

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE TURK REVERTS TO THE ANCESTRAL TYPE

The withdrawal of the Allied fleet from the Dardanelles had consequences which the world does not yet completely understand. The practical effect of the event, as I have said, was to isolate the Turkish Empire from all the world excepting Germany and Austria. England, France, Russia, and Italy, which for a century had held a restraining hand over the Ottoman Empire, had finally lost all power to influence or control. The Turks now perceived that a series of dazzling events had changed them from cringing dependents of the European Powers into free agents. For the first time in two centuries they could now live their national life according to their own inclinations, and govern their peoples according to their own will. The first expression of this rejuvenated national life was an episode which, so far as I know, is the most terrible in the history of the world. New Turkey, freed from European tutelage, celebrated its national rebirth by murdering not far from a million of its own subjects.

I can hardly exaggerate the effect which the repulse of the Allied fleet produced upon the Turks. They believed that they had won the really great decisive battle of the war. For several centuries, they said, the British fleet had victoriously sailed the seas and had now met its first serious reverse at the hands of the Turks. In the first moments of their pride, the Young Turk leaders saw visions of the complete resurrection of their empire. What had for two centuries been a decaying nation had suddenly started on a new and glorious life. In their pride and arrogance the Turks began to look with disdain upon the people that had taught them what they knew of modern warfare, and nothing angered them so much as any suggestion that they owed any part of their success to their German allies.

"Why should we feel any obligation to the Germans?" Enver would say to me. "What have they done for us which compares with what we have done for them? They have lent us some money and sent us a few officers, it is true, but see what we have done! We have defeated the British fleet---something which neither the Germans nor any other nation could do. We have stationed armies on the Caucasian front, and so have kept busy large bodies of Russian troops that would have been used on the western front. Similarly we have compelled England to keep large armies in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, and in that way we have weakened the Allied armies in France. No, the Germans could never have achieved their military successes without us; the shoe of obligation is entirely on their foot."

This conviction possessed the leaders of the Union and Progress Party and now began to have a determining effect upon Turkish national life and Turkish policy. Essentially the Turk is a bully and a coward; he is brave as a lion when things are going his way, but cringing, abject, and nerveless when reverses are overwhelming him. And now that the fortunes of war were apparently favouring the empire, I began to see an entirely new Turk unfolding before my eyes. The hesitating and fearful Ottoman, feeling his way cautiously amid the mazes of European diplomacy, and seeking opportunities to find an advantage for himself in the divided counsels of the European powers, gave place to an upstanding, almost dashing figure, proud and assertive, determined to live his own life and absolutely contemptuous of his Christian foes. I was really witnessing a remarkable development in race psychology---an almost classical instance of reversion to type. The ragged, unkempt Turk of the twentieth century was vanishing and in his place was appearing the Turk of the fourteenth and the fifteenth, the Turk who had swept out of his Asiatic fastnesses, conquered all the powerful peoples in his way, and founded in Asia, Africa, and Europe one of the most extensive empires that history has known. If we are properly to appreciate this new Talaat and Enver and the events which now took place, we must understand the Turk who, under Osman and his successors, exercised this mighty but devastating influence in the world. We must realize that the basic fact underlying the Turkish mentality is its utter contempt for all other races. A fairly insane pride is the element that largely explains this strange human species. The common term applied by the Turk to the Christian is "dog," and in his estimation this is no mere rhetorical figure; he actually looks upon his European neighbours as far less worthy of consideration than his own domestic animals. "My son," an old Turk once said, "do you see that herd of swine? Some are white, some are black, some are large, some are small---they differ from each other in some respects, but they are all swine. So it is with Christians. Be not deceived, my son. These Christians may wear fine clothes, their women may be very beautiful to look upon; their skins are white and splendid; many of them are very intelligent and they build wonderful cities and create what seem

to be great states. But remember that underneath all this dazzling exterior they are all the same---they are, all swine."

Practically all foreigners, while in the presence of a Turk, are conscious of this attitude. The Turk may be obsequiously polite, but there is invariably an almost unconscious feeling that he is mentally shrinking from his Christian friend as something unclean. And this fundamental conviction for centuries directed the Ottoman policy toward its subject peoples. This wild horde swept from the plains of Central Asia and, like a whirlwind, overwhelmed the nations of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor; it conquered Egypt, Arabia, and practically all of northern Africa and then poured into Europe, crushed the Balkan nations, occupied a large part of Hungary, and even established the outposts of the Ottoman Empire in the southern part of Russia. So far as I can discover, the Ottoman Turks had only one great quality, that of military genius. They had several military leaders of commanding ability, and the early conquering Turks were brave, fanatical, and tenacious fighters, just as their descendants are to-day. I think that these old Turks present the most complete illustration in history of the brigand idea in politics. They were lacking in what we may call the fundamentals of a civilized community. They had no alphabet and no art of writing; no books, no poets, no art, and no architecture; they built no cities and they established no lasting state. They knew no law except the rule of might, and they had practically no agriculture and no industrial organization. They were simply wild and marauding horsemen, whose one conception of tribal success was to pounce upon people who were more civilized than themselves and plunder them. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries these tribes overran the cradles of modern civilization, which have given Europe its religion and, to a large extent, its civilization. At that time these territories were the seats of many peaceful and prosperous nations. The Mesopotamian valley supported a large industrious agricultural population; Bagdad was one of the largest and most flourishing cities in existence; Constantinople had a greater population than Rome, and the Balkan region and Asia Minor contained several powerful states. Over all this part of the world the Turk now swept as a huge, destructive force. Mesopotamia in a few years became a desert; the great cities of the Near East were reduced to misery, and the subject peoples became slaves. Such graces of civilization as the Turk has acquired in five centuries have practically all been taken from the subject peoples whom he so greatly despises. His religion comes from the Arabs; his language has acquired a certain literary value by borrowing certain Arabic and Persian elements; and his writing is Arabic. Constantinople's finest architectural monument, the Mosque of St. Sophia, was originally a Christian church, and all so-called Turkish architecture is derived from the Byzantine. The mechanism of business and industry has always rested in the hands of the subject peoples, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and Arabs. The Turks have learned little of European art or science, they have established very few educational institutions, and illiteracy is the prevailing rule.

The result is that poverty has attained a degree of sordidness and misery in the Ottoman Empire which is almost unparalleled elsewhere. The Turkish peasant lives in a mud hut; he sleeps on a dirt floor; he has no chairs, no tables, no eating utensils, no clothes except the few scant garments which cover his back and which he usually wears for many years.

In the course of time these Turks might learn certain things from their European and Arab neighbours, but there was one idea which they could never even faintly grasp. They could not understand that a conquered people were anything except slaves. When they took possession of a land, they found it occupied by a certain number of camels, horses, buffaloes, dogs, swine, and human beings. Of all these living things the object that physically most resembled themselves they regarded as the least important. It became a common saying with them that a horse or a camel was far more valuable than a man; these animals cost money, whereas "infidel Christians" were plentiful in the Ottoman countries and could easily be forced to labour. It is true that the early Sultans gave the subject peoples and the Europeans in the empire certain rights, but these in themselves really reflected the contempt in which all non-Moslems were held. I have already described the "Capitulations," under which foreigners in Turkey had their own courts, prisons, post offices, and other institutions. Yet the early sultans gave these privileges not from a spirit of tolerance, but merely because they looked upon the Christian nations as unclean and therefore unfit to have any contact with the Ottoman administrative and judicial system. The sultans similarly erected the several peoples, such as the Greeks and the Armenians, into separate "millets," or nations, not because they desired to promote their independence and welfare, but because they regarded them as vermin, and therefore disqualified for membership in the Ottoman state. The attitude of the Government toward their Christian subjects was illustrated by certain regulations which limited their freedom of action. The buildings in which Christians lived should not be conspicuous and their churches should have no belfry.

Christians could not ride a horse in the city, for that was the exclusive right of the noble Moslem. The Turk had the right to test the sharpness of his sword upon the neck of any Christian.

Imagine a great government year in and year out maintaining this attitude toward many millions of its own subjects! And for centuries the Turks simply lived like parasites upon these overburdened and industrious people. They taxed them to economic extinction, stole their most beautiful daughters and forced them into their harems, took Christian male infants by the hundreds of thousands and brought them up as Moslem soldiers. I have no intention of describing the terrible vassalage and oppression that went on for five centuries; my purpose is merely to emphasize this innate attitude of the Moslem Turk to people not of his own race and religion---that they are not human beings with rights, but merely chattels, which may be permitted to live when they promote the interest of their masters, but which may be pitilessly destroyed when they have ceased to be useful. This attitude is intensified by a total disregard for human life and an intense delight in inflicting physical human suffering which are not unusually the qualities of primitive peoples.

Such were the mental characteristics of the Turk in his days of military greatness. In recent times his attitude toward foreigners and his subject peoples had superficially changed. His own military decline and the ease with which the infidel nations defeated his finest armies had apparently given the haughty descendants of Osman a respect at least for their prowess. The rapid disappearance of his own empire in a hundred years, the creation out of the Ottoman Empire of new states like Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Rumania, and the wonderful improvement which had followed the destruction of the Turkish yoke in these benighted lands, may have increased the Ottoman hatred for the unbeliever, but at least they had a certain influence in opening his eyes to his importance. Many Turks also now received their education in European universities; they studied in their professional schools, and they became physicians, surgeons, lawyers, engineers, and chemists of the modern kind. However much the more progressive Moslems might despise their Christian associates, they could not ignore the fact that the finest things, in this temporal world at least, were the products of European and American civilization.

And now that one development of modern history which seemed to be least understandable to the Turk began to force itself upon the consciousness of the more intelligent and progressive. Certain leaders arose who began to speak surreptitiously of such things as "Constitutionalism," "Liberty," "Self-government," and to whom the Declaration of Independence contained certain truths that might have a value even for Islam. These daring spirits began to dream of overturning the autocratic Sultan and of substituting a parliamentary system for his irresponsible rule. I have already described the rise and fall of this Young Turk movement under such leaders as Talaat, Enver, Djemal, and their associates in the Committee of Union and Progress. The point which I am emphasizing here is that this movement presupposed a complete transformation of Turkish mentality, especially in its attitude toward subject peoples. No longer, under the reformed Turkish state, were Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, and Jews to be regarded as "filthy giaours." All these peoples were henceforth to have equal rights and equal duties. A general love feast now followed the establishment of the new régime, and scenes of almost frenzied reconciliation, in which Turks and Armenians embraced each other publicly, apparently signaled the absolute union of the long antagonistic peoples. The Turkish leaders, including Talaat and Enver, visited Christian churches and sent forth prayers of thanksgiving for the new order, and went to Armenian cemeteries to shed tears of retribution over the bones of the martyred Armenians who lay there. Armenian priests reciprocally paid their tributes to the Turks in Mohammedan mosques. Enver Pasha visited several Armenian schools, telling the children that the old days of Moslem-Christian strife had passed forever and that the two peoples were now to live together as brothers and sisters. There were cynics who smiled at all these demonstrations and yet one development encouraged even them to believe that an earthly paradise had arrived. All through the period of domination only the master Moslem had been permitted to bear arms and serve in the Ottoman army. To be a soldier was an occupation altogether too manly and glorious for the despised Christian. But now the Young Turks encouraged all Christians to arm, and enrolled them in the army on an equality with Moslems. These Christians fought, both as officers and soldiers, in the Italian and the Balkan wars, winning high praise from the Turkish generals for their valour and skill. Armenian leaders had figured conspicuously in the Young Turk movement; these men apparently believed that a constitutional Turkey was possible. They were conscious of their own intellectual and industrial superiority to the Turks, and knew that they could prosper in the Ottoman Empire if left alone, whereas, under European control, they would have greater difficulty in meeting the competition of the more rigorous European colonists who might come in. With the deposition of

the Red Sultan, Abdul Hamid, and the establishment of a constitutional system, the Armenians now for the first time in several centuries felt themselves to be free men.

But, as I have already described, all these aspirations vanished like a dream. Long before the European War began, the Turkish democracy had disappeared. The power of the new Sultan had gone, and the hopes of regenerating Turkey on modern lines had gone also, leaving only a group of individuals, headed by Talaat and Enver, actually in possession of the state. Having lost their democratic aspirations these men now supplanted them with a new national conception. In place of a democratic constitutional state they resurrected the idea of Pan-Turkism; in place of equal treatment of all Ottomans, they decided to establish a country exclusively for Turks. I have called this a new conception; yet it was new only to the individuals who then controlled the destiny of the empire, for, in reality, it was simply an attempt to revive the most barbaric ideas of their ancestors. It represented, as I have said, merely an atavistic reversion to the original Turk. We now saw that the Turkish leaders, in talking about liberty, equality, fraternity, and constitutionalism, were merely children repeating phrases; that they had used the word "democracy" merely as a ladder by which to climb to power. After five hundred years' close contact with European civilization, the Turk remained precisely the same individual as the one who had emerged from the steppes of Asia in the Middle Ages. He was clinging just as tenaciously as his ancestors to that conception of a state as consisting of a few master individuals whose right it is to enslave and plunder and maltreat any peoples whom they can subject to their military control. Though Talaat and Enver and Djemal all came of the humblest families, the same fundamental ideas of master and slave possessed them that formed the statecraft of Osman and the early Sultans. We now discovered that a paper constitution and even tearful visits to Christian churches and cemeteries could not uproot the inborn preconception of this nomadic tribe that there are only two kinds of people in the world---the conquering and the conquered.

When the Turkish Government abrogated the Capitulations, and in this way freed themselves from the domination of the foreign powers, they were merely taking one step toward realizing this Pan-Turkish ideal. I have alluded to the difficulties which I had with them over the Christian schools. Their determination to uproot these, or at least to transform them into Turkish institutions, was merely another detail in the same racial progress. Similarly, they attempted to make all foreign business houses employ only Turkish labour, insisting that they should discharge their Greek, Armenian, and Jewish clerks, stenographers, workmen, and other employees. They ordered all foreign houses to keep their books in Turkish; they wanted to furnish employment for Turks, and enable them to acquire modern business methods. The Ottoman Government even refused to have any dealings with the representative of the largest Austrian munition maker unless he admitted a Turk as a partner. They developed a mania for suppressing all languages except Turkish. For decades French had been the accepted language of foreigners in Constantinople; most street signs were printed in both French and Turkish. One morning the astonished foreign residents discovered that all these French signs had been removed and that the names of streets, the directions on street cars, and other public notices, appeared only in those strange Turkish characters, which very few of them understood. Great confusion resulted from this change, but the ruling powers refused to restore the detested foreign language.

These leaders not only reverted to the barbaric conceptions of their ancestors, but they went to extremes that had never entered the minds of the early sultans. Their fifteenth and sixteenth century predecessors treated the subject peoples as dirt under their feet, yet they believed that they had a certain usefulness and did not disdain to make them their slaves. But this Committee of Union and Progress, led by Talaat and Enver, now decided to do away with them altogether. The old conquering Turks had made the Christians their servants, but their parvenu descendants bettered their instruction, for they determined to exterminate them wholesale and Turkify the empire by massacring the non-Moslem elements. Originally this was not the statesmanlike conception of Talaat and Enver; the man who first devised it was one of the greatest monsters known to history, the "Red Sultan," Abdul Hamid. This man came to the throne in 1876, at a critical period in Turkish history. In the first two years of his reign, he lost Bulgaria as well as important provinces in the Caucasus, his last remaining vestiges of sovereignty in Montenegro, Serbia, and Rumania, and all his real powers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Greece had long since become an independent nation, and the processes that were to wrench Egypt from the Ottoman Empire had already begun. As the Sultan took stock of his inheritance, he could easily foresee the day when all the rest of his domain would pass into the hand of the infidel. What had caused this disintegration of this extensive Turkish Empire? The real cause, of course, lay deep in the character of the Turk, but Abdul Hamid saw only the more obvious fact that the intervention of the great European Powers had

brought relief to these imprisoned nations. Of all the new kingdoms which had been carved out of the Sultan's dominions, Serbia---let us remember this fact to her everlasting honour---is the only one that has won her own independence. Russia, France, and Great Britain have set free all the rest. And what had happened several times before might happen again. There still remained one compact race in the Ottoman Empire that had national aspirations and national potentialities. In the northeastern part of Asia Minor, bordering on Russia, there were six provinces in which the Armenians formed the largest element in the population. From the time of Herodotus this portion of Asia has borne the name of Armenia. The Armenians of the present day are the direct descendants of the people who inhabited the country three thousand years ago. Their origin is so ancient that it is lost in fable and mystery. There are still undeciphered cuneiform inscriptions on the rocky hills of Van, the largest Armenian city, that have led certain scholars---though not many, I must admit---to identify the Armenian race with the Hittites of the Bible. What is definitely known about the Armenians, however, is that for ages they have constituted the most civilized and most industrious race in the eastern section of the Ottoman Empire. From their mountains they have spread over the Sultan's dominions, and form a considerable element in the population of all the large cities. Everywhere they are known for their industry, their intelligence, and their decent and orderly lives. They are so superior to the Turks intellectually and morally that much of the business and industry had passed into their hands. With the Greeks, the Armenians constitute the economic strength of the empire. These people became Christians in the fourth century and established the Armenian Church as their state religion. This is said to be the oldest Christian Church in existence.

In face of persecutions which have had no parallel elsewhere these people have clung to their early Christian faith with the utmost tenacity. For fifteen hundred years they have lived there in Armenia, a little island of Christians surrounded by backward peoples of hostile religion and hostile race. Their long existence has been one unending martyrdom. The territory which they inhabit forms the connecting link between Europe and Asia, and all the Asiatic invasions---Saracens, Tartars, Mongols, Kurds, and Turks---have passed over their peaceful country. For centuries they have thus been the Belgium of the East. Through all this period the Armenians have regarded themselves not as Asiatics, but as Europeans. They speak an Indo-European language, their racial origin is believed by scholars to be Aryan, and the fact that their religion is the religion of Europe has always made them turn their eyes westward. And out of that western country, they have always hoped, would some day come the deliverance that would rescue them from their murderous masters. And now, as Abdul Hamid, in 1876, surveyed his shattered domain, he saw that its most dangerous spot was Armenia. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that these Armenians, like the Rumanians, the Bulgarians, the Greeks, and the Serbians, aspired to restore their independent medieval nation, and he knew that Europe and America sympathized with this ambition. The Treaty of Berlin, which had definitely ended the Turco-Russian War, contained an article which gave the European Powers a protecting hand over the Armenians. How could the Sultan free himself permanently from this danger? An enlightened administration, which would have transformed the Armenians into free men and made them safe in their lives and property and civil and religious rights, would probably have made them peaceful and loyal subjects. But the Sultan could not rise to such a conception of statesmanship as this. Instead, Abdul Hamid apparently thought that there was only one way of ridding Turkey of the Armenian problem---and that was to rid her of the Armenians. The physical destruction of 2,000,000 men, women, and children by massacres, organized and directed by the state, seemed to be the one sure way of forestalling the further disruption of the Turkish Empire.

And now for nearly thirty years Turkey gave the world an illustration of government by massacre. We in Europe and America heard of these events when they reached especially monstrous proportions, as they did in 1895-96, when nearly 200,000 Armenians were most atrociously done to death. But through all these years the existence of the Armenians was one continuous nightmare. Their property was stolen, their men were murdered, their women were ravished, their young girls were kidnapped and forced to live in Turkish harems. Yet Abdul Hamid was not able to accomplish his full purpose. Had he had his will, he would have massacred the whole nation in one hideous orgy. He attempted to exterminate the Armenians in 1895 and 1896, but found certain insuperable obstructions to his scheme. Chief of these were England, France, and Russia. These atrocities called Gladstone, then eighty-six years old, from his retirement, and his speeches, in which he denounced the Sultan as "the great assassin," aroused the whole world to the enormities that were taking place. It became apparent that unless the Sultan desisted, England, France, and Russia would intervene, and the Sultan well knew, that, in case this intervention took place, such remnants of Turkey as had survived earlier partitions would disappear. Thus Abdul Hamid had to abandon his satanic enterprise of destroying a whole race by murder, yet Armenia continued to suffer the slow agony of pitiless persecution. Up to the outbreak of the

European War not a day had passed in the Armenian vilayets without its outrages and its murders. The Young Turk régime, despite its promises of universal brotherhood, brought no respite to the Armenians. A few months after the love feastings already described, one of the worst massacres took place at Adana, in which 35,000 people were destroyed.

And now the Young Turks, who had adopted so many of Abdul Hamid's ideas, also made his Armenian policy their own. Their passion for Turkifying the nation seemed to demand logically the extermination of all Christians---Greeks, Syrians, and Armenians. Much as they admired the Mohammedan conquerors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they stupidly believed that these great warriors had made one fatal mistake, for they had had it in their power completely to obliterate the Christian populations and had neglected to do so. This policy in their opinion was a fatal error of statesmanship and explained all the woes from which Turkey has suffered in modern times. Had these old Moslem chieftains, when they conquered Bulgaria, put, all the Bulgarians to the sword, and peopled the Bulgarian country with Moslem Turks, there would never have been any modern Bulgarian problem and Turkey would never have lost this part of her empire. Similarly, had they destroyed all the Rumanians, Serbians, and Greeks, the provinces which are now occupied by these races would still have remained integral parts of the Sultan's domain. They felt that the mistake had been a terrible one, but that something might be saved from the ruin. They would destroy all Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, and other Christians, move Moslem families into their homes and into their farms, and so make sure that these territories would not similarly be taken away from Turkey. In order to accomplish this great reform, it would not be necessary to murder every living Christian. The most beautiful and healthy Armenian girls could be taken, converted forcibly to Mohammedanism, and made the wives or concubines of devout followers of the Prophet. Their children would then automatically become Moslems and so strengthen the empire, as the Janissaries had strengthened it formerly. These Armenian girls represent a high type of womanhood and the Young Turks, in their crude, intuitive way, recognized that the mingling of their blood with the Turkish population would exert a eugenic influence upon the whole. Armenian boys of tender years could be taken into Turkish families and be brought up in ignorance of the fact that they were anything but Moslems. These were about the only elements, however, that could make any valuable contributions to the new Turkey which was now being planned. Since all precautions must be taken against the development of a new generation of Armenians, it would be necessary to kill outright all men who were in their prime and thus capable of propagating the accursed species. Old men and women formed no great danger to the future of Turkey, for they had already fulfilled their natural function of leaving descendants; still they were nuisances and therefore should be disposed of.

Unlike Abdul Hamid, the Young Turks found themselves in a position where they could carry out this holy enterprise. Great Britain, France, and Russia had stood in the way of their predecessor. But now these obstacles had been removed. The Young Turks, as I have said, believed that they had defeated these nations and that they could therefore no longer interfere with their internal affairs. Only one power could successfully raise objections and that was Germany. In 1898, when all the rest of Europe was ringing with Gladstone's denunciations and demanding intervention, Kaiser Wilhelm the Second had gone to Constantinople, visited Abdul Hamid., pinned his finest decorations on that bloody tyrant's breast, and kissed him on both cheeks. The same Kaiser who had done this in 1898 was still sitting on the throne in 1915, and was now Turkey's ally. Thus for the first time in two centuries the Turks, in 1915, had their Christian populations utterly at their mercy. The time had 'finally come to make Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks.