

THE TURKS AND THE EASTERN QUESTION.

II.

Orcham carried on the work of conquest so successfully begun. He took the city of Nice; overran the remainder of Bithynia, with great part of Mysia; advanced his forces to the Hellespont and Bosphorus, and at times broke in on European soil. At last he broke in to remain there, and it came about this way: Soliman, the eldest son of Orchard, having been appointed governor of the newly acquired province of Mysia, visited the spot on the shore where the great and rich city of Cyzicus once stood. The ruins of columns and marble edifices scattered over the turf filled him with awe and admiration. To his heated fancy they were nothing less than the remains of wondrous palaces that the genii had built. This Turk was of a dreamy turn of mind, and loved to wander in meditation on the beach amidst the ruins of this Tyre of Propontis. He had his reward, as who shall not who gives his thoughts free play? One evening as he sat wrapt in contemplation he beheld the ruined temples of Jupiter, Proserpine and Cybele reflected by the light of the moon in the tranquil waters of the Sea of Marmora. It seemed to his fancy as if the restored city were emerging from the deep in all its ancient glory, girdled with the white sails of a fleet. The whispering of wind and murmuring of wave struck upon the ear as mystic voices from beings invisible; while the silvery beams of the moon seemed to bind into one as by bridges the shores of Europe and Asia. He thought of his grandsire's dream, of which I have spoken, and came to a resolution that both sides of the Straits should be united by him. Soliman was not slow to move when once he had found a reason. The next night, with a chosen band of forty, he crossed the strait on a rough raft and seized the castle of Tzyppe, now Chini, near to Gallipoli.

And now we must follow the Turk in Europe, bent on further conquest. And all things favoured the plan. Nature herself seemed to war against Greece. Great earthquakes shook and shattered the walls of her towns; the inhabitants in terror fled to the fields, and the Turks entered as masters. Gallipoli—the Callipolis of ancient geography and the key of the Hellespont, soon fell—thus giving him command of the ways of communication between Europe and Asia. It gave the Greeks but little concern at the time, the Emperor remarking that he had merely lost a "cellar for wine and a sty for hogs," alluding to the magazines established there by Justinian. And so the Empire grew and extended. Orchard consigned the work of government administration to his brother Aladdin, who was the first vizier, or burden-bearer of the nation, while Orchard himself made plans for further conquest. This vizier established for the first time a permanent military force. He had trouble with his soldiers at first, for they had memory of the days of pastoral equality, and men will not yield their freedom all at once. But to obviate the difficulty they struck upon the plan of rearing up in the doctrines of Islam, the children of the conquered Christians, training them from early youth in the use of arms and forming them into a separate corps. A damnable invention, it will be said—and it was. The devil had two children born to him at that time: those perverted Christians turned into soldiers and called "Janissaries," and gunpowder over in Europe. All know the history of those Janissaries—how they grew to be strong and able to rule at last, setting up whom they would, and whom they would putting down; how they fought with vigour and fanaticism winning in almost every battle; grew in insolence at home, until a monarch had them all extirpated by the sword. I have said that the state of Europe was favourable to Turkish views of conquest. This is specially true of the Eastern division of the Roman Empire, of which Constantinople was the capital. While feeble Emperors resigned themselves to the pleasures and empty formalities of the court, insolent and venal courtiers, entrusted with arbitrary power, so corruptly administered the government, enriching themselves by fiscal oppression, and prostituting justice for gain, that all respect for the imperial throne had long been extinguished in the popular mind. The great provinces, such as those of the Wallachians, Bulgarians, Slavonians and Albanians separated their interests from the Greek Government, caring little whether it stood or fell. Add to this political misfortune the fact that since the middle of the eleventh century, on the ground of doctrinal and ritual differences, the Greek Emperors, clergy and people had disowned and defied the authority of the Vatican, setting up an independent hierarchy with Constantinople for its head, and it will be seen that the Greek outlook was glowing indeed. Europe could have sent no help if it had the mind, for Europe itself was distracted, almost ruined, by the fierce rivalry of Popes. So the Turk went on his conquering way with scarce a check. He advanced from the Hellespont and captured Adrianople in 1361, and it became the seat of government. John Palaeologus I. became alarmed for Constantinople, and went to Italy in search of help. He renounced all the tenets which Rome called heterodox; tendered the abject submission to Pope Urban V.; kissed the feet of His Holiness in the Church of St. Peter, and led the mule of His Holiness through the streets of the city. And His Holiness promised as usual, but also as usual nothing came of the promise, and the poor king could get no assistance.

In 1363 the first battle was fought between the powers of Europe and the invading Turk. The Servians, the Bosnians, the Hungarians and the Wallachians formed a league to pursue their independence and drive the enemy back into Asia. With their combined forces they crossed the Balkans, but were totally defeated by the Turkish King Amurath. The allies recovered and offered battle once more, but with the like result, and Serbia was added to the territory of the conqueror. Then came the reign of Bajazet, a fierce, proud, warlike man, and talented withal, who pushed his way eastward to the Euphrates and northward to the Danube. Hungary got the help of some French and German knights, and sent an army one hundred thousand strong against him, and they fought at Nicopolis. The Hungarian army was swept into the Danube. But Bajazet blundered, being blinded by his passion. He planned a campaign into the very heart of Europe, and boasted that he would one day feed his horse with a bushel of oats on the altar of St. Peter's at Rome. But that horse never got that feed, for upon the proud and conquering Turk swept the fierce Timour-leik, or lame Timour, Tamerlane, as we have learnt to call him. He was at first chief of a Nomadic horde of Mongols, and these rose to the mastery of the empire stretching from the great wall of China to the shores of the Mediterranean. By Tamerlane the empire of the Turks was shattered, but not broken.

Mohammed I. restored it again in its integrity. Other conquests were made in the reign of Amurath the Second, who twice returned to meet and master Turkish foes.

I must dwell a moment on Amurath's son and successor, Mohammed II. for he it was before whom Constantinople fell. He was a fierce Islamite—had wisdom, strength of body and mind, and an unflinching courage. He was the most talented of all the Sultans, and because he prostituted his powers to his passion and his pride, became the most execrable of them all. From the moment of his accession his thought was of Constantinople, his master passion a desire to possess it. In 1453 he invested the city with an army of 120,000 men—desolated with savage cruelty all the environs, and shut the inhabitants within the walls. The total force ultimately brought against the city, including army and navy, was 260,000 strong. To oppose this formidable host was a garrison of but 8,000 men, who had to defend a circuit of 13 miles of land and water. The inhabitants numbered one hundred thousand, made up mostly of priests, mechanics, women and children. The Greek King made another effort to gain help from the West, by offering the Greek Church to the rulers of Rome; but it failed, the people would not be transferred. They had some conscience, and some respect for it too—a good and great thing always. They said it would be apostacy, which is worse than the horrors of war—worse than any defeat could be. The Grand Duke Notaras, the first Minister of the Empire, said he would rather see the turban of Mohammed in the city than the tiara of the Pope, or the hat of a Cardinal. It was a most unequal fight. The besiegers—nearly 300,000 strong—well-disciplined, and well-led by a young and brave commander; the besieged, scarce a dozen thousand strong, all who could fight being told, and among them discord and insubordination. They got greatly dejected upon hearing that a Nun had apostatized to Islamism, and refused to observe Lent; and still more on hearing that two Monks, having been entrusted with money to repair the walls, had reserved it for their own use when the war should be over. They didn't know as well as we how little Nuns may learn to care for fasting, and how much Monks may learn to care for money, or they wouldn't have been cast down. And why shouldn't they so care? A care for the Church is surely the first and best of all moralities. But the Turks were confident. Sheiks and fanatics predicted triumph, and Othman's dream was told from tent to tent. The Koran, too, was quoted as giving them promise, "Know ye a city encompassed on two sides by water, and on the third by land," it said, "the last hour shall not come before it be taken by sixty thousand of the faithful." And again, "They shall conquer Constantinople; the army that conquers it is the best of armies." So spake the great prophet, and the sound was as of a voice from heaven. The Scripture had said, and it must be—God is God—and Mohammed is his prophet. With varying fortunes, displays of determination without, and the courage of despair within, for fifty long and dreadful days the battle raged. And then came the final assault. It was prepared for—the Sultan and his host of Turks believed in God and Mohammed—and that there was power that could and would help them, so they prayed and fasted, and gave a great illumination. And those in the city believed in God and Christ, and they prayed and fasted, and cried to the God of right and of battle. But victory went with numbers and the wrong. The oppressor triumphed—the cross was less glorious in sight than the crescent. Why? I know not. Things are strangely ordered. God is God and Mohammed is his prophet. Constantinople fell on May 29, 1453. The Greek Empire had come to an end, having lasted 1123 years, from the time Constantine had called it the seat of Empire, and named it after himself. The wars of the Roses were going on in England.

Thus was completed the political overthrow of Eastern Christendom and the breaking up of the Empire of the Greeks. The Turk became an object of dread. He threatened Spain and Italy. A comet appeared, supposed to be in league with the Turk, and the Ave Maria was repeated three times a day—the Church bells were tolled at noon in all Roman Catholic places, and the prayer was made, "Lord, save us from the devil, the Turk, and the comet," and the triad each day were excommunicated in solemn ecclesiastical manner. But prayers and excommunications prevailed only for one—the comet disappeared—but the Turk and the devil remained to vex Europe.

The change of mastery on the Bosphorus crippled for a time the navigation of the Black Sea, by excluding the mercantile marine of Western Europe from its waters. To restore that navigation became the policy of England and France and other Western nations, and the rise of what is now called "The Eastern Question," to which I shall refer by and by. In 1522, fell to the Turks the Island of Rhodes, which gave them the key of the Archipelago, of Greece, of the Dardanelles, of Asia Minor, and of the Seas of Syria and Egypt. The famous Soliman was Sultan; and that was the time of greatest power and glory to the Turks. The Empire in Europe embraced, the Greeks occupying old Greece and part of Macedonia, as well as the country about Constantinople—the Bulgarians who held a country extending from the Danube to the Black Sea; and the South Slavonic races, whom we now know as Serbs, Bosnians, Herzegovinians, and Montenegrins, all identical in race—and also the Albanians of the hilly country near the Adriatic. To these may be added Roumania, for then it was really, and until quite recently, nominally subject to the Turks.

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(To be continued.)

"A LAY SERMON TO INSOLVENTS."

"To thine own self be true and it will follow as the night the day; thou canst not then be false to any man."

Is there a niche in Life for each one of us in which alone we can really show to advantage, whatever of beauty or usefulness we possess? Is there some portion of the machinery of existence left vacant for each of us, in which, and which alone, we shall find our power to sustain or propel so exactly balanced to the other parts of the machine as to leave us no sense of strain, but rather, healthful exercise of our faculties in promoting the usefulness of the whole? These are questions which peculiarly interest us, who, suffering the reality of failure, are oppressed with a sense of it, and burdened with the care