quick at your lessons, you are patriotic, you are brave, and you are ready to study out all the great and curious things in this wonderful world of ours. But very often I find one great thing lacking in you: you are not quite gentlemanly enough. There are so many little actions which help to make up a true gentleman, and which I do not see in you. Sometimes, when mother or sister comes into the room

where you are sitting in the most comfortable chair, you do not jump up and say, "Take this seat, mother," or, "Sit here, Annie," but you sit still and enjoy it yourself. Sometimes you push past your mother or sister in the doorway from one room to another, instead of stepping aside politely for them to pass first. Sometimes you say, "the governor," or the "boss," in speaking of your father; and when he comes in at night, you forget to say, "Good evening, sir." Sometimes, when mother has been shopping, and passes you on the corner carrying a parcel, you do not step up and say, "Let me carry that for you mother," but keep on playing with the other boys. Sometimes, when mother or sister is doing something for you, you call out, "Come, hurry up!" just as if you were speaking to one of your boy companions. Sometimes, when you are rushing out to play, and meet a lady friend of mother's just coming in at the door, you do not lift your cap from your head, or wait a moment till she has passed in.

"Such 'little things' do you say? Yes; to be sure. But it is these very little acts—these gentle acts—which make gentlemen. I think the word "gentleman" is a beautiful word. First, "man," and that means everything brave and strong and noble; and then "gentle," and that means full of all those little, kind, thoughtful acts of which I have been speaking. A gentleman! Every boy may be one if he will. Whenever I see a gentlemanly boy, I feel so glad and proud! I met one the other day, and I have been happier ever since.—*Up-Stairs.*

#### THE LITTLE WREN.

THE following story of a little wren in connection with the Battle of the Boyne, which was fought in Ireland many years ago, will bring to mind the words of Jesus, that not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without the knowledge of our Heavenly Father. Little things often bring about great consequences:

It was in the month of July, a hot Summer's day. Just before the battle, the sentinels of King William's army felt uncommonly tired and sleepy, and very much inclined to take a nap, notwithstanding the near neighborhood of the enemy. Of course, if grown-up soldiers fell asleep, a little drummer boy could not be expected to keep awake. While he slept, his companions nodding around him, a little wren spied some crumbs upon his drum-head, and straightway hopped upon it to pick them up. The noise of her little feet and her beak tapping on the parchment woke the lad, who spied the enemy advancing, and instantly gave the alarm. But for this little bird the sleepers might have been surprised, and the events of the day altered. As it was, the skill of William won him the victory, and James fled beaten from the field.

SPEND your time in nothing which you know must be repented of. Spend it in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed. Spend it in nothing which you might not safely and properly be found doing, if death should surprise you in the act.