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Bosnia-Turkey

THE FUTURE OF TURKEY

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[This article, written in June, gives in the first paragraphs a clear statement of the conflicting interests of Austria and Russia that furnished the torch for the present conflagration. Turkey's future will depend upon the part which she now plays in the general war between the great Christian Powers of Europe.—THE EDITOR.]

MY principal object in this paper is to give an account of the present position and prospects of Turkey. To make this intelligible, a short summary of the influences which have been at work in the Balkan Peninsula and of the events of the last two years is desirable. Two great European states, Russia and Austria, have exceptional interest in the development of Rumania and the Balkan states and in the future of Turkey. Russia and all the Balkan states belong to the "Orthodox Church." Russia aided each of them to throw off the Moslem yoke. Austria has at least eleven millions of subjects belonging to the same church. The two empires during the last fifty years have striven against each other with varying success in Bucarest, Belgrade, and Sofia to obtain a dominating influence in the countries of these capitals. This struggle was never more intense than during the last two years.

The result so far is that Russia gains. The Russians believe that they have detached Rumania from Austrian influence and from the Triple Alliance. Three years ago, Austrians and Hungarians were of opinion that Serbia was a negligible factor and could at any time be annexed. Austria coveted Salonica and considered that the easiest way for an Austrian army to reach that port was through Serbia. The war between Turkey and the Balkan states has dispelled

this illusion: its results upon Austrian influence are disastrous all round. Serbia has doubled her territory. Her success at Kumanovo marked one of the decisive battles of 1912. Her army broke up the Turkish offensive designed to threaten Sofia on the rear of the Bulgarian army, and greatly increased Serbian reputation among the Serbian subjects of Austria. Austria's diplomatic action succeeded unfortunately in preventing Serbia from obtaining a port on the Adriatic, and this was the prime cause of the war between the victorious allies. Austria played fast and loose with Bulgaria. King Ferdinand has always had Austrian leanings, and the Austrians might have made of Bulgaria a valuable friend. The Red Book of the empire published last April, confirmed the impression that Austria's policy is as vacillating as it was when Gladstone declared that whoever trusted to it was leaning upon a broken reed. At one time she was supporting Bulgaria; at another Rumania. Her minister Berchtold finished by deserting and alienating the Bulgars, making the Serbs more hostile than ever, and giving final aid to Rumania, for which she received no thanks. Judging by the rules laid down by Machiavelli, and remembering that her most dangerous enemies are those within her own borders, Austria's policy was to have made friends with the Bulgars so as to have used them in case of need against the Serbs or Rumanians. Russia's policy has been more successful.

My observations on the war between the Balkan states and Turkey must necessarily be brief. Bulgaria bore the brunt of the campaign. Previously in the spring of 1912, an agreement had been made between Bulgaria and Serbia alone, of which the avowed object was to put an end to the intolerable anarchy and misrule in Macedonia. The premier of Bulgaria at the time was Gueshoff, a man as little likely to undertake an enterprise without careful consideration as any statesman I know—he is one of several in that country who owe much of their steadiness, judgment,

and high character to the influence of Robert College in Constantinople. No more careful man could have been chosen to pilot his country through the complications of an alliance than Gueshoff.

Bulgaria and Serbia were soon joined by Greece and Montenegro. The acquisition of Venizelos, the Greek premier, was important, for he represents the best type of Greek character. There is probably no nation which contains two such distinct types of men as does Greece. One part of the population, and that the largest, is noisy, blatant, boastful, and has never shown statesmanlike instinct or capacity either in the senate or in the field. The other is composed of men who are hard workers, who are thoughtful, cool, and silent; every capital of Europe has seen such Greeks enriching themselves by commerce and earning the respect of their neighbors. Venizelos belongs to this type, and the question which has interested on-lookers, and interests them still, is whether the mass of the nation will support him or clamor for the appointment of one who will earn their approval by doing what they wish. That is the pressing danger which now threatens Greece. In the campaign which began in the later months of 1912, Greece more than doubled her territory. There is some danger of underestimating her military successes in the war on account of the exaggerations in which the native and the European press usually speak of them. I agree with one of the leading Serbian generals that Greece has not done so much as she thinks she has, that the nation which did most was Bulgaria, and that Serbia has certainly surpassed Greece in both military ability and success.

By the agreement of 1912 between Bulgaria and Serbia, the object of the war was to be considered as accomplished when the Turks were driven out of Macedonia. The territory west of the river Vardar and north of the Struma as far as Ochrida and Dibra was to go to Bulgaria; in this the majority of the inhabitants were Bulgarians. For a

similar reason, the northern part of Macedonia, including what is known as "Old Serbia," was to be annexed to Serbia. The land between these was to be arbitrated on by the Czar. But Austria's declaration at an early date that Serbia would not be allowed to get to the Adriatic changed the situation. The war commenced, and, to the general surprise of Europe, the Turkish army was swept before the Bulgarians in the campaign around Kirk Killissi and Lilo Burgas. Thereupon, Russia notified the Bulgarian government that she could not allow Adrianople to become Bulgarian, and that her army would not be allowed to force the Chatalja lines which defend Constantinople. It is fair to Russia to believe that in this notification she was mainly anxious to prevent a European war. If Chatalja had been taken, Constantinople could hardly have resisted, and such a war might have been precipitated. Bulgaria accepted an armistice at Chatalja at the moment when she had reason to believe that she could obtain Adrianople from Turkey on the signature of a separate treaty with her: loyalty to her allies restrained her, for neither Janina nor Scutari had fallen.

Now, when it became known that Serbia would not be allowed a port on the Adriatic, Russia advised Bulgaria to give Serbia compensation in Macedonia. Bulgaria claimed execution of the treaty; Serbia its revision. The premiers of the two states, Passitch and Gueshoff, could probably have come to an agreement, but the military leaders on both sides opposed. The militarists triumphed, and thereupon Gueshoff resigned. Meanwhile Greece and Bulgaria were negotiating and soon fighting for the possession of Salonica. The war party in Sofia, intoxicated with its success, refused to come to an agreement. In sober truth, no government in Sofia could have stood if the army had not resisted the efforts of Greece to gain or retain Salonica. Greece joined with Serbia, with the result that there was a war between the allies in which Bulgaria was defeated.

Meanwhile, Rumania had been playing a watching game. As early as November, 1912, she had asked Bulgaria to surrender Silistria with about fifteen hundred square kilometres of territory around it, and in return had offered to send two *corps d'armes* and to lend two million pounds sterling to Bulgaria. Sofia hesitated. When the second war appeared inevitable, Rumania sent a note to the Powers and to Bulgaria, declaring that if war broke out, "Roumanie ne restera pas inactive." She renewed her demands. Daneff, the leader of the Bulgarian war party, bitterly opposed them. Each disputant sent delegates to the Czar, and an arrangement was arrived at which promised a peaceful solution. Commissioners were sent to mark the boundaries of the territory around Silistria to be ceded; but they quarrelled as to the centre from which a three kilometre radius was to be drawn. Rumania then sent a second note repeating her threat. King George declared to the delegates of the Balkan states, then in London, that a conflict among them for the spoils of war "would be a crime against humanity." But the war party in all the three Balkan states was now in the ascendant.

It is too soon to answer the question of who should bear the terrible responsibility for the re-opening of the conflict. It broke out with a virulence unseen in the first war. The results are well-known: Bulgarian troops had to leave Thrace; the Rumanians advanced to within a few miles of Sofia; the Turks had an easy march from Chatalja, and re-took Adrianople without opposition; and Bulgaria had to accept the conditions offered at Bucarest, which in view of her brilliant success in the war against Turkey must be regarded as humiliating. But the settlement arrived at in Bucarest cannot be regarded as likely to endure. Turkey still maintains a large army in the portion of Thrace left to her, and this with the object of retaining Adrianople. Bulgaria, which fought the most successfully in the first war, though she has obtained a port on the Ægean, has been

humiliated. It has been suggested that she will unite with Turkey to drive the Greeks out of Salonica. But the suggestion is only entertained by those who do not know the stuff of which Bulgarians are made. Already they are steadfastly at work to till their fields and make up for lost time. Serbia has not gained her port, though she has obtained a large section of country which by her agreement as well as by racial considerations ought to be Bulgarian. Greece in her northern acquisition has trouble before her and does not yet see a settlement with Turkey. Thus the inter-state quarrel was a misfortune to every state except perhaps Rumania, and not less to Turkey than to Bulgaria.

Turkey has, in fact, lost most by the recent wars. The area of the empire has been largely diminished: Tripoli in Africa is lost; Macedonia with Salonica, its important port, is gone, and so also are Janina, Monastir, Scutari, Cavalla, and Drama; Serbia has more than doubled its territory; Albania has been created an independent state; and Crete and nearly all the islands in the *Ægean* have been taken away. The questions which now become of interest are—Will the process of disintegration continue? Or will Turkey, which is now practically limited to Asia Minor and Arabia—all that remains to her in Europe being Constantinople and Thrace,—be able to concentrate her strength and to develop into a progressive state which can hold its own? For without such development she will disappear from the list of nations; the most thoughtful men among the Turks agree with Europeans who know the country that if the policy which the late Sultan Abdul Hamid pursued, had been continued, Turkey must soon have vanished.

Six years ago, however, on the twenty-fourth of July came a revolution which, before the year had passed, deposed Abdul Hamid, who is now a prisoner in a small palace on the Bosphorus. So long as he was on the throne he was hated by all except those who lived upon him, but he is now despised and

regarded as a neglectable factor. The Young Turks, officially known as the "Committee of Union and Progress," who had brought about the revolution wisely decided to let him live. One of them who is in a position to know told me recently that there is no need to trouble about his safe-keeping. "If the doors were left wide open," said my informant, "he would not venture out." He was deposed because all classes recognized that he was ruining the country. In his arrogance and suspicion of all men, he had come to believe that he alone possessed the art of statesmanship, and that his ministers, who were better educated and more experienced in affairs than he, were not to be trusted. Hence, when, in 1908, a few Young Turks decided to reëstablish the constitution, they had the sympathy of every section of the population of Turkey. They called together a parliament and established constitutional government in lieu of absolutism. They were inexperienced men and had to make use of those whose training in administration had been conducted on Abdul Hamid's methods. But numbers of these men were dismissed. Those who had flourished under his régime were disaffected, and on the thirteenth of April, 1909, an attempt was made to overthrow the Young Turks. It was led by a small party of the *Ulema*, corresponding to a priestly caste, and their battle-cry was for the "Sheriat" or sacred law. These reactionists had Constantinople in their power for several days, Abdul Hamid himself being unwilling to come forward as their ostensible leader but waiting upon events. Then Shevket pasha, the leader of the army in Salonica acting with the Young Turkey Committee in that city, led an army to the capital and, having captured it, formally deposed Abdul Hamid, and placed on the throne the present ruler, who took the title of Mehmet V. It is sufficient to say of him that he is a good constitutional ruler, of kindly disposition, and without the pretentiousness which characterized his predecessor.

From that time to the present, Young Turkey has been

in power. There have been various changes of ministers, but the power behind the throne has always been the Young Turkey party. They are not only in power, but though there is undoubtedly disaffection, there is no organized opposition. They have committed many blunders, have employed unconstitutional methods of government, and are even charged with having had recourse to assassination. Party feeling between them and their opponents in and out of the Chamber of Deputies runs high. The leaders and the opposition are too deadly in earnest for a display of sweet reasonableness, and there is an instinctive feeling even that they are fighting for their lives. In other words, the country is still in revolution.

Nevertheless, the Young Turks have accomplished much useful work. They are animated by patriotism, and their leaders at the beginning set before the country high ideals of government. The most conspicuous among them is Talaat bey. He is a Moslem, of strong personality, knows what he wants, but has an open mind. Without experience—he was a telegraph clerk until the revolution of 1908—every year has seen him develop. Of all the prominent men in the party, he apparently is the one with the soundest judgment, a man who can see both sides of a question, and who grows. Another eminent member of the government is Javid bey, whose gift is finance. He is a Moslem of Salonica of the curious Jewish sect known as “Dunmays” or “Crypto-Jews,” the descendants of the followers of a certain Sabatai Levy, who in the seventeenth century was regarded by his followers as the Messiah, but who accepted Islam, and thereby saved his life, as did his followers. Javid was at one time a teacher of the Turkish language in Robert College.

I have said that the Young Turks had ideals, but above all things they desired to compact the various discordant races in Turkey into one people to be known as “Osmanlis.” They worked strenuously to realize some of these ideals,

and in the capital especially have met with singular success. Those who knew the city six years ago are astonished at the results. Everything is now regulated by European time—that is, twelve o'clock is at mid-day instead of being as it was six years ago at sunset. The change makes punctuality possible. The thousands of street dogs, which made night hideous and clean streets impossible, have been destroyed. On all the principal streets, now properly paved, we have well-made side-walks, and the cleanliness of the streets compares favorably with that of the best European cities. A system of police or *gendarmerie* has been established, which not only works well but is gaining the confidence of the people. Narrow streets have been widened; the huge waste spaces in Stamboul, caused by three great fires since the revolution, and which in many places still resemble Pompeii in their desolation, have been re-planned with proper drainage. Nor are the improvements confined to the capital. The two most appreciated at large are freedom of travel and the almost complete absence of spies. We are all amazed at the increased movement of the population; the local trains and tram-cars have more than doubled their number of passengers. This year we have obtained electric lighting and telephones. Shops are kept open at least an hour later than before the revolution. The absence of spies makes men ready to discuss politics, to complain of their grievances, and to seek redress.

The reverse of this picture shows the blunders of the Young Turks. They restored the constitution and called a Chamber of Deputies; but the elections were gerrymandered. They spread a network of organization throughout the country, and in most cases their nominees were elected. Freedom of discussion, however, became the national educator. It struck at corruption, emphasized the evils from which the country was suffering, and showed us foreigners that they were not easily removed. Young Turkey had proclaimed equal justice to all irrespective of race or creed.

It soon found that the *vis inertiae* of the majority of the Moslems was a formidable obstacle. The first Sheik-ul-Islam after the revolution claimed that, according to the teaching of Islam, Christians ought to have equal rights with Moslems. He told me in the presence of three or four members of the higher *Ulema* and of three prominent Englishmen, that the want of liberality in the treatment of Christians during recent years was not only in violation of the teaching of the Prophet but of his practice and that of the early caliphs. Yet it soon became evident that whatever he and the Young Turk party might believe, the Moslem mob would not consent that their Christian fellow-subjects should have equal rights with them. Such equality was against their most cherished traditions.

Then there began a struggle which has not yet ended, and which has been greatly intensified by the late wars. When the conservative section of the party obtained the upper hand, the ancient privileges of the Christian churches were attacked. The party in power claimed that under the constitution there could be no privileges. All were equal before the law, and that law was the sacred law. The churches claim that their privileges, which have existed since 1453 and have been recognized by every sultan, were necessary, and that the practices of Islam and of Christianity differed so essentially that they must retain them. Bigamy for example, was a crime under Christian law but not punishable under Islamic. On these and other questions, disputes arose to put an end to the first harmony. While each party has tried to bring about a *modus vivendi*, new difficulties are constantly presenting themselves. These were largely increased by the bitter feeling against the Greeks occasioned by the late war, and especially by the savage treatment of them in Thrace during the last year. Their houses and lands were allowed to be seized by Moslem immigrants from Macedonia, and in spite of the remonstrances of the patriarch and of the embassies, the government was unable

or unwilling to prevent pillage and outrage. The patriarch on June eighth ordered all the Greek churches to be closed as his strongest means of protest, and a Moslem secret organization is directing a boycott of all Christians in the country. Thus religious equality for the present is not within sight.

Meanwhile, the process of what Lord Beaconsfield called "concentration" has reduced Turkey practically to Asia Minor. The Turks during the last twelve months have given more serious attention to establishing good government than ever before, and some of them have the healthy belief that this is their last chance of continuing in existence as a nation. Hitherto, scheme after scheme of reforms, some of them excellent, has been accepted by the Porte but only after having been largely whittled away. Once accepted, the reactionary element at the Porte endeavored assiduously and with success to render them useless, and Turkish reforms under the old régime had become farcical. When therefore we were informed a year ago that a new project was being drafted for Asia Minor but especially for the six or seven *vilayets*, or provinces, where the Armenians live, Christians and foreigners alike were skeptical.

After many changes a project is now approved by the Powers. The reforms are intended for seven *vilayets*,—Van, Bitlis, Erzeroum, Sivas, Harpout, Diarbekir, and Trebizond. An advisory Council is to be named in each *vilayet*. In Van and Bitlis, the Council will contain an equal number of Christians and Moslems. In the other *vilayets*, the representatives will be in proportion to the number of these bodies. At the head of the new organization, there are to be two General Inspectors whose duty it is to control the execution of the reforms. These officials are to be foreigners belonging to one of the smaller European states. The two already appointed are Mr. Westemenk, a Dutchman, and a Norwegian, Mr. Hoft. The first has had experience in Java, and both come to their task with excellent recommendations. The *gendarmérie*

system is to be reorganized under English and French officers of experience. General Baumann, a Frenchman with a German name, is placed at the head of all the *gendarmérie* in the empire. But the most important item in the project is the appointment of General Inspectors. Much depends on the character of the two persons named, and more perhaps on the way they are supported by the central government. The most hopeful feature in their instructions is that they are to have real power granted to them. This is already conferred on paper. Whether they will be honestly supported by the government remains to be seen. They are authorized, on their own initiative, to dismiss all officials except the governors, or *valis*, whom in the exercise of their unrestricted judgment they consider inefficient or corrupt. Even as to the *valis*, they have important rights. They are to report their complaints against a *vali* and their recommendation to the Minister of the Interior, and within four days the Minister is to communicate his decision. Each of the General Inspectors is to have assistants under his control.

At the time of writing, the detailed instructions and attributions of the Inspectors have not yet been drawn up. Moreover before the project can be put into execution, it must receive the sanction of the Chamber of Deputies. Many of the proposals require a change in the law; and one of the first duties of the Chamber, which met on the fourteenth of May, after twenty months' suspension, will be to consider a new law for the *vilayets*. As, however, the elections to the Chamber held last spring resulted in the appointment of a majority who were the nominees of the Young Turkey party, no one doubts that, if the party is in earnest, it can pass into law any bill which it proposes. The intention is to have similar reforms for all Asia Minor and Syria—Arabia may be disregarded though the Arabs have been and will continue to be troublesome.

Those who do not know Turkey can hardly realize what

difficulties will have to be contended against in carrying this project into execution. The chief of them arises from the traditional sentiment of hostility between Moslem and Christian. In none of the *vilayets* are the Christians in a majority; yet Christians, Armenians and Greeks alike, are from causes which need not be here examined of superior intelligence and more industrious than their Moslem neighbors. And it will be difficult indeed to persuade or to force the provincial Turk to believe that the new ruler is in earnest in trying to establish that equality between Christian and Moslem which their instinct, their tradition, their incapacity, and their Moslem teaching have led them to believe ought not to exist. The teaching and tradition of centuries are not to be lightly put aside. It is to be expected that people with such traditions will meet every effort to grant equality of rights to the Christians with stolid resistance.

The remarkable ignorance of the Moslem population is another difficulty. It would be easy to fill many pages with coffee-house babble illustrating its colossal character. In village belief, the sultan is the lord of the world; occasionally some of his vassals like the Czar or the King of England give him trouble. It is no answer to say that the Turks in the towns are not so ignorant, for Turkey is an essentially agricultural or pastoral country. In the matter of education the Turk in comparison with every Christian race in the country is at great disadvantage on account of the difficulty of Turkish written characters. Most of the thirty-two letters of his alphabet have three or four separate forms according as they are used at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the word; whereas Armenian is as phonetically correct as Italian or German, and modern Greek is much easier than classical Greek.

But ignorance combined with poverty is a still greater obstacle to the progress of reforms. Now, the poverty of Asia Minor is much more serious than is generally supposed.

The larger portion of the country is a table-land between 2,000 and 3,000 feet high which for agricultural purposes is very poor. Its poverty is also due in part to the fact that it has been subjected during the last 3,000 years to periodic invasions by nomad races from the North, caused largely by physical conditions. Some of the nomads have settled down, but they make bad settlers. They want little, are idle, and render property insecure. But the point to which I wish to call attention is that physical causes have helped to make and keep the majority of the Moslems of Asia Minor lazy and poor—I do not stop to inquire how far the teaching of Islam, that is, of resignation, is a contributory cause of a general disinclination to work. With fairly good soil and a semi-tropical sun, almost any crops can be grown provided there is rain. But the rain-fall is irregular, and an excellent harvest may be followed by almost rainless years when the yield is hardly equal to the seed which has been sown. Happily, the construction of railways will take away one great cause of non-production in Asia Minor, the difficulty of getting produce to market.

Another and an appalling difficulty with which the Young Turks will have to deal in the future is the drain upon their resources caused by their large army. The whole population of Asia Minor is probably about eighteen millions. I take no account of the people of Arabia, numbering about two millions, since for military purposes they hardly exist. Of these eighteen millions, there are upwards of four millions who profess Christianity. Of these the Greeks, excluding the inhabitants of the islands, number about two millions and the Armenians one and three-quarters millions. This is the population on which Turkey has to depend for its army. Every Ottoman subject whether Moslem or Christian, not incapacitated by youth, age, or infirmity, or being a *mollah*—priest or teacher,—is to be a soldier. Exemption from military service during time of peace may be had on payment of fifty Turkish pounds,

but not during time of war. Students of the university or approved high schools serve for one year only. The result of the new plans is that in time of peace there always will be 150,000 men under arms; in time of war there will be not less than three-quarters of a million. A year ago there were probably 600,000 men called up. There are still 200,000 soldiers in what remains of European Turkey, and the belief is that this number will be there retained. In the army there are now also about 10,000 Armenians. The withdrawal of so large a number of men from the cultivation of the soil and the cost of their equipment and maintenance are heavy charges for so poor a country as Turkey. The government admits that its estimate of six millions sterling for the year is insufficient, and to meet it recourse will have to be made to foreign loans and a large increase in the taxation of the poverty-stricken country. But the evil does not end there. The commonest campaigns, which are against the Arabs, are deadly, and many of those who return from any campaign are not merely diseased but have become demoralized and incapable of steady work.

Time only will show whether these difficulties can be overcome, whether the Moslem people will permit the reforms to become effective, or can be coerced. In favor of the affirmative answer, are to be put the facts that the reforms have not been dictated to the Porte by any foreign Power and that Young Turkey believes that a Damocles sword is hanging over the country, which will inevitably fall if reforms are not executed. Young Turkey is fighting against ignorance, poverty, and fanaticism, and deserves credit for working hard to provide elementary education as the best remedy. For the present its great want is of teachers.

In the towns and especially in the capital, I believe that public opinion will be favorable to the reforms. If so, this will be due largely to the influence of Robert College and similar establishments among men, and to the support of Turkish

women. Amongst the latter, there has been since the revolution a remarkable movement in favor of progress. This has been largely contributed to by the American College for Girls, which under the presidency of Dr. Mary M. Patrick has exerted a profound influence upon girls of many nationalities but especially upon Turks. The college is already an exceptionally strong force in the Near East, where such an institution is of even more value for the sentiments it inspires than for its direct teaching. Its graduates and pupils have become a leaven which has been working especially among Turkish women with far-reaching results. They will all be on the side of reform.

All things considered I believe that the signs are hopeful. The Young Turks intend to put the valuable scheme of reform into operation. They mean to do what their predecessors only promised. If they can overcome the prejudice of the Moslem mob against granting rights to Christians, a Turkish empire may be consolidated in Asia Minor and become a comparatively progressive state. There is also hope, perhaps, in the example of Italy. Arnold of Rugby, the historian of the Roman empire, writing about 1840, declared after a visit to Italy that he saw no sign which led him to believe that its regeneration was possible. Nevertheless, there the hopeless has been gloriously achieved. Moreover, the Young Turks believe in themselves, and have ideals for the realization of which they are striving. I venture to conclude by saying that they will succeed if they can admit Christians to a real equality with Moslems, if they can cause justice to be impartially administered to all subjects irrespective of race or creed, and if they can produce an educated people. If they fail to do this, the world will see Asia Minor and Arabia partitioned among the European Powers.