

# **THE ARMENIANS**

*By*

**C.F. DIXON-JOHNSON**

*“Whosoever does wrong to a Christian  
or a Jew shall find me his accuser on  
the day of judgment.” (EL KORAN)*

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## Preface

*The following pages were first read as a paper before the "Société d'Etudes Ethnographiques." They have since been amplified and are now being published at the request of a number of friends, who believe that the public should have an opportunity of judging whether or not "the Armenian Question" has another side than that which has been recently so assiduously promulgated throughout the Western World.*

*Though the championship of Greek, Bulgarian and other similar "Christian, civilized methods of fighting," as contrasted with "Moslem atrocities" in the Balkans and Asia Minor, has been so strenuously undertaken by Lord Bryce and others, the more recent developments in the Near East may perhaps already have opened the eyes of a great many thinking people to the realization that, in sacrificing the traditional friendship of the Turk to all this more or less sectarian clamor, British diplomacy has really done nothing better than to exchange the solid and advantageous reality for a most elusive and unreliable, if not positively dangerous, set of shadows.*

*It seems illogical that the same party which recalled the officials (and among them our present War Minister) appointed by Lord Beaconsfield to assist the Turkish Government in reforming their administration and collecting the revenue in Asia Minor, and which on the advent of the Young Turks refused to lend British Administrators to whom ample and plenary powers were assured, should now, in its eagerness to vilify the Turk, lose sight of their own mistakes which have led in the main to the conditions of which it complains, and should so utterly condemn its own former policy. Whatever hardships the Armenians may within recent years have suffered, the responsibility for them must surely to a great extent rest with the well-meaning idealists who, instead of trying to improve existing conditions, inspired their helpless dupes with impracticable aspirations which were bound to lead to disaster.*

*The writer desires to thank those authors and travelers whose works he has so freely quoted, and upon whose information he has relied for the historical and geographical notes, as well as Professor Henry Leon, Mr. Robert Fraser, and other friends, who have afforded him their most valuable assistance.*

*The reasons for dealing with the subject at this particular juncture are given in the text and will, he hopes, prove satisfactory to the reader.*

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Croft-on-Tees, Yorkshire

February, 1916.

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# THE ARMENIANS

## I.

The earliest history of Armenia, as Kurdistan was called previous to its conquest by the Osmanli Turks, is lost in the mists of mythology. But even in the pre-Persian era we find Armenia existing as a separate state, populated by a number of fierce and diverse tribes who were continually contending amongst themselves, the victor for the time being imposing its own chieftain as suzerain over the remainder. These tribes differed greatly in their racial characteristics, the main divisions being the Kurds, who were then called Karduchians, the Chaldeans, from whom the Nestorians are probably descended, and the Haikians. The latter race, who are known to us today as Armenians, although they still retain the name Haik amongst themselves, do not appear to have had a common origin. They may be divided, at the present time, into two distinct groups: the round-headed and the long-headed. Both, as a rule, are of short stature, with thick necks, and rather solidly built. Many of them possess peculiarly semitic features, amongst these the prominent nose which is generally considered a characteristic of the Jew. This fact has led to some ethnologists to advance the theory that one of the lost tribes of Israel wandered to the shores of Lake Van and settled there, intermarrying with the Haikian inhabitants, while others assign these physiological characteristics to the incursion of certain Afghan tribes. It is worthy of note in connection with this latter theory, that the Afghans are likewise, by some writers, believed to be descendants of one of the lost tribes.

If the theory that the Armenian race is descended from one of the missing tribes be correct, it is not improbable, judging from their aptitude in financial affairs and the manner in which they have made usury and money-changing a fine art, that these people may be the lineal descendants of the money-changers whom Christ scourged and drove from the Temple at Jerusalem. Even at the present day most of the *sarafs*, or money-lenders and changers, in the Ottoman Empire are Armenians, and their sharp practice and unscrupulousness in commercial pursuits is so notorious that it has given rise to the saying: "It takes ten Turks to cheat one Jew, ten Jews to cheat one Greek, but twenty Greeks assisted by seven Jews and five Turks to cheat one Armenian."

It would be a tedious endeavor to follow the changes in the rulers whom the alternate ascendancies of Persia, Parthia, Greece, Rome and Byzantium subsequently imposed upon the territory of Armenia. The court, which at one time was modeled on that of Persia, became a center of intrigue. The rulers of the contending Empires controlled the destinies of the kingdom by political rather than by forcible means, finding it easier, as a rule, to remove an unamenable king by assassination, bribery, or by fomenting revolution, than by sending armed forces into an inaccessible country populated by fierce tribes. For this reason the Kings of Armenia practically became puppets in the hands of their more powerful neighbors.

The most important event in the early history of Armenia came with the accession in 284 A.D. of Diocletian as Emperor of Rome. Diocletian, desirous of establishing his influence there, sent from Rome a young Armenian by name of Tiridates, the last living representative of the Armenian branch of the Arsacid dynasty, which was originally of Persian origin. Tiridates rallied the nobles, and supported by them and a

few Roman troops who had accompanied him, drove out the Persian governors. A decade or so after being proclaimed king, Tiridates became a convert to Christianity, and with the help of his cousin, St. Gregory the Illuminator, established the Christian faith in Armenia.

The priestly families, when they heard that the new religion required no sacrifices, were much perturbed and threatened violent opposition. But astute St. Gregory was equal to the occasion. He not only promised that the sacrifices should continue, but that the priestly share of the slaughtered animals should be greater than ever before, and he furthermore assured to them the hereditary succession of the priesthood. Thus thoroughly satisfied, the priests unanimously adopted the new doctrines and became servants of the new religion.

The change was nominal rather than real; the new religion was grafted on to the old, and ancient rites were maintained under fresh names. In order to ensure to the priesthood their full share of the slaughtered animals, it was ordered that no animal except those slain in the chase should be killed by anyone but the priests themselves. Animal sacrifice still forms an important part of the ritual of the Gregorian, or, as it is called, the Armenian Church. Even today the priests are able to terrify recalcitrant members of the church by threatening to withhold the *matal* or sacrifice made for the ablution of sins after death.

In the cities and plains, where the population was engaged in commerce, agriculture and other peaceful pursuits, St. Gregory, with the aid of his newly converted priests, had little difficulty in imposing the new religion. The people, freed by the apostasy of the priesthood, were glad to rid themselves of the Zoroastrian religion, which they disliked because it had been imposed upon them under the domination of the Persians.

It should be noted that what is termed the Orthodox Armenian Church stands apart and distinct, both in its doctrines and ritual, from either the Greek or Protestant Churches. It was not represented at the Council of Chalcedon and never signified its acceptance of, or adherence to the doctrines there promulgated. It holds to a certain extent what is known as the Monophysite doctrine: that the mortal body of Jesus was incorruptible. Many of the Orthodox Armenian clergy still cling to the tradition that after the entombment of Jesus His body was conveyed by angels to Mount Ararat and deposited beside the remains of Noah's Ark, which, according to them, are still to be found there. During the period when He made Himself visible to His disciples, as related in the New Testament, Christ again assumed this earthly body, which after His ascent to Heaven was reconveyed by the angels to Mount Ararat, where it still lies in a secret tomb, uncorrupted and ready to be reassumed once more at His second coming upon earth.

Mass is celebrated in the Armenian Church with a very elaborate ritual entirely distinct from and much more ornate and oriental than that of either the Latin or Greek Churches. During the celebration the assistants at the ceremonial rattle, a curious instrument, not unlike the ancient Egyptian sistrum, composed of a huge cross set with jangling brass rings.

The head of the Church is styled in Armenian Katoghikos (Catholicos). The Armenian clergy is none too well educated, and is extremely superstitious and bigoted. All other forms of Christianity are

denounced by them as heretical, and they have not scrupled to persecute those of their flock who have listened to the persuasive appeals of Protestant missionaries.

Mr. Grattan Geary, when at Mosul, found that each of the churches belonging to the warring sects had a guard of Turkish soldiers to keep the peace. Camp bedsteads were placed outside the church doors, on which these soldiers slept at nights, and the sentries, pacing up and down presented arms as he entered. When he endeavored to get some definite knowledge respecting the various antagonistic sects of native Christians, the one distinctive idea which he derived from their answers was that, in the opinion of each sect, all the others were hopelessly perverse, besotted, ignorant and dishonest, and that, in a word, they were somewhat worse than Mussulmans. He tells us (in his book "Through Asiatic Turkey") that

The hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, characterizing the different native sects in their inter-relations could not have been easily exaggerated; and I am sorry to say that in the opinion of men who have had ample opportunity of judging from personal observation, there is only too much foundation for the bad opinion which each of those sects entertains of the other. "When a Mohammedan gives me his word," said a gentleman who had a long experience of the country, "whether he be a Turk or a Kurd, I can always rely upon it. I have never been what is called 'done' by a Mussulman, although I have had transactions of all kinds with Moslems for years; but when a native Christian tells me anything, I have cause to instinctively ask myself where the deception lies – in what direction I am going to be tricked. There are exceptions, of course; but if anyone has many dealings with Mussulmans and native Christians in these parts, he will soon learn that the one may be depended on, and the other will almost certainly deceive and cheat you if you give him a chance."

In the meantime, while the Armenian of the plains had accepted St. Gregory's teaching, the mountaineers, who had never adopted the religion of their alien rulers, continued to remain pagans. This circumstance was an important factor in accentuating the natural cleavage between the cultivators of the plains and the pastoral mountaineers, a cleavage due, in a great measure, to the physical conditions of the country, the plains being wide and extensive and the mountains distant and not every accessible, with the result that the population of Armenia at that time was more acutely divided than the Highlanders and the Lowlanders of Scotland a few centuries ago.

So far as archeological remains are concerned, practically no trace is to be found of this early Armenian kingdom. Whatever towns there may have been were probably constructed chiefly of wood or mud, and the cultural level of the inhabitants seems to have been far below that of their neighbors. This is not to be wondered at when we take into account the climatic conditions of the country, the lack of communications and the state of anarchy into which it was so frequently plunged. Although for a brief period under Tigranes II, Armenia, in alliance with Mithridates, king of Pontus, became a kingdom of considerable importance, it reverted to its former dimensions after his defeat by Lucullus in the year 69 B.C. To speak of "the glories" historical or material, of ancient Armenia is simply a misuse of words.

After the abdication in the year 430 A.D. of King Bahram, who was the last really independent ruler, although the kingdom was nominally divided between the Eastern and Western Empires, the condition of Armenia became worse than ever before. Anarchy and disunion reigned supreme. The nobles,

jealous, intriguing, covetous and mercenary, continually transferred their allegiance from one side to another, or, when not busy fighting as partisans for Rome or Persia occupied their time congenially in warring amongst themselves and ravaging each others' territories.

In the year 1079 the Seljuks swept through the land, and with the fall of King Hagig II. The last remaining semblance of an independent Armenia disappeared. The Seljuks respected the Christian religion of the plain dwellers but converted the mountaineers to the Islamic faith, thus still further accentuating the line of demarcation between what may fairly be described as the Highlanders and Lowlanders of the district.

The rule of the Seljuks, who showed their tolerance by allowing the Lowlanders to remain Christians, was mild and liberal. They greatly improved the condition of the country, restored law and order and erected many public buildings and mosques, traces of which are still visible. On the other hand the country suffered grievously during the subsequent invasions of the Mongol hordes.

The year following the invasion of the Seljuks the Pagatrid Rhupen founded a small principality in Cilicia, which by gradually extending its boundaries became known later as the kingdom of Lesser Armenia. Internal disputes between the Catholics and Gregorians weakened this little State and facilitated its conquest by Egypt in 1375.

In 1414 Selim I, Osmanli Sultan of Constantinople, drove out the Mongols, and with their disappearance Armenia was incorporated in the Ottoman Empire under the name of Kurdistan.

## II.

The physical features of Kurdistan have an important bearing on the political history of the country. It is a high tableland 6,000 feet or so above the sea level. On the north it descends somewhat abruptly to the Black Sea, on the south it exhibits a series of rugged terraces ending in the lowlands of Mesopotamia, while on the east and west it slopes more gradually, until it reaches the low plateaus of Persia and Asia Minor.

The general appearance of this tableland is uninteresting and monotonous. Most of the hills are grass-covered and treeless except for patches of scrubby looking bushes, while the plains are wide and cultivated. The winters are long and sever; the summers, which last about five months, are very hot and almost without rain.

The population falls into three distinct groups: sedentary, semi-nomadic and nomadic.

THE FIRST GROUP, consisting of Armenians, Greeks, Turks, Jews and some few Kurds, lives in the plains, chiefly as agriculturists, merchants and traders, but their staple means of livelihood is undoubtedly agriculture. During the short summer months they till the fields, and in the winter retire to their towns and villages. They are a hard-working, thrifty and prosperous race.

THE SECOND GROUP, the semi-nomads, are Kurds. They migrate with their flocks along the valleys in the spring, the slopes in summer, and the mountain tops in autumn. They sell wool, butter, goats' hair, skins, and animals for slaughter to the traders in the plains, and in return purchase domestic

necessaries such as barley, petroleum and sugar for their own use, and hay for their herds. Thus provided they move, as winter approaches, to the mountain villages, there to await the coming of the following spring.

These Kurds are a truculent, warlike, yet simple, generous and industrious race. They live in separate tribes or communities under their own chieftains. The character of the tribes varies considerably, some being fiercer than others. Some regard all strangers with suspicion and repel them, while others welcome and confide in them. In this respect, and in fact in many other characteristics, they very much resemble the Scotch Highland clans of some two hundred years ago. Like these, they at times war with one another, the usual cause for dispute being either the ownership of the ground on which the flocks are grazed, or the proprietorship of a well. Mr. Grattan Geary, who traveled through Asiatic Turkey in 1878, describes the Kurds as "fine, strong fellows, with well marked features, which are, however, often marred by a sinister expression and a furtive glance, for which it is not easy to account in the descendants of a race of martial mountaineers who have never bowed the neck to any yoke. They have a reputation for treachery and cruelty, which I am afraid is not undeserved." Mr. Geary, during his journey found that the outlying Christian and Moslem villages were again being plundered by the Kurdish mountaineers although

The raids and disturbances which distracted the country before the Sultan's authority was made real in the more hilly parts of Kurdistan, had been reduced to very small dimensions before the war with Servia, and afterwards with Russia, caused the Turkish troops to be withdrawn.

But in the opinion of those with whom he spoke on the subject

The whole state of things in Kurdistan might be changed in the course of a twelvemonth by a little firmness and energy on the part of the officials representing the Government. The power of the Kurds for organized resistance has been completely broken, and the military strength of the Government can be no longer contested by them. The change has, even as it is, greatly ameliorated the lot of the Christian and the Jewish population ; but to complete the work a sufficient force of mounted native police should be organized and properly paid, and the administration of justice improved.

The success of General Hawker, an officer of the Guards placed by the Turkish Government in command of a well equipped and regularly paid gendarmerie (an appointment which he held until the outbreak of the present European war) has amply verified the correctness of these views.

It is worthy of observation that as a means of "civilizing" the Kurds, and accustoming them to discipline, and at the same time suitably utilizing their warlike propensities as a frontier guard against Cossack raids, Sultan Abdul Hamid formed nearly 10,000 of these Kurds into cavalry regiments, styling them the "Hamidieh Cavalry." The bravery, hardihood and energy of these men rendered them particularly fit for such an operation, and the experiment proved a complete success. It was largely from time-expired men of these regiments that many of the gendarmes, who proved themselves so efficient under General Hawker's command, were enlisted.

THE THIRD GROUP, the nomadic Kurds, have largely intermarried with the Arabs of the South, where they winter their flocks and herds, and are therefore really semi-Arab rather than pure Kurd. They

are neither so industrious nor so reliable as the Kurds proper, but are quicker witted and more intelligent. During the summer months they graze their flocks on the mountain slopes, and as winter approaches migrate to the warmer regions bordering on Mesopotamia, to return again in the early summer. It is important to note that the four great mountain strongholds of the Hakkari, the Dersim, the Zeitun and the Sassun form an exception to the general rule that the plains are populated by a tenacious but unwarlike ware of farmers and merchants, largely composed of Armenians, while the mountains are occupied by war-like nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurds. The sturdy war-like agriculturists of these four rough, inaccessible regions have never, from the earliest until comparatively recent times, really acknowledged the control of a central government. Originally refugees from persecution, they in their turn offered shelter to lawbreakers and bandits. A large proportion of the Hakkari are Nestorians, while the Dersimli are Kurds and the Zeitunli and Sassunli Gregorian Armenians. Mr. Gearly, who believes the Nestorians to be the descendants of the ancient Chaldeans, says: -- "They are unquestionably as fine a people, physically, as are to be found anywhere and their well-shaped heads and expressive features denote great natural intelligence."

### III.

Having thus sketched as briefly as possible the early history, ethnology and physical features of the country, we shall be better able to understand what is commonly known as the "Armenian Question."

When the Ottoman rule was established, the plain-dwellers and the pastoral tribes of the mountain slopes still preserved their national customs, language and vices, and they have retained these to this day. The waves of conquest had swept over the cold, inhospitable plateau into the richer and warmer plains beyond; but while the conquerors had established governors and garrisons, they had never planted colonists; this is the principal reason why there has been so little change in this strange country. When we hear of the aspirations of the Armenians for independence or absorption by Russia, we must always remember that from all accounts the mountaineers, or Kurds, have been as long established in Kurdistan as the plain-dwellers, usually called by the name of Armenians, and have consequently an equal right to a voice in the matter.

How then is it that the Armenians have developed a national sentiment, whereas the Kurds, who equally retain their former customs and language, are bitterly opposed to any alteration in their present condition?

We all know that Constantinople was captured by the Osmanli Turks in the year 1453. Their sultan, Mahomed II, a liberal and wise ruler, granted religious freedom to the conquered races in his dominions and, in order not to be troubled with their continual disputes, organized all the non-Moslems into communities or "millets" under their own ecclesiastical chiefs, with absolute authority in civil and religious matters. There was already at this time a large number of Armenians in Stambul, who in due course were formed into a community of this kind under their own Ecclesiastikos or Patriarch. When Selim I conquered Armenia the Gregorian Christians of that country were by an imperial irade incorporated under

the Armenian Patriarch at Constantinople, while the Kurds, who had embraced Islam under the Seljuk rule, received no special treatment since they were of the same religion as their rulers.

The formation of the conquered races into separate communities under their own ecclesiastical chiefs, though inspired by the most benevolent principles, has, by fostering centrifugal aspirations, been the root evil of all the subsequent internal troubles in the Ottoman Empire. Sir Charles Wilson in his article on Armenia, in the "Encyclopedia Britannica" explains how this happened in the case of the Armenians:

This *imperium in imperio* secured the Armenians a recognized position before the law, the free enjoyment of their religion, the possession of their churches and monasteries, and the right to educate their children and manage their own municipal affairs. It also encouraged the growth of a community life which eventually gave birth to an intense longing for national life. On the other hand it degraded the priesthood. The priests became political leaders rather than spiritual guides, and sought promotion by bribery and intrigue. Education was neglected and discouraged, servility and treachery were developed, and in less than a century the people had become depraved and degraded to an almost incredible extent. After the issue, in 1839, of the hatt-i-sheriff of Gul-Khaneh, the tradesmen and artisans of the capital freed themselves from clerical control. Under regulations, approved by the Sultan in 1862, the patriarch remained the official representative of the community, but all real power passed into the hands of clerical and lay councils elected by a representative assembly of one hundred and forty members. The "Community," which excluded Roman Catholics and Protestants, was soon called the "Nation," "domestic" became "national" affairs, and the "representative" the "national assembly."

But there the process of evolution stopped, for although the national idea became familiar to the Armenian population, there was no real aspiration for a national or separate existence. A well-informed and acute writer, 'Odysseus,' in his book "Turkey in Europe" tells us that until the years succeeding the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878:

The Turks and Armenians got on excellently together. The Armenians looked upon Russia as their enemy, and a large Armenian population from that country migrated into Kurdistan. The Russians restricted the Armenian Church, schools and language; the Turks on the contrary were perfectly tolerant and liberal as to all such matters.

They did not care how the Armenians prayed, taught and talked, and in many ways found them the most useful and loyal of their Christian subjects. The Greeks were always inclined towards Hellas but there was no Armenia.

The Armenians were thorough Orientals and appreciated Turkish ideas and habits. While the wealthier members of the community lived in accordance with Turkish custom, the poorer found employment as domestics in Moslem houses. With the exception of those who settled abroad for commercial purposes, the Armenians were quite content to live among the Turks and spend their money in Turkey.

The Armenians even went so far as to speak Turkish among themselves, and their present language contains numerous Turkish words (to the extent of almost forty per cent), and though Kurds and Zaptiehs perhaps rendered life at times a little too eventful, on the whole the "Sarafs" or money changers gained more than brigands and tax-collectors combined. The balance of wealth

certainly remained with the Christians. The Turks treated them with good humored confidence and the phrase “millet-i-sadika,” the loyal community, was regularly applied to them.

The toleration of the Government and the friendly relations which existed at that time between the Turks and the Armenians, as described by ‘Odysseus,’ is fully corroborated by the following passages from Mr. Geary’s book “Through Asiatic Turkey”:

The Chief of the Dominican Mission, a very enlightened man who has been for some years resident in Mosul, did not share these misgivings. He did not consider that he ran any risk of losing his life through Mahomedan fanaticism. As for the Government, he said that the religious toleration enjoyed under it was complete. It never in any way interfered with what the Christians did or taught in the schools or the churches. It was impossible to desire more absolute liberty of worship or teaching. But in civil administration there was great scope for improvement, and, indeed, an absolute necessity for it. The laws were good, but they were not steadily applied. The laxity and want of thoroughness which characterized every department were inexplicable and allowed even the best conceived measures to result in mischief. . . . We found the village of Krelani to be one of considerable size: the inhabitants being half Christian and half Mohammedan. Religious differences seemed to be completely disregarded, Christian and Moslem being on the most friendly terms. The chief men of both sections were sitting in a little circle in front of the Kahia’s house when we arrived, and they rose and saluted me very civilly. . . . I can only say, that if there be any bigotry amongst these people, I saw no manifestation of it throughout my long journey: I could not have been received with greater courtesy if I had been myself a True Believer. . . . He is a very strict Mussulman, though, like most Turks, whether strict or not, he is very tolerant.”

It should be observed that the Armenians as a race are considerably scattered. The original territory known as Armenia having been annexed by Russia, Persia, and Turkey, the bulk of the Armenian population is divided between these three Powers. They are estimated to number in Russia about 1,000,000, in Persia 150,000, and in Turkey, including Salonika and the lost European Provinces, 1,500,000. In addition to these there are about 250,000 Armenians scattered through Europe, America, the East Indies and Egypt. As we shall subsequently see, all the troubles originated from outside and not in Kurdistan itself. The first disturbing element, in the opinion of ‘Odysseus,’ was the arrival of a number of Protestant and other foreign missionaries. This judgment, disappointing as it must be to many who are deeply interested in the religious side of missionary work, is amply corroborated by Sir Edwin Pears, who admits in his book, “Forty Years in Constantinople,” that “In a very real sense it may be said that the fomenters of political agitation in Armenia, as in Bulgaria, were the schoolmasters and the missions, Catholic or Protestant.” These good men, as we are told by Sir Mark Sykes, in his interesting and most important work entitled “Dar-ul-Islam,” soon found that

It was as impossible to turn an Oriental Moslem into a Christian, as it would be to transform an English Christian into a Jew; hence their missionary effort was confined to turning one kind of Christian into some other kind.\* Large sums of money were spent in transforming a Jacobite into a

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\* Three American missionaries called: they had been settled for several years in Anatolia, and had succeeded in making some converts amidst the Armenians, but they had not in any one instance induced a Mohammedan to change his faith.

little Bethel Peculiar Anabaptist, in converting the little Bethel Anabaptist ne Jacobite to Roman Catholicism, and in reforming the Roman Catholic late little Bethel Peculiar Anabaptist ne Jacobite into an American Keswickian Presbyterian.

But the process of turning a Jacobite into a American Keswickian Presbyterian spoilt a good Oriental and made him a discontented and semi-Europeanized Asiatic.

The first Armenian converts to Protestantism were subjected to fierce persecutions by their fellow Armenians who clung to their old form of faith, and for their protection from this persistent annoyance and cruelty the Sultan about 1857 issued an irade recognizing the Protestants as a separate religious community independent from the Orthodox Armenian Church and free from any interference by its officials.

The second disturbing factor were the clauses inserted, at the request of Russia, in the Berlin Treaty of July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1878, whereby the six signatory Powers acquired the right of superintendence and interference in the internal affairs of Kurdistan. The clauses of this treaty imbued the Armenians with the idea that they were entitled to the grant of special privileges from the Porte, and this was easily fomented into the notion of founding an Armenian kingdom, or at least an Armenian autonomous state. These ideas were further encouraged by the formation of the Bulgarian Principality and by the foundation in London in the year 1890 of the Anglo-Armenian Society “whose laudable object was hampered by their invincible ignorance of the spirit and methods of the East.”

The third disturbing element was the development, after the Russo-Turkish war, of the Nihilist movement in Russia. The persecuted Armenians of the Caucasus readily entered into the conspiracy, the Armenian branch of which had its headquarters at Tiflis.

The Czar’s Government increased its severity towards the Armenians, and when the Russian police made the existence of the secret societies at Tiflis too precarious, the Armenian revolutionaries moved their headquarters and branches to New York, Paris, London, and Geneva, where, between the years 1889 and 1892, they founded their secret societies the Hintchak, the Aptak and subsequently the most diabolical of them all, the Dashnaksutium. They also founded a regular revolutionary propaganda publishing their own papers and reviews.

These societies, by blackmailing and preying upon the rich Armenian financiers and traders of Europe and America, soon became wealthy corporations. Hunted out of Russia, they sent their emissaries into Kurdistan, where they renewed their nefarious campaign. Although denounced and hated by the respectable resident Armenians and the priests, whom they blackmailed and murdered as occasion offered, they even tried to embroil the central government with the European Powers by committing crimes, the responsibility for which they attempted by false evidence to fix on the Missionary Colleges. They committed murders in the streets of London. In New York the police unearthed a conspiracy of blackmail, bomb outrages and murder, which completely terrorized the rich Armenian bankers and merchants. A little

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One of them observed that the Turks were by no means a cruel race.” (Col. F. Burnaby: “On Horseback through Asia Minor.”)

\* “Odysseus”: “Turkey in Europe.”

over two years ago the London Press reported the discovery by the New York police of a further conspiracy of terrorism and assassination.

The advent of these revolutionary agents into Kurdistan had the inevitable result of embittering the former good relations of the Turkish Government and the resident Moslem population with the Christian, and especially the Orthodox Armenian section of the inhabitants.

This was natural for the reason that in Turkey the people have a horror of secret societies and plots, founded on the experience of their own suffering at the hands of the Greek Hetairia and the Bulgarian Komitadjis. The fears of the Turks and the Kurds were genuine. They believed that the members of the once loyal "millet-i-sadika" no longer merited that title, and that they were arming and preparing to massacre the Moslems. The whole country became like a powder magazine, and Europe had not long to wait for the inevitable spark which started what are known as the Armenian massacres of 1894 and 1896.

#### IV.

We shall better understand the question of these massacres, if we first study the Armenian character, at the same time noticing the aptitude and fitness of the race for self-government.

The Pro-Armenian societies in this country would have us believe that the native Armenians are as a race poor, gentle, honest, agricultural folk, persecuted by wicked officials, robbed of their hard-earned savings by the wild Kurds and cruel Circassians, and periodically martyred for their Christian faith; and to give vividness to this pleasant picture one or two Europeanized, highly-venerated Armenians are usually produced on our public platforms as living specimens of this "harmless, inoffensive" people. In this manner Lord Bryce, speaking recently at Manchester, pictured the life of mingled simplicity and refinement lived by this Christian race in Moslem Turkey, and went on to say that the Armenians were amongst the most orderly subjects of the Turks, well educated and accustomed to the refinements of civilization as much as ourselves. If this were true it would imply that civilization, as we understand the word, must have made tremendous progress in Kurdistan within recent years under Turkish rule, but this Lord Bryce will probably not admit.

Lord Bryce proceeded to add that for the past sixteen centuries the Armenians had been a Christian people, clinging to their religion in spite of constant persecution, while all the time they might have secured complete immunity from such by renouncing their Christian faith.

It is fair to presume that Lord Bryce truck this anti-Moslem note in order to command sympathy by appealing to the religious prejudices of his audience, for the observation was not only inopportune but entirely unnecessary, in as much as later in the same speech he state that "there was no fanaticism about the massacres and no outbreak of Moslem fury on the part of the people."

How utterly false is his estimate of the character of the native Armenian will be shown by the testimony of competent and observant travelers and orientalists, who have studies this people in their own homes. Let us see first what SIR CHARLES WILSON, the great traveler and Orientalist, author of the article on Armenia in the Encyclopedia Britannica, says:

The Armenians are essentially an Oriental people, preserving like the Jews whom they resemble in their exclusiveness and wide-spread dispersion, a remarkable tenacity of race and faculty of adaptation to circumstances. They are frugal, sober, industrious and intelligent, and their sturdiness of character has enabled them to preserve their nationality and religion under the sorest trials. They are strongly attached to old manners and customs, but have also a real desire for progress which is full of promise. On the other hand they are greedy of gain, quarrelsome in small matters, self-seeking and wanting in stability, and they are gifted with a tendency to exaggeration and a love of intrigue, which has had an unfortunate influence on their history.

They are deeply separated by religious differences, and their mutual jealousies, their inordinate vanity, their versatility and their cosmopolitan character must always be an obstacle to the realization of the dreams of the nationalists.

LORD SALISBURY, in a letter to Sir Henry Layard, British Ambassador at Constantinople, dated May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1878, gives expression to the following opinion:

Asiatic Turkey contains a population of many different races and creeds, possessing no capacity for self-government and no aspiration for independence, but owing their tranquility and whatever prospect of political well-being they possess entirely to the rule of the Sultan.

This letter confirms the contention that at the time there was no real demand for independence.

Mr. GRATTAN GEARY, in "Through Asiatic Turkey," says:

A few of the more educated Armenians hope to secure in some way the autonomy of the country in which they by no means form the majority of the population. Whether they could keep the Mussulman majority of the population in order we need not inquire; granting that a flock of doves could, if well organized and assured of diplomatic support from distant eagles, keep a much larger number of hawks in subjection, the fact remains that even *the Armenians*, by far the most capable and the most numerous of the Christian races in Asiatic Turkey, *have no aspiration for anything further than a provisional autonomy*. They do not regard themselves as the heirs of the Empire, and never in their wildest flights think of superseding the Osmanlis, and themselves welding the Empire together for the common good. *The only race among them, all which has any real desire to govern, is the Turkish*. The others either desire, like the Kurds and the Arabs, to be simply freed from the shackles of government altogether, so that they may pillage in peace; or, like the Christians, to be protected from without, or at most to acquire a local predominance. If we want to find an Oriental equivalent for patriotism or love of country, in Asiatic Turkey, we need look for it in the Turkish section of the population alone.

The autonomy of the Asiatic provinces is out of the question. How could Mesopotamia or Kurdistan become autonomous? The Arabs and the Kurds are too "autonomous" already, and the first thing to be done with them is to place them under a regime of well-armed police. *Asia Minor is Turkish and does not ask for Autonomy*. The elements of self-government do not exist in Armenia. The Armenian Christians are the minority of the population and are deficient in the military virtues; they could not hold their own against the warlike Kurds.

These words of Mr. Geary are the more interesting as they so closely resemble the opinion expressed by Lord Salisbury in his letter quoted above.

'Odysseus,' in his "Turkey in Europe," says:

The characteristics of the Armenians would seem to be somewhat as follows: They are a race with little political aptitude or genius for kingdom building. This want of capacity was not due to the Turkish conquest – even before that event they had proved their inability to hold their own. The Armenians are a people of great commercial and financial talents, supple and flexible as those must be who wish to make others part with their money: stubborn to heroism in preserving certain characteristics, but wanting withal in the more attractive qualities, in an artistic sense, kindness, and some (though not all) forms of courage.

To this testimony may be added the observations of COL. FRED BURNABY (“On Horseback through Asia Minor”):

One thing which seemed to be the unanimous opinion of all classes in Erzeroum was, that should the Armenians ever get the upper hand in Anatolia, their government would be much more corrupt than the actual administration. It was corroborated by the Armenians themselves. The stories which they told me of several of their fellow-countrymen thoroughly bore out the idea.

SIR MARK SYKES, who has traveled far and often into Kurdistan, certainly formed a very unsatisfactory opinion of the Armenians as a whole, especially of the town Armenians, who are quite a distinct race from the villagers, with whom they seldom intermarry. He has noticed, however, the same regrettable characteristics in the villagers as in the townsmen, though with the former he believes they are not innate, but rather imposed by the upper clergy and bishops, who are nearly all recruited from the town-folk. His remarks are deserving of careful attention. The following passage, which we venture to quote in extenso from his recently published book, “The Caliph’s Last Heritage,” throws into relief the principal characteristics of the Armenian people:

The expression of the generality of town Armenian young men is one which undoubtedly inspires a feeling of distrust, and their bearing is compounded of a peculiar covert insolence and a strange suggestion of suspicion and craft. They have a way of answering an ordinary question as if the person to whom they are speaking were endeavoring to treat them dishonestly, and as if they felt themselves more than a match for him. Their manners are not by any means fawning or cringing, as many people suggest; on the contrary, they are generally somewhat brusque, but at the same time uneasy – indeed one might well say their manners were decidedly unhappy. It is very difficult to account for this ill-bred behavior and tone, and I myself can only attribute it to the fact that they keynote of the town Armenian’s character is a profound distrust of his co-religionists and neighbors. Whether this fear arises from long and sad experience, or from a perverted business instinct, it is hard to tell; but to say that it is not without cause may sound a harsh, but perhaps not unjust judgment.

In common with man others of the Christians of Turkey, the town Armenians have an extraordinarily high opinion of their own capacities; but in their case this is combined with a strangely unbalanced judgment, which permits them to proceed to lengths that invariably bring trouble on their heads. They will undertake the most desperate political crimes without the least forethought or preparation; they will bring ruin and disaster on themselves and others without any hesitation; they will sacrifice their own brothers and most valuable citizens to a wayward caprice; they will enter largely into conspiracies with men in whom they repose not the slightest confidence;

they will overthrow their own national cause to vent some petty spite on a private individual; they will at the very moment of danger grossly insult and provoke one who might be their protector but may at any moment become their destroyer; by some stinging aggravation or injury they will alienate the sympathy of a stranger whose assistance they expect; they will suddenly abandon all hope when their plans are nearing fruition; they will betray the very person who might serve their cause; and finally, they will bully and prey on one another at the very moment that the enemy is at their gates. And this strange and unfortunate method of procedure is not confined only to their political methods, their dealings are equally preposterous and fatal.

To add to this curious fatuousness of conduct, the town Armenians are at once yielding and aggressive. They will willingly harbor revolutionaries, arrange for their entertainment and the furthering of their ends; yet at the same time they can be massacred without raising a finger in their own defense. He is as fanatical as any Moslem. . . . That the Armenians are doomed to be forever unhappy as a nation seems to me unavoidable. . . . In a time of famine at Van the merchants tried to corner the available grain! . . . The Armenian revolutionaries prefer to plunder their co-religionists to giving battle to their enemies: the anarchists of Constantinople threw bombs with the intention of provoking a massacre of their fellow-countrymen. The Armenian villages are divided against themselves; the revolutionary societies are leagued against one another; the priests connive at the murder of a bishop; the church is divided at its very foundations. . . .

If the object of English philanthropists and the roving brigands (who are the active agents of revolution) is to subject the bulk of the Eastern provinces to the tender mercies of an Armenian oligarchy, then I cannot entirely condemn the fanatical outbreaks of the Moslems or the repressive measures of the Turkish government. On the other hand, if the object of Armenians is to secure equality before the law, and the establishment of security and peace in the countries partly inhabited by Armenians, then I can only say that their methods are not those to achieve success.

His description of the Armenians of the Mush Plain is instructive and interesting:

The Armenians of the Mush Plain are at present an extremely difficult people to manage. They are very avaricious and would object to pay the most moderate taxes; they are also exceedingly treacherous to one another, and often join the revolutionaries to wipe off scores on their fellow villagers. As for the tactics of the revolutionaries, anything more fiendish one could not imagine – the assassination of Moslems in order to bring about the punishment of innocent men, the midnight extortion of money from villages which have just paid taxes by day, the murder of persons who refuse to contribute to their collection boxes, are only some of the crimes of which Moslems, Catholics, and Gregorians accuse them with no uncertain voice.

The following pen picture of the young Armenian who wept over the punishment of his great nation is a study in itself:

We were saluted by a brisk young Armenian, who said (it afterwards proved false) that he was employed as a tutor to the Shaykh's sons. He accused Prof. Rendel Harris of having promised him assistance, and then breaking his word. He longed to embrace Mr. Bryce (I should have experienced some pleasure in seeing him accomplish this wish): he had a great admiration for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; he said he was studying to be an ethnologist, psychologist, hypnotist and poet; he admired Renan, Kant, Herbert Spencer, Gladstone, Spurgeon, Nietzsche and

Shakespeare. It afterwards appeared that his library consisted of an advertisement of Eno's Fruit Salt, from which he quoted freely. He wept over what he called the "Punishment of our great Nation," and desired to be informed how in existing circumstances he could elevate himself to greatness and power.

It would be unfair to suggest that these very unfavorable descriptions are intended otherwise than as generally characteristic of the Armenian race. The experience of every traveler is that there are both good and bad people to be found in all races, but unfortunately in some races the good are few and the bad are many.

Armenians, as we know, have risen to the highest positions as soldiers, statesmen and financiers both in Turkey and Russia, and have proved themselves good and devoted subjects of their respective governments. Armenian soldiers fought bravely and loyally on the Turkish side in the Balkan war at the very time when their compatriots were pillaging the shops of their Moslem fellow-citizens in Adrianople. The near East is full of these strange contradictions. In Kurdistan Armenians have risked their lives in protecting Moslems from assassination.

## V.

It is important to notice that the so-called Armenian Atrocities have a remarkable family likeness to the "Bulgarian Atrocities," over which a large number of sentimental people in England developed a frenzy of indignation.

A comparison of Sir. Henry Layard's dispatch to Lord Derby on the "Bulgarian Atrocities," dated 1877, with Sir Mark Sykes' account of the happenings which commenced with the disturbances at Zeitun in 1895, show exactly how these events originated and were grossly exaggerated. The history of every alleged massacre in Turkey is almost the same, whether we consider the Bulgarian "atrocities" in 1876, the disturbances in Sassun in 1896, those in Constantinople in the same year, or those at Van in 1915. In every case we find the same charges of connivance by local officials acting under orders from Constantinople, the same gross exaggerations and the same stories of bestiality, in which the traducers of the Turks seem to take a special delight. And it is these same people, as the *Near East* said in a leading article, who compel the Turks "to listen to sermons about disorders which were deliberately fomented by the preachers themselves or by men preaching in their name."

Referring to these "hellish" and "unutterable" forms of torture of which the Turks are so freely accused, 'Odysseus' says:

These are often spoken of as being so terrible that the details cannot be given in print, but I believe them to be largely the invention of morbid and somewhat prurient brains. Medical testimony makes it certain that no human being could survive the tortures which some Armenians are said to have suffered without dying.

Sir Henry Layard wrote as follows to Lord Derby:

The English people cannot, perhaps, yet bear to hear the truth of the events of last year; but it is my duty to state it to your lordship. The marvelous ability shown by RUSSIA and HER AGENTS in

MISLEADING PUBLIC OPINION in England and elsewhere has been amply rewarded. It will probably be long before that which is true can be separated from that which is false; when history does so it will be too late. The Porte has taken no effective means to place its case before Europe. It neither employs the Press nor competent agents for such purposes. Its appeals to the Powers, at the State papers that it issues to refute the charges against it, are so prepared that they are more calculated to injure its cause. A great portion of the English public are, probably, still under the impression that the statements upon which the denunciations against Turkey were originally founded are true – the 60,000 Christians outraged and massacred; the cartloads of human heads; the crowd of women burnt in a barn; and other similar horrors. There are persons and amongst them, I grieve to say, Englishmen, who boast that they invented these stories with the object of “writing down” Turkey, to which they were impelled by a well-known hand. People in England will scarcely believe that the most accurate and complete inquiries into the events of last year in Bulgaria now reduce the number of deaths to about 3,5000 souls, including the Turks whoever, in the first instance, slain by the Christians. No impartial man can now deny that a RISING of the CHRISTIANS, which was intended by its authors to lead to a GENERAL MASSACRE of the MOHAMMEDANS, was in contemplation, and that it was directed by RUSSIAN and PANSLAVIST AGENTS;”\*

Sir Mark Sykes writes (and his account is so graphic that the author makes no apology for quoting him in full):

Some Revolutionary Society, not being satisfied with the general state of affairs in Turkey and scenting collections and relief funds in the future, judged it expedient in the year of grace 1895, to dispatch certain emissaries to Armenia. On the warlike population of Zeitun they pinned their hopes of raising a semi-successful revolution, and six of their boldest agents were accorded to that district. What the end of the revolution would be these desperadoes recked little, so long as the attention of Europe was drawn to their cause and their collection boxes. These individuals however found their people by no means ripe for insurrection and their influence was but small. True, there were certain persons ready to talk sentimentally and foolishly, possibly treasonably, but in no way prepared to rise actually in arms. However, an opportunity of embroiling their countrymen unexpectedly presented itself, by taking advantage of which they succeeded in forcing the hand of the Government.

In happened that a number of Furnus and Zeitunli Armenians were in the habit of going to Adana for the purpose of earning money as farmers and handicraftsmen; for some reason, the Government at that time issued an order that all strangers should return to their own towns and districts. The Furnus and Zeitunli Armenians were enraged at this action, saying that they were not permitted by the Padishah to earn sufficient to pay their taxes, which they considered exorbitant; consequently they were foolish enough to pillage some Turkomans on their way home.

The Turkomans addressed themselves in complaint to the Mutesarif of Marash, who decided to investigate the affair by a commission consisting of a Turkish Bimbashi (filed officer) and an Armenian resident, escorted by five Zaptiehs. The agents saw in this move a chance of bringing matters to a crisis and either attacked, or persuaded the villagers to attack, the commission,

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\* Extract from Sir Henry Layard’s (H.M. Ambassador at Constantinople) dispatches.

killing the Bimbashi and three of the guard, and carrying of the Christian commissioner with them. The surrounding Armenians, knowing themselves to have been originally in the wrong, and seeing themselves compromised, accepted the inevitable and joined the revolutionaries.

The Governor of Marash, having been informed of this affair, dispatched a company of infantry to reinforce the garrison at Bertiz. The rebel leaders and their followers intercepted this party, and an undecided action resulted, owing to the assistance given by the Moslems of Bertiz. The next day the revolutionists decided to attack the garrison at Zeitun in order to force that town (whose inhabitants had but little inclination) to join a jihad against the Osmanli. After a brief resistance the castle surrendered, through the incapacity of its besotted commander.

Having gained a victory of some importance, the Armenian force proceeded to the Kertul district, where they plundered and sacked several Turkish villages, eventually seizing Anderim, where they burnt the Konak. On their way back to Zeitun they committed some most disgraceful murders at Chukarhissar in commemoration of the decease of the late Armenian kingdom which was finally ended at that place.\*

After this anarchy supervened, the Moslems and Kurds, infuriated by exaggerated reports, lusting for treasure of the wealthy but feeble bazaar Armenians, massacred and overwhelmed them at Marash and elsewhere. The Turkish Government, now thoroughly alarmed, had concentrated two divisions, one at Marash, under Ferik Pasha, who showed an extraordinary incapacity during the massacre; the other under a reliable soldier, Ali Pasha, at Adana. The latter with considerable promptitude swept forward towards Zeitun, driving before him the Armenian population, and although certain "outrages"\*\*\* were committed during the march, I do not think that he is in any way to blame for the conduct of the campaign. It would have been a grave military fault to have left a hostile population in his rear; and the Armenians he called upon to surrender, were already too overcome with panic to accept terms, and either awaited destruction in their villages, resisting to the last, or fled to the town of Zeitun, where the revolutionary agents, in order to maintain their prestige, were cramming the population with absurd falsehoods of a British relief column landed at Alexandretta.

One of them even sent out messengers, who returned with hopeful letters which he himself had written. But this impostor and his colleagues were not satisfied with the general disloyalty of the inhabitants, and felt that some deed should be committed which would absolutely debar the people from any hope of mercy from the Government. Accordingly they assembled the refugees driven in by Ali Pasha, and repaired with them to the Konak, where the imprisoned garrison was quartered, and *proceeded to murder them with bestial cruelty*. It must be remembered that this piece of villainy can in no way be imputed to the population of Zeitun, but to the disgraceful ruffianism of the revolutionaries and the crazy fanaticism of the exasperated and hopeless villagers. It must also be recorded to the credit of the Zeitunlis themselves, that after this abominable butchery several crept into the yard and rescued some seventy soldiers, who survived beneath the corpses of their comrades; fifty-seven of these were handed over at the end of the war. It is a relief to find in all these bloody tales of Armenia such noble deeds of kindness on the part of

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\* I was told some ghastly details, but I doubt the veracity of them, as they were related to me by a town Armenian.

\*\* These would not be so called if committed by any other troops than those of the Turkish Army.

Christians to Moslems, and Moslems to Christians, and that every massacre can bring similar cases to light.

After that foolish slaughter the revolutionary agents may have plumed themselves on a striking piece of policy. Zeitun was compromised beyond recall, and the town prepared to withstand these siege to the last; but here the chapter of Zeitun closes, for within three weeks Edham Pasha, a noble example of what a cultivated Turk can be, arrived on the scene, and with the assistance of the European Consuls concluded an honorable peace with the town; containing, alas! A clause by which the miserable causes of all this unhappiness and bloodshed were allowed to return unmolested to Europe, where they probably eke out an existence as distinguished as their military adventures.

It would appear a grave fault on the part of the Powers to have allowed the revolutionary agents to escaped.

As to how far the Turks were in the wrong, who can judge? They have a side which should be considered, as it is impossible for them to allow a revolution to be impending in the heart of their country, when threatening enemies appear on every frontier. They have their own homes to consider, and if they allowed the revolutionaries to continue their intrigues, there is little doubt that a formidable insurrection would have broken out whenever the moment was favorable. Also it must be borne in mind, that in the event of an Armenian rebellion it was the intention of the conspirators to have perpetrated similar massacres.

The necessary killing in India after the Mutiny, although carried out more formally, was just as merciless; and from all one can gather, the gentle Skobeleff pacified Central Asia much as the Turks aborted the Armenian revolution.

It is also a fact that the Armenians have an extraordinary habit of running into danger without having the courage to face it, and the revolutionists from abroad were always prepared to provoke a massacre in order to induce the Powers to assist them. I have good reason to know that these wretches actually schemed to murder American missionaries, hoping that America would declare war on the supposition that the Turks were the criminals.

The same writer points out that the massacres of Malatia, in the year 1896, were an exception to the general rule, because in this instance the Moslems struck first, fearing a general rising and slaughter of their wives and families.

‘Odysseus’ says:

Perhaps this frame of mind will be more intelligible if we try to imagine what would be the feelings of Anglo-Indians, if they supposed that the natives, under the influence of Russian intrigues, were preparing the repeat the horrors of the Mutiny. Probably the orders issued to the local Ottoman authorities warned them to be on their guard against any revolutionary movement of the Armenians, and should there by any reason to apprehend one, to at once take the offensive.

Sir Mark Sykes’s remarks also deserve quotation:

When one first hears the tale of the Malatia massacre, one says, now indeed there was no excuse for the Turks; this was a brutal attempt to destroy a harmless population; but on inquiry it is the same foolish, hopeless tale, the usual boastful Armenian threats, the inevitable noisy talk of freedom and liberty; the cry that the Turks were on the verge of collapse! the arms collected! the usual pointless

intrigue and the inevitable betrayals of each other; the final provocation given, and the natural outbreak of the Moslems, resulting in massacre. The Armenians had intended to fight; had prepared for a revolution; had collected weapons from all parts; but as usual, on the first onslaught they were hopeless and panic-stricken, and what they intended to have been a battle ended in a pitiless slaughter.

The only few who maintained anything like a bold front were those who took possession of the Armenian Church and held it against the mob; but by admiration for them was lost when I learned that these miserable hounds, when they saw Franciscan monks escaping from their convent, fired on them at 200 yards in hopes of killing a European and so forcing the hand of the Powers. This ruse I have alluded to before, and it seems to be a favorite stratagem, exhibiting the Armenian nature in its most unpleasant light.

How massacres could well have been avoided is hard to imagine. The Armenians insisted on threatening revolutions; openly boasted that the Powers would help them; silently intrigued against the Government; silently betrayed one another's intrigues; collected arms and gave offence to the Moslems, and yet possessed no more cohesive fighting or military capacity than rabbits.

The falsity of the suggestion of the Pro-Armenians that these were unprovoked massacres inspired by the Turkish Government working upon Moslem fanaticism and Kurdish greed, is also shown by the following passage from Sir Edwin Pears' book:<sup>\*</sup>

As a friend to the Armenians, revolt seemed to me purely mischievous. Some of the extremists declared that while they recognized that hundreds of innocent persons suffered from each of these attempts, they could provoke a big massacre which would bring in foreign intervention.

The only apparent reason why Sir Edwin Pears regarded as "mischievous" these revolts, resulting in the sacrifice of hundreds of innocent persons, is indicated by his adding that "such intervention was useless so long as Russia was hostile," and it is interesting also to note the callousness with which the extremists at the cost of hundreds of innocent victims endeavored to provoke a massacre of thousands of their compatriots.

In August 1896 the revolutionaries, having failed to stir up a general rising in Asia determined to adopt desperate measures in Constantinople in the hope of forcing the hands of the Ambassadors. About 1 p.m. on an August afternoon they suddenly attacked with bombs and revolvers the guard of the Ottoman Bank, twelve of whom they killed. They then broke in and seized the European staff as hostages. Besieged in the top story of the bank they threatened to blow up the building with all who were in it, rather than surrender. The Ambassadors hastily appealed to the Porte, who yielded to their importunities on behalf of their nationals and allowed them to guarantee a safe conduct to the conspirators. That night they were quietly smuggled away on Sir Edgar Vincent's yacht.

Bombs were also thrown in the Grand Rue de Pera, near the Galata Serai, and some of the conspirators who had taken a position upon the roofs of the houses in that, the principal thoroughfare of Constantinople, fired upon the populace in the street below.

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<sup>\*</sup> "Forty Years in Constantinople."

There seems little doubt that the revolutionists had contemplated a series of attacks at different important points, to be followed by a more or less general rising of the Armenian population, which numbered from 200,000 to 400,000.

A cry went through the city that the Armenians had risen in revolt and were massacring the other citizens. Many persons armed themselves with cudgels and, joined by a cosmopolitan mob from Pera and Galata, many of whom were Greeks anxious to pay off old scores on their hated commercial rivals, wreaked vengeance on the Armenian population. The soldiers and police took no part in the killing. It is estimated that about 1,000 persons perished, including those killed by the bombs and revolvers of the conspirators. What happened in London and Liverpool after the sinking of the "Lusitania" affords an idea of how the East End people of London, who claim to be far more highly educated than the Constantinople rabble, would have behaved if German desperados, after murdering twelve of the sentinels on guard at the Bank of England, had been allowed to escape free in deference to the representations of the American and Spanish Ambassadors, especially after the fears and passions of the mob had been aroused by German aliens shooting and bombing from the roofs of the house. In considering the question of massacre we must always bear in mind that mob law is inevitably cruel and senseless, as witness the excesses committed during the French Revolution, and the Commune, the lynchings in America of today, and the pogroms of Russia.

MR. SIDNEY WHITMAN was in Constantinople at the time as special correspondent for the *New York World* in connection with the "so-called Armenian atrocities," as he terms them. The instructions sent him by Mr. Gordon Bennett were very precise:

The correspondent is to take no sides and express no opinions of his own. In many cases it would appear that the matter sent to the papers by their correspondents in Turkey is biased against the Turks. This implies an injustice, against which even a criminal on trial is protected.

Mr. Sidney Whitman's book of "Turkish Memories" throws many interesting side-lights on these events. He says:

There was little or no reason for assuming that the disturbances had their source in religious fanaticism directed against the Christian as such; whilst evidence was accumulating that a vast Armenian conspiracy, nurtured in England, obscured the real issue, to which there were two sides.

Writing of the Press, he observes:

The agitation on the part of the Armenian Committees in the different capitals of Europe had been carried on to such purpose, that there was hardly an American or an English newspaper which had a good word left to say of the Turks. A horde of adventurers of various nationalities, declasses of every sphere of life, cashiered officers among the rest, who had left their native country for its good, were eking out a precarious livelihood by providing newspaper correspondents, if not Embassies, with backstairs information.

He mentions that:

The agitation carried on in England by Canon McColl and the Duke of Westminster, backed by sundry fervent Nonconformists, had the effect of exhibiting the fanatical Turks as thirsting for the blood of the Christian.

And yet not a single Christian other than the Orthodox Armenians was molested. With regard to the Jews he tells us how a Jewish money-changer, mistaken for an Armenian, had been set on by the mob: when it was ascertained that he was a Jew, he was released, but the crowd ran after him, and brought him back to collect his money, which was scattered on the ground. Would any other mob in the world have acted thus under similar conditions?

It is a noteworthy fact that from the time when the Jews first found shelter in Turkey from their Christian persecutors and the terrors of the Inquisition in Spain, until the present date, no one has ever even suggested that they have been ill-treated in the Ottoman Dominions; on the contrary, thousands of fugitive Jews, escaping the pogroms in Russia have within the last quarter of a century found security and peace in Turkey. Many Poles fleeing from persecution have found a safe asylum in Turkey, as well as the Hungarian leaders Kossuth, Gorgey and many others after their abortive revolution against Austrian domination. Although threatened with war by both Austria and Russia unless he surrendered the fugitives, the Sultan of Turkey refused to break the sacred laws of hospitality enjoined by Mohammed. On an earlier occasion a Sultan of Turkey had similarly refused to surrender to Russia the King of Ukraine (Lesser Russia), who was a refugee at his court, although he was offered a great reward should he comply, with war as the alternative in case of refusal.

If the Turk were a fanatical persecutor of all persons professing another faith than his own, how is it that for centuries Jews, Roman Catholic and Greek Christians have been allowed free exercise of their religion in all parts of the Turkish Empire, and that Protestant missionaries of many sects have not been interfered with in that country? Does not all this tend to prove that the Armenian trouble is a political and not a religious one?

Mr. Sidney Whitman further says, that in one hospital he visited he found that about forty Turkish soldiers, who were lying there, were wounded by Armenian bombs or revolver shots during the street fighting, and that the correspondents of the different European papers, when asked to inspect a large quantity of bombs found in a house at Pera, refused to do so.

Such was the general disinclination to admit any fact which could tell in favor of the great provocation the Turks had received from the Armenian revolutionaries.

The sad case of the late Mr. Melton Prior sows a pleasing exception to the general attitude adopted by the foreign journalists:

The renowned war correspondent confided to me that he was in an awkward predicament. The public at home had heard of nameless atrocities, and was anxious to receive pictorial representations of these. The difficulty was how to supply them with what they wanted, as the dead Armenians had been buried and *no women or children suffered hurt, and no Armenian church had been desecrated*. As an old admirer of the Turks, and as an honest man, he declined to invent what he had not witnessed. But others were not equally scrupulous. I subsequently saw an Italian illustrated paper containing harrowing pictures of women and children being massacred in a church.

## VI.

And now within the last two months we find once more the same influences at work, and many of the same men who promulgated the Bulgarian atrocities exploiting fresh massacres of Armenians. There is absolutely no reason why we should implicitly believe the reports which have been so assiduously circulated in the Press and on the platform, simply because, owing to the unfortunate war with Turkey, we are unable to ascertain what has really happened. The exploiters of these stories are under the same disability, having only heard one side, and that an extremely biased one. The value of certain newspaper information is curiously illustrated by Sir Edwin Pears who, writing about the Bulgarian "atrocities," says, "I collected a number of rumors (sic!) and made much use of the information which Dr. Long furnished me. . . [my account] appeared in the *Daily News*, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (June 1876)." Dr. Long, according to Sir Edwin, was a former missionary and correspondent to "an obscure newspaper in America," and relied for his information entirely upon Bulgarian letters and not on person investigation. No Englishman worthy of the name would condemn a prisoner on the evidence of the prosecution alone, without first hearing the evidence for the defense. Yet that is exactly what we are now asked to do. The Editor of the *Economist* is right when he says "Certainly we must not allow our standards of proof to decline in judging reports of atrocities," and this is especially necessary at a time when truth seems rather than fiction, and when sensational stories are passed as authentic reports for the acceptance of a public prone to believe anything (witness the stories, all since proved to be entirely fictitious, of the fatal accident, the suicide, and finally the burial of the German Crown Prince).

Captain Granville Fortescue, the well-known American war correspondent, in his recently published book, "What of the Dardanelles," gives an example of how stories – not to call them by another name – are manufactured and disseminated by means of the Press all over the world:

The rumors of a revolution in Turkey have been so many and frequent, that I must state they have not the least foundation in fact. Why should the British public be fed on these silly canards? Time and again I have read long dispatches from Athens and Mytilene, which purport to describe the troubled conditions in Turkey. I remember an item that told of a riot in Constantinople. Reference was made to the looting of the Pera Palace Hotel by a "stop-the-war" mob. On the date mentioned in the dispatch I was in this hotel. The whole story was pure invention. Personal observation convinced me, that Constantinople was the most normal of all the capitals of the nations at war.

Sir William Osler, the eminent physician, in a speech recently delivered at the Leeds Luncheon Club, said that:

In a great crisis like the present we are all a bit surcharged emotionally. Judgment becomes difficult, and we become weak-minded and believe anything any Ananias says. Who could have dreamt that so early in the war there were so many liars in the country as the men and women who saw the Russian troops? An instability of this sort leaves us an easy prey for the Yellow Press. Think of all the legless, armless, eyeless Belgians that crowded their columns. All have been seen by these perverters; few, if any, by the camera. What a triumph of unstrung nerves was that matter of the war babies.

Russians, mutilated Belgians and “war-babies,” were said to be in our midst, and yet it took us weeks to learn the truth. We shall indeed be hysterical if we allow ourselves to be hoaxed about alleged events in the recesses of Asia Minor.

It is well to recall that Sir Henry Layard in the report of the Bulgarian atrocities, from which we have quoted, stated that: “there are persons, and amongst them I grieve to say Englishmen, who boast that they invented these stories with the object of writing down Turkey, to which they were impelled by a well-known hand.”

No one believes that gentlemen in the position of Lord Bryce, Mr. Noel Buxton, Mr. Aneurin Williams and Sir Edwin Pears would for a minute willingly deceive the British public; but it is indeed more than possible that some “well-known hand” has been deceiving them. May not this hand have been that of the wealthy Armenian Committees which are spread over Europe and America, and who have never hesitated as to the means chosen for the attainment of their objects, because with them the end justifies the means? Even the Earl of Crewe, when on October the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1915, he replied in the House of Lords to the Earl of Cromer’s question as to “whether His Majesty’s Government had received any information confirmatory of the statements made in the Press to the effect that renewed massacres of Armenians had taken place on a large scale,” based his information on a report he had received from His Majesty’s Consul at Batum, and which he acknowledged was founded upon the statements published in a newspaper at Tiflis. It is certainly most significant that the British Consul at Batum, -- a town actually on the frontier -- should have had to rely for his information on a newspaper published at Tiflis, nearly 200 miles further back. This newspaper was probably “The Horizon,” an Armenian propagandist organ, and therefore quite unreliable. Likewise, unless he had been willfully misinformed, it would be difficult to account for Lord Bryce’s statement at the Mansion house, that there was not the slightest basis for the report that the Armenians had themselves provoked the massacre by rising in conspiracy. The facts and probabilities, so far as we know them, are otherwise.

The Turks had just sustained in the Caucasus a severe defeat. They needed every available man and every round of ammunition to check the advancing Russians. It is therefore incredible that without receiving any provocation they should have chosen that particularly inopportune moment to employ a large force of soldiers and gendarmes with artillery to stir up a hornet’s nest in their rear. Military considerations alone make the suggestion absurd.

The Germans had failed in their projected attack on Calais and Dunkirk after suffering enormous losses. The Franco-British forces were massing for the counter-stroke. Russia was almost at the gates of Cracow, Przemysl had fallen, and her armies were descending into the plains of Hungary. The Servians had retaken Belgrade after inflicting a disastrous defeat on the Austrians. The Allied fleets were hammering at the Dardanelles. Greece, Roumania and possibly Bulgaria might at any moment join the Entente Powers. The position of Turkey and the Central Powers appeared worse than it has ever been before or since. It is therefore most unlikely that the Turkish Government without receiving any provocation, and even if, as suggested by Lord Bryce, they entertained the idea of exterminating the

Armenians, should have chosen so inopportune a moment to damn themselves and forfeit all hope of magnanimous treatment for their country if defeated, besides running the risk of prejudicing the Christian Balkan States against them. Lord Bryce's accusation, from the point of view of political expediency, carries its own refutation.

In peace the Turks are a good-nature, easy-going race, hospitable, generous to the poor, and particularly fond of animals and children – a sure sign of a kindly and humane disposition, long-suffering, but when provoked, like all the near Eastern races both Moslem and Christian, exhibiting a fury out of all proportion to the insult according to our Western ideas. They are indeed less so than any of the Western nations with all their supposed superiority.

When Greece was fighting Turkey, the Greeks of Constantinople, although Ottoman subjects, actually dared to fly the Greek flag over their houses, and after the death of their archbishop, which occurred at the same time, paraded his dead body, seated upon the episcopal throne, through the streets of Pera, escorted by their prelates and clergy, without being subjected to any molestation. Annually, too, the Host is borne in procession through the streets of the City of the Khalif. Contrast this extraordinary tolerance with present conditions in London, where German subjects are forbidden to pray in their own churches in the German tongue and where, only a few years ago, the British Government on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress refused to allow the Host to be borne through the streets of Westminster.

During the Balkan war, when even the mosques were crowded with sick and starving refugees and only the most heroic efforts of the Turkish army, decimated with cholera, were able to keep the victorious Bulgars outside the gates of the city whose very foundations were shaking under the vibration of the enemy's guns, Greeks, Bulgars and foreign adventurers of every description feasting and making merry in the cafes of Pera openly rejoiced at the misfortune of the Turkish Empire. The principal of Robert College, a Christian school on the shores of the Bosphorus, allowed full play to his sectarian bias, boasting that many of the enemy's successful generals had been educated at the College, which was founded under the protection and goodwill of the Sultan. Yet during those bitter days, in spite of all this provocation, not a single alien enemy was interfered with by those "fanatical Moslems," whose hierarchical chief, the Sheik-ul-Islam, set an example by continuing to employ the Greek gardener who had been in his service for many years. The Turks were either too tolerant or too contemptuous to even notice the unseemly and licentious behavior of the enemies with their gates. Such is the character of a people who would rather go without their dinner than to see a poor man hungry, and who, even at a period when Jews were being burnt alive in Christian Spain, Huguenots hunted out of France and priests guilty of saying Mass executed in England, allowed perfect freedom to every race and sect within her dominions.

In the present war we have the overwhelming and convincing testimony of all ranks, from Lord Kitchner downwards, that the Turks have fought gallantly and cleanly, and have treated our wounded and prisoners with kindness and humanity. It is inconceivable, therefore, that these same Turks without any provocation (and Lord Bryce himself has said that there was no religious fanaticism), should have committed the devilries of which they are accused, and in this connection we have the curiously illuminating observation

by a celebrated correspondent, on his return from the seat of the last Balkan war, that “paradoxical as it might seem, the Turks were the only Christians in the Balkans”!

This brief examination of the Turkish military and political situation, and of Turkish character, ought sufficiently to refute the suggestion that the Turks were the aggressor and acted without provocation.

On the other hand these same military and political factors, when applied to the Armenian point of view and seen in conjunction with the character of these people, afford good and sufficient reasons for believing that the Armenians themselves commenced the troubles by rising in rebellion. It would indeed have been more than extraordinary had the rebellious section, armed and ready for any mischief, remained quiet under circumstances which were so entirely in their favor.

The defeat of the Turkish army in the Caucasus and the absence of the greater part of the local garrisons and gendarmery, as well as of the able-bodied Moslems, at the front, were entirely favorable to the long matured but hitherto abortive schemes of the revolutionists and russophile Armenians for raising an armed rebellion. Bands of armed Armenian volunteers called “Fedais,” estimated by Lord Bryce at over 8,000, with a probable increase “in the near future” to between 20,000 and 25,000, were already operating in the country as early as last March, and Lord Bryce and the “Friends of Armenian” were appealing for funds to clothe and equip the Armenian Volunteers on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, almost one month before these alleged unprovoked “massacres.” Furthermore, Russia was undoubtedly arming the population and assisting in fomenting a revolution; nor can Russia be blamed for this, seeing that she was then at war with Turkey. Finally the character of the Armenians, so graphically described by Sir Mark Sykes in his account of the people of the Mush plain, and by other travelers whom we have quoted, leaves no doubt that the majority of the Armenian population were quite ready and willing to take advantage of the situation.

What really seems to have occurred in this: about the end of April the Armenians of the Van district believing, after the defeat of Sary Kamish in the Caucasus, that the complete victory of Russia was assured, thought that their opportunity had at least arrived. Urged on by the revolutionaries and Russian agents, and hoping to cooperate with the “Fedais” who had already seized the town of Baskale, 50 miles to the East on the main road from Van to the Persian frontier, they rose in revolt and, as a correspondent of the *Times*, perhaps in an unguarded moment, admits, “finally captured the town of Van and took a bloody vengeance on their enemies.” It was the old story of the massacre of the Zeitun garrison over again. Early in June the revolutionists betrayed the town to the Russian troops.

What happened afterwards is more or less conjecture, but reading the accounts, even those evidently inspired from Armenian sources, it would appear that there were organized risings in other parts of Asia Minor also. For Mr. Henry Wood, the special correspondent at Constantinople of the United Press Agency of America, reported that the Armenians not only were in open revolt but were actually in possession of Van and several other important towns. At Zeitun he said that on the participation of Turkey in the war, when the authorities tried to enforce military service upon the young Armenians (as they were entitled to do by the Constitution), the soldiers were attacked and 300 killed. The town was subsequently retaken, and the population was dispersed and deported. It appears obvious that the Turkish authorities, anxious for the

safety of their lines of communication, had no other alternative than to order the removal of their rebellious subjects to some place distant from the seat of hostilities, and their internment there. The enforcement of this absolutely necessary precaution led to further risings on the part of the Armenians. The remaining Moslems were almost defenseless, because the regular garrisons were at the front as well as the greater part of the police and able-bodied men. Already infuriated at the reports of the atrocities committed at Van by the insurgents, in fear for their own lives and those of their relatives, they were at last driven by the cumulative effect of these events into panic and retaliation and, as invariably happens in such cases, the innocent suffered with the guilty.

The Turkish Government has repeatedly been accused of trying to “end the Armenian question by ending the Armenians,” but the evidence of many persons who traveled through the country shortly after the previous disturbances is, that with very rare exceptions only able-bodied men were slain, and not the women, children, or aged. This in itself would confirm the opinion that the measures were purely repressive and, however severe, were taken in the interest of public safety.

## VII.

Unfortunately the Turk never deigns to explain his own case, and thus the pro-Armenians always manage to hold the field, appalling the public by incessant reiteration and exaggeration as to the number of victims, and apparently valuing to its full extent the wisdom of the old Eastern proverb: Give a life twenty-four hours' start, and it will take a hundred years to overtake it. Later on, when the true figures become available, only a very few inquisitive people realize the falsity of the earlier stories. Thus Lord Bryce, speaking in the House of Lords on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1915, said that the information he had received went to show that 800,000\* was a possible number of the Armenians destroyed since May last. By adding to this figure the 250,000 refugees in Russia for whom funds are requested, and 13,000 refugees in Egypt, we arrive at a grand total of 1,063,000 Armenians, while, according to Sir Charles Wilson, the total Armenian population of the nine Provinces most thickly populated by them is only 925,000, which he describes as an outside estimate. The total number of Arabs killed the Italian newspapers in the Tripolitan war exceeded three times the population of the country. It would seem that the advocates of the Armenians are imitating the Italian Press.

As an example of the most extraordinary reports anent the so-called massacres, furnished to and circulated through the English newspapers by Lord Bryce, is that of Mersina:

The number of Armenians sent *from* this city now totals about 25,000, and this *in addition* to the many thousands coming from the north that pass through.

Yet the total population of Mersina as given in the official returns for 1908 was 20,966 persons, of whom 11,246 were Moslems, 2,441 Jews, and the remaining 7,279 Christians of various sects, Greek, Armenian, Latin and Nestorian. How 25,000 Armenians could have been sent from Mersina out of a total Christian population of 7,279 (at least one half of whom were Greeks), is difficult to understand.

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\* He has since increased this figure to 1,000,000.

The *Times* report of Lord Bryce's statement in the House of Lords quotes him as saying, that at Trebizond

The facts as to the slaughter were vouched for by the Italian Consul, who was there at the time. The Turkish authorities hunted out all the Christians, gathered them together and drove them down the streets to the sea. They were all put on sailing boats and carried out some distance into the Black Sea, and there thrown overboard and drowned; the whole Armenian population of from 8,000 to 10,000 was destroyed in that way in one afternoon.\* After that any other story becomes credible.

Indeed any other story would be more credible. Consider (apart from the time that would be required for the collection and embarkation of the victims) the number of sailing boats necessary to carry 8,000 or 10,000 people "some distance" out to sea, even if the boats were able to make more than one journey! And still this was the preposterous story vouched for, according to Lord Bryce, by the Italian Consul, Signor Corrini, who was there at the time. Yet the account of the same event, as given in the *Rome Messagero* is entirely different, the Consul being made to say that the banishment of Armenians under escort, and wholesale shootings in the streets continued for a whole month, while there is nothing about the Armenians having been shipped out to sea and drowned *en masse* in one afternoon.

It is interesting to compare the original accounts relating to the number of Bulgarians killed in the popular risings of 1876 and of Armenians killed in the Sassun disturbance of 1896, with the subsequent official estimates.

#### ORIGINAL ESTIMATES.

<b>Bulgarians</b> .....	<b>60,000</b>
<b>Armenians</b> .....	<b><u>8,000</u></b>
	<b>68,000</b>

#### SUBSEQUENT OFFICIAL ESTIMATES.

<b>Bulgarian and Turkish Soldiers</b> .....	<b>3,500</b>
<b>Armenians</b> .....	<b><u>900</u></b>
	<b>4,400</b>

We thus see that the total number of victims amounted to only about 6.4 percent of the figures originally circulated. Such exaggeration, deliberately made with the object of appealing to the imagination of sentimental people, is astounding in its mendacity. When we can apply the test of investigation to Lord

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\* The *Times*, in a leading article, adds the further information that "The Italian Consul, who reports this enormity, saw it done with his own eyes."

Bryce's estimate of 800,000 killed in the present alleged "massacres" we shall in all probability find these figures similarly excessive.

All the stories of Turkish misdeeds have proved on investigation to be gross exaggerations beyond the belief of any thoughtful person. Anyone gifted with imagination and a sufficiently prurient mind could write up the stories now being so assiduously circulated to the Press by Armenian agencies acting, undoubtedly, under instructions from a central Bureau.\*

"The Bulgarian atrocities," to which reference has already been made, afford a very good example of how easily a prejudiced sentimentalist can be deceived. The late Canon McColl, at Mr. Gladstone's request, went out to the Balkans to collect evidence. On one occasion his guide (presumably a Levantine, over-anxious to please his employer and to earn some extra backsheesh) pointed out on the horizon a large number of erections, which he asserted were "hundreds of impaled Christians." The report of this was sent home to England, where it made a great sensation as apparently irrefutable first-hand evidence, on good authority. But in the sequel conclusive proof came forth that no Christians had been either massacred or crucified anywhere near that district, and furthermore that the supposed figures were nothing but the common haystacks of the country, which are built around a pole, and which – after the hay has been eaten by the cattle until only a few bunches are left – might bear rather the appearance suggested by the guide. Canon McColl acknowledged his mistake, but of course the mischief had been done.

Leaving aside these stories of "massacres" and extermination of the Armenians, which we believe to be, in the main, a tissue of exaggerations and invention, let us now turn to the question of "Armenian Independence" and examine whether their claim to any such independence is founded on the inherent right which all united races however small, possess to choose their own form of government.

The answer must be an emphatic negation, for the reason that the Armenians are neither the most numerous nor the most homogeneous section of the population of the country in which they live.

Sir Charles Wilson, an unbiased authority, estimates the total Armenian population of the nine provinces of Kurdistan as being 925,000 at the most, or only 15 percent of the total population of 6,130,000, which is made up of 4,460,000 Moslems, 645,000 Greeks and other Christians, plus 100,000 Jews and Gypsies. And General Zelenyi, in a census made for the Caucasus Geographical Society in 1896, estimates that even in the five provinces which they most largely inhabit, the Armenians form only 26 percent of the entire population.

In order to make this minority less apparent, the pro-Armenians take the figures of only 6 provinces – choosing of course those most thickly populated with their friends – and add to them to Greeks, other Christians and Jews; but even then the Moslems are in a large majority.

The following are the figures for 1908 of the population of the nine vilayets specified below, as ascertained by an official census taken by the Ottoman Government: --

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\* "Everything had been carefully prepared in Asia and in the Press of Europe and America before the Armenian outbreak (1893-96) to boom a second Bulgaria." (Sidney Whitman: "Turkish Memories.")

	<b>Moslems.</b>	<b>Non-Moslems, Christians and Jews, Gypsies and Yezidis (Devil Worshippers).</b>	<b>Total Population.</b>
1. Adana. . . . .	185,000	215,000	400,000
2. Aleppo. . . . .	644,597	261,977	906,574
3. Bitlis. . . . .	295,000	75,000	370,000
4. Diarbekir. . . . .	301,509	112,016	413,525
5. Erzerum. . . . .	501,101	146,009	647,110
6. Mamuret el Aziz. . . . .	378,723	101,263	479,986
7. Sivas. . . . .	848,474	273,450	1,121,924
8. Trebizond. . . . .	1,001,260	70,211	1,071,471
9. Van. . . . .	<u>325,000</u>	<u>105,000</u>	<u>430,000</u>
	4,480,664	1,359,926	5,840,590

Even if for the sake of argument we were to grant (although such is far from being the case), that the Christian and Jewish population does form a majority over the Moslem one, it proves no case for the pro-Armenians, because all the Moslems are solidly united in opposition to any alteration of the status quo, while the Christians have no common idea or policy.

Thus a large majority of the Roman Catholics and Protestants, including even the Armenian Roman Catholics and Protestants, as well as the Orthodox Greeks, favor the status quo, as do also the Jews and Gypsies.

The Gregorians are hopelessly divided: some want a national existence when even their friends, like Mr. Buxton, agree that “the population is too divided to permit success,” while others desire annexation by Russia, and on the other hand Boghos Nubar Pasha, the leader of the largest section, declares that they desire to remain with their fellow Moslems an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.

#### VIII.

The stories that have been so assiduously circulated about wholesale “massacres” of Armenians have a distinct object in view, viz: to influence the future policy of the British Government and to prepare the public mind for the desired settlement – the incorporation of Armenia in the Russian Empire.

The advocates of this arrangement naturally uphold the correlative policy of Great Britain annexing Mesopotamia. Superficially considered the idea looks attractive, however opposed it may be to the proclaimed objects with which we embarked on this war. It would appear, however, that the supporters of the scheme have both properly considered the profound underlying dangers of their project. The very fact of the great importance attached to the Anglo-Russian Alliance should inspire one with the gravest doubts as to the wisdom of the suggestion. Two great Powers with frontiers meeting along such a tract of country

may at any moment not see eye to eye on every question. There is no continuity in international politics; they change from day to day according to the needs of a situation which can never be permanently fixed. It is the duty of statesmen to look further than the immediate present, and England will never forgive it, if in the settlement at the conclusion of the war they permit mistakes, which would almost inevitably lead to friction between two prospective neighbors and present friends.

In this connection it may be useful to recall the prophetic words of Sir Henry Layard, one of our ablest and most far-sighted diplomatists:

It would probably signify little to the rest of Europe whether Russia retained Armenia or not. But England has to consider the effect of the annexation to Russia of this important Province upon the British Possessions in India. Russia would then command the whole of Asia Minor and the great valley of the Euphrates and Tigris which would inevitably fall into her hands in course of time. . . The moral effect of the conquest of Armenia and the annexation of Ghilan and Mazanderan by Russia upon our Mohammedan subjects, and upon the population of Central Asia cannot be overlooked by a statesman who attaches any value to the retention of India as part of the British Empire.

Mr. Grattan Geary, than whom no writer has studied more closely the question at issue, speaks thus of the enormous advantage which the Power in possession of highland Kurdistan would have over the one that ruled lowland Mesopotamia:

Diarbekir is the key to the valleys of both the Tigris and the Euphrates – once there, they can decide whether they will move down the former to Bagdad, or down the latter to a point where they can command both rivers and reach the gulf. . .the forests at the head of both rivers supply the means of constructing with small cost light boats or rafts, for floating reinforcements and military stores to any point where a General might choose to establish an entrenched camp, so that it would be almost impossible to shake his hold of the country, once he had entered and taken possession. . . For it must be borne in mind that the swift currents of those rivers will enable an army to move without fatigue or difficulty from North to South, while a force moving northwards must tail along a roadless country where rapid marching is out of the question. . . Once an army gets into the Mesopotamia plains, there is no fortified place there that could withstand it for an hour, and the current of the rivers would save even this line of invasion. The Emperor Trajan and a couple of centuries later the Emperor Julian, descended the Euphrates with large fleets put together in the Armenian mountains.

It is interesting to note that in Mr. Grattan Geary's opinion a powerful nation holding Kurdistan could equally from Diarbekir overrun Syria and seriously menace Egypt.

It may therefore not be out of place to consider how the Armenian question stood immediately before the outbreak of the European war.

The policy of the British Government, bound by the Cyprus Convention to maintain the integrity of the Sultan's dominions in Asia, had been to strengthen the position of Turkey by loyally endeavoring to ameliorate the unrest which the revolutionary societies had stirred up amongst the Armenians. It is well known that all schemes of reform proposed by Great Britain or by Turkey herself, had been without exception cold-shouldered or openly opposed by Russia, firstly because they would, if successful, destroy

any excuse for intervention and subsequent annexation; secondly because they contained some form or other of self-government, which Russia feared would not only encourage the national feeling of the Ottoman Armenians (who would look to England as their protector rather than to Russia), but would also encourage a similar national sentiment amongst the Armenians in the Caucasus.

With the advent of the Anglo-Russian Entente, our policy was revised. There are many Englishmen who believed, and still firmly believe, that wise and prescient statesmanship should have succeeded in reconciling, or at least allying, the hereditary animosity which existed between our new friend and our old, traditional ally, and that in any case it would have been more worthy and more dignified, besides being to the advantage of this country, had we openly declared that under no circumstances would we sacrifice sacred obligations and old friendships to a policy of expediency. Public opinion, awakened by recent occurrences in the Near East, at last realizes how mistaken was the attitude of our Government towards Turkey. Official Russia, we believe, would have appreciated and accepted our point of view. Progressive Russia most certainly would have done so.

Unfortunately the British Government apparently thought otherwise. In 1912, the Porte without any outside pressure and being genuinely anxious to improve the condition of her Asiatic provinces, demanded (under the terms of the Cyprus Convention) that they should be supplied with British administrators, but these were refused.

The Russian Government then took up the question of the reforms, and Turkey appealed to Germany to protect her from the very unpalatable scheme put forward by Russia. Germany gained a nominal victory, but success really rested with Russia. As a compromise a thoroughly unpractical scheme was adopted, by which two Inspector Generals were appointed, one of whom was a Dutchman and the other a Norwegian. Either had any knowledge of the Near East: one spoke no language other than his own, and the other in addition spoke only a few words of French. Then came the European War, and neither of these gentlemen ever reached Kurdistan. The scheme was foredoomed to failure, as was, indeed, expected. In this connection the Russian "Orange Book" is full of interest. We find there that during the negotiations, on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1913, M. Sazanoff sent the Porte a vigorous dispatch, in which he laid stress on the fact that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire largely depended upon the degree of pacification of the Armenian provinces. He further declared that:

The Imperial Government cannot admit a chronic state of anarchy, which by reason of the proximity of the Turkish frontier, cannot fail to have a most pernicious effect on the neighboring provinces of the Caucasus.

Further light is thrown on the situation as it was then, by an article published at that time in the "Nineteenth Century" by Mr. Noel Buxton, who had been travelling in Kurdistan. Mr. Buxton is all the more convincing because the object of the article apparently was to prove, that the only salvation of the district was annexation by Russia. Mr. Noel Buxton wrote:

The present aim of Russia's policy is also, perhaps, to prevent the Kurdish chiefs in the Turkish territory *from making terms with the Turks or on the other hand with the Christians*, and so to keep up the *excuse for possible intervention*.

Mr. Buxton then proceeds to justify this policy of creating disorder. It was the policy his friends the Bulgars had pursued with such success in Macedonia with the Komitadjis\* (as was to be expected, we now find Mr. Buxton taking a prominent role in damning the Turks for the recent alleged massacres). Mr. Walter Guinness, M.P., in his description of a tour made in Kurdistan about the same time as Mr. Buxton, corroborates the evidence of that gentleman. He mentions numerous indications of an active Russian propaganda not only amongst the Armenians, but among the Kurds as well. He adds:

*Many of these (the Kurds) are armed with Russian rifles, and in the mountains I found, in an out of the way village, a Russian dressed as a Kurd, and living the life of the Kurds.*

Russia was arming both the Kurds and the Orthodox Armenians. The object was two-fold: the Kurds would resist the measures taken by the local officials to enforce the decree against the carrying of rifles, which had been promulgated by the Turkish Government in order to enforce law and order, and the Armenians, excited by agents-provocateur and revolutionaries, would be encouraged to revolt. In either event there would be disturbances, which would enable Russia to point to the failure of European control as justification for her armed intervention followed by annexation, on the ground that this was the only possible solution. The observant student of current history will no doubt perceive in this desired end an interesting and instructive parallel to the handing over to Austria of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and her final cynical annexation of those provinces; whether the parallel would stop here, if the object is gained, may be told by some future historian.

## IX.

Some people, perhaps, will say that whether these stories of massacres be true or false, it is inopportune to defend the reputation of a nation with whom we are at war. If this argument were true, it would apply with equal force as a criticism of the officers and men who have written home from Gallipoli, giving spontaneously such wholehearted and generous testimony to the bravery and chivalry of the Turks. Truth can never be inopportune so long as our conscience is clear, which it would not be if we allowed false stories to remain uncontradicted simply because the untrue assertions might be detrimental to an enemy. But at this advanced stage of the war such stories are scarcely likely to have any effect on the neutral nations, who are, indeed, more likely to be influenced in our favor if we show ourselves fair-minded and willing to investigate the truth. Their object is simply to bias public opinion in this country still further against an already misjudged and badly maligned enemy.

Some good-natured people have indeed gone so far as to say, that "the fact of the Armenians rising in rebellion and butchering the Moslems of Van and only waiting an opportunity to do so in other places, was no justification for the severity of the Turkish Government, or for the reprisals of the local Turks and the cruelties of the Kurds." But even admitting, all exaggeration apart, the severity of the Turkish

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\* On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1913, the Special Correspondent of *The Times* at Constantinople warned his readers that there was great danger of the introduction into Asia Minor of Macedonian methods with band-warfare and all its attendant horrors, and in February, 1914, the Press reported that a large quantity of contraband ammunition had been seized by the gendarmerie in the vilayet of Bitlis.

Government's action in ordering the removal of the Armenian population and the methods adopted by local officials to stamp out disaffection, it must not be forgotten how critical the situation was for Turkey: that for her it was a matter of life and death. There is not the slightest doubt that unless the incipient revolution had been immediately crushed and further danger removed, the Turkish army on the Caucasus would have been hopelessly cut off and the Moslem population exterminated at the hands of the revolutionaries. The British Government has never hesitated under much less critical conditions to suppress rebellion within its borders with an iron hand and by measures which, surveyed after the time of stress and danger was past, have appeared both harsh and cruel in the extreme.

It is possible that a certain number of innocent Armenians may have been killed by the mob who, infuriated and panic-stricken by the reports they had received of the butchery of their co-religionists at Van, and the slaughter of the soldiers at Zeitun, believed that should the Armenians get the upper hand they would suffer in the same manner; but for the fate of these poor victims, or for the excesses committed by the Kurds, it would hardly be just to hold either the Turkish Government, or the local Turkish officials responsible. These had done everything possible to disarm the tribes so as to make them amenable to law and order, but despite their endeavors the Kurds were being continually armed by outside agencies. One of the principal causes of the Albanian revolution was the attempt to disarm the mountaineers, and after that experience it is greatly to the credit of the Turkish Government that they still persisted in trying to deprive the Kurds of their rifles.

We had no hesitation in repeating that these stories of wholesale massacre have been circulated with the distinct object of influencing, detrimentally to Turkey, the future policy of the British Government when the time of settlement shall arrive. No apology, therefore, is needed for honestly endeavoring to show how a nation with whom we were closely allied for many years and which possesses the same faith of millions of our fellow-subjects, has been condemned for perpetrating horrible excesses against humanity on "evidence" which, when not absolutely false, is grossly and shamelessly exaggerated.

During the Boer war the most horrible charges were made on the Continent against the conduct of our troops. One picture, for example, in the then famous and widely circulated French *Assize de Bearer*, showed a number of British soldiers lining a trench and firing on the advancing Boers, who were unable to reply because a number of their own women-folk were tied to stakes along the front of the British trenches. By pictures such as these the fury of the European nations was roused against us, and there was hardly a single one we could call a friend. Turkey, however, stood true: thousands of her Moslem subjects volunteered to fight for us, and prayers were offered up in her mosques for the success of the British arms. And over a score of influential Moslems, headed by Obeid-Ullah Effendi, formerly Minister of Education for Syria and today a member of the Ottoman Legislative Assembly, attended at the British Embassy at Pera, and there openly made prayers for the success of the British Arms in South Africa.

The Turks are one of the few races who have always found themselves in full sympathy with the British character, and to whom we appeared neither "cold" nor "perfidious." This is not surprising, because the characteristics of the two peoples are very similar, with the exception that the Turk is not a sportsman

for the reason that he objects to taking life unnecessarily; which fact does not however prevent the British soldier from referring to him as a “good sport.”

Although the Turk may at times have expressed regret and disappointment at some action of the British Government, they always ended by saying “ah, if only Beaconsfield or Palmerston were alive; they were men!” This liking is reciprocated by most Englishmen, and especially by those who have lived for any length of time in close contact and community with the Turks (such as the Whittalls, one of the great families of English merchants who have made Constantinople their home). On the occasion of King Edward’s telegram of congratulation to Sultan Abdul Hamid after the grant of the Turkish Constitution, Sir William Whittall wrote in the *Near East* October 1908:

It is to be hoped that, as now practically the whole of Turkey is enthusiastic for England, we shall know how to meet the circumstances and preserve their affection, for they are worth loving, and some future day their love for us will be an important factor in our history.

Unfortunately these high expectations remain unfulfilled.

British officers and soldiers fighting in Gallipoli have under strange conditions developed this sentimental liking for their opponents. The Rev. Dr. Ewing, a Scottish chaplain serving with the forces in Gallipoli, relates the appreciation shown by a captured Turkish officer when, being led behind our lines, he was the care with which the clergyman had fenced round the little Moslem cemetery to protect “God’s acre” from destruction, and writes: -- “Such little amenities may do something to soften the asperities of war, and make easier the resumption of friendly relations when the war is over.” “On the whole, however,” he adds, “I can hardly imagine a war waged with less animosity on both sides, than this between ourselves and the Turks.” If such are the impressions and experience gathered on the battlefield itself, it would behoove us here at home in England to treat with the greatest circumspection, at least, the accusations against an honorable foe and – mindful of the many “God’s acres” that have been consecrated on the fire-swept slopes of Gallipoli by the blood of Christian and Moslem heroes alike – to be careful lest any wanton or unqualified word of ours make more difficult “the resumption of friendly relations when the war is over.”