

The Presbyterian Record

VOL. XXI.

MARCH, 1896.

No. 3.

THE CRIME OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY.

THIS century has been by far the grandest one the world has ever seen. Freedom, light, knowledge, art, science, have made unparalleled advance, and pity has kept pace. More has been done to prevent and relieve human want and suffering than in all previous history.

The panorama of the ages, outside of Eden and Israel, may be seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan. First, the Pagan world; the man among thieves; cruelty to the weak; robbery and bloodshed; might making right: then the first millennium and a half of the Christian era; the Priest and Levite; the civilized world dominated by Rome; which cared for self but not for human want and suffering: while the present century sees the humanities in action as never before. In it the civilized world has been dotted with hospitals, asylums, institutions, and agencies of all kinds, for lessening every human ill. It is the century of Christian missions. It is the Good Samaritan century. We see as never before, many millioned Christianity on its knees beside more millioned bodily and spiritual want and woe, pouring in oil and wine, and bearing the bruised to safety and rest.

But it has remained to one of the closing years of this grandest century to witness the Crime of History; for when we remember that the whole civilized world, with its light and knowledge and corresponding responsibility, is actively or passively implicated, there is no question but the crime, not only of this century but of all centuries, has been the butcheries, with all their attendant horrors, of the Armenian Christians by the Turks, during the past year. The wrongs, persecutions, and massacres, of other days, were horrible in themselves, but viewed in the light of all their surroundings, there is not in any of them the great, black, cumulative, wide extended, guilt that rests upon the present generation.

First there is the Turk; cruel, fanatical, ignorant; from whom, since his sway means tyranny and wrong, the world should take his sceptre.

Partners in the guilt are Russia, Germany, France, and others. For the Turks we may pray, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," but that cannot be said of the others. They knew their sin. Seeking their own selfish ends there was no ear for the cry of the oppressed.

Britain longed to help, probably the only power that, as a power, really did so. But it was hard to see her way. The jealousy of other nations prevented her from doing what she would. Armenia was far inland. The landing of troops might have led others to resist, fearful lest she should gain some advantage. Had a beginning been made, she would have rushed to arms and faced the world, but it seemed an awful responsibility to take a first step that might involve Europe—the world, in strife.

Besides this, at the most critical moment, the Government of the U. S. A., the great Christian nation, from which, if from any, she should have received sympathy and encouragement, flung a threat across the seas about a disputed line in a Venezuelan swamp; and a painful feature of the case, is, that a number of the leading religious papers in the United States, while joining in a chorus of condemnation against the powers for not stopping the massacres, lay special stress upon Britain's guilt; when their own country was one of the means by which she was hindered.

Britain's hands are not clean of this present crime, but she is probably the least guilty of any of the world's greatest powers. Had the Government of the U. S. A. from the first given sympathy and co-operation, the result would probably have been different.

But the wrong has been done, and the Christians in Britain, and Canada, and the United States, though they could not stay the destroyer's arm, are sending help to relieve the suffering. Scores of thousands, their property destroyed, their homes in ruins, without food or clothing, are facing the horrors of winter, relieved only by the charity of the Christian world in which all are asked to join.

Let there be prayer as well as work, for God hears prayer, and God reigns.