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CAN ISLAM BE REFORMED?

THE many liberal movements which for more than a quarter of a century have been smouldering in the Muhammadan world have suddenly blazed up into the light of day, and Europe has been taken by surprise at the sight of Turks and Persians demanding a constitutional government; but to those who have had an opportunity of watching the progress of liberal and modern ideas among Muhammadans it has long been evident that some such attempt to arrest the imminent decay of Islam would soon be made. Not only in Egypt and India, where Moslems are most directly exposed to the influence of European thought, but in Asiatic Turkey and Persia, and even in Afghanistan, Moslems are being affected by ideas which are in their origin European, however much their presentment may have been changed to commend them to Oriental audiences. I am not afraid to say that in the best minds these ideas have found a welcome upon their own merits, from their innate superiority over the ideas which they dispossessed. But their acceptance by the generality has undoubtedly been enormously stimulated by the desire to escape from the ruin which is impending over the Muhammadan world. 'The sword has departed from Islam' is a phrase which I have frequently heard upon the lips of Indian Muhammadans; and we may well believe that wherever Muhammadans are gathered together, whether in the bazars of Kabul, or the caravanserais of Tripoli, or beneath the shadow of the Ka'bah, this is the absorbing subject of conversation; and when stories have been exchanged of the successful aggressions of the French, the English, and the Russians, the question must often be asked, 'How have the Franks succeeded in achieving such preponderance as to be able to triumph over the Faithful?' Here and there an intrepid thinker, like my friend Mr. Sayyid Husain Bilgrami, will lay bare the true source of the disease and say frankly to his people, 'We lost the qualities which gave us empire long before we lost empire itself.' But these bitter truths cannot be relished by the masses; it is more congenial to national self-love to believe that it is not moral or intellectual superiority which has given Christendom its predominance, but rather that this predominance is due to some specific contrivance or artifice of which the Franks have the secret,

and that if the Moslems could but learn the trick of it they would be able to make head against Christendom as easily as they did of old. And what more natural than to suppose that Parliamentary institutions are such a device? How plausible it must appear to a people whose affairs are mismanaged by a self-indulgent despot that the reason of Western supremacy is that in Europe public affairs are directed by a council composed of the best and wisest elders of the nation, and that by this means the favouritism and corruption which have brought the Islamic kingdoms so low are avoided. The leaders are not victims of these facile delusions; they know that the Moslems have a long and weary way to go before they can come up with the van of European progress; none the less, these delusions have helped the cause of reform, for the new ideas would have made but slow progress did they not commend themselves to the people as specifics for the malady from which they were suffering.

Can the leaders bring their movement to a successful issue? Can the social structure of Islam be brought into harmony with modern ideas? This is a question in which half the Chancelleries of Europe are vitally interested, inasmuch as a constitutional government is an obvious impossibility in Moslem countries if Moslem society is incapable of reform. Lord Cromer, who has been in close contact with Muhammadan statesmen, who can write of them with genuine friendship, does not hesitate to answer this question with an emphatic negative. 'It should never be forgotten,' he says in the second volume of *Modern Egypt*, 'that Islam cannot be reformed. That is to say, that reformed Islam is Islam no longer.' This is not a chance phrase, an *obiter dictum* of secondary importance; it is the bed-rock upon which his conclusions regarding the future rest. 'Islamism,' he says elsewhere, 'as a social and political system, though not as a religion, is moribund.' The concern of Muhammad Beyram to bring Islam and its ways into harmony with modern society he describes as an attempt to square the circle, and he closes his admirable portrait of him with these gloomy words:

We may sympathise, and for my part I do heartily sympathise, with the Muhammad Beyrams of Islam, but let no practical politician think that they have a plan capable of resuscitating a body which is not indeed dead and which may yet linger on for centuries, but which is, nevertheless, politically and socially moribund and whose gradual decay cannot be arrested by any modern palliatives, however skilfully they may be applied.

This, of course, is a conjecture about the future which time alone can prove or disprove, but it is presumably based upon observation of the present; indeed, it is but another way of presenting a charge which has often before been brought against Muhammadans, the charge, namely, that Islam is rigid and inelastic, incapable of change and therefore incapable of reform. Lord Cromer himself shares this popular opinion. 'Islam,' he asserts, 'speaking not so much through the Koran as the traditions which cluster round the Koran, crystallises religion and law into one inseparable and immutable whole, with the result that all

elasticity is taken away from the social system.' Here, then, is the root of Lord Cromer's pessimism and the source of many other prophecies about the imminent decay of Islam. Never was there a generalisation made in more flagrant defiance of the facts. Far from being inelastic, Muhammadan opinions have changed in the past, are changing now, and will presumably continue to change in the future. The alleged rigidity of Islam is a European myth, for the groundlessness of which there is overwhelming evidence. The myth, it is charitable to suppose, arose from the fact that Muhammadans themselves are averse to such an expression as the 'reform of Islam.' Islam is the name of a divine revelation, and the suggestion of reforming it gives them something of the shock which a Christian would experience on hearing of a proposal to 'amend the Gospel.' But has this horror of 'amending the Gospel' ever stood in the way of reform in Christendom? The infallibility of Holy Writ must be the starting-point of all reformers. Those who go further and pretend to a new revelation, like the Mormons or the Babis, are founding a new religion, not reforming an old one. From Wyclif to Tolstoi every Christian reformer has claimed not to amend the Gospel, but to bring to light its true meaning, which the Churches had perverted or misunderstood, and in the same way the Muhammadan reformer has claimed not to 'reform Islam,' but to show his people the error of their ways, and bring them back to the practice and understanding of the true faith, as it was practised and understood by the companions of the Prophet; his professed object has not been to alter but to restore, a formula under which the greatest reforms in all ages have been accomplished. Protestants, at least, should not find it hard to understand his position, for the great reformers of the sixteenth century appealed exactly in the same way to Scripture, to the early Fathers, and the practice of the primitive Church against the errors of Rome.

A convincing proof that Muhammadan opinion is susceptible of change, and therefore of reform (under a conservative formula) is to be found in the number of sects or heresies into which the Islamic world is divided; for what is a heresy but an attempt at reform? If the attempt fails, the reform is confined to a sect, it remains a heresy. If it is accepted by the majority of the believers, it becomes the orthodox faith, but in any case the movement was, in the eyes of the founders, a change for the better—that is, a reform. The power to throw out new sects is a vital function. It indicates that thought is not stagnant, but that the people are adapting their religious beliefs to the changing ideas of the age. Islam has never for long lost this vital power. As early as the third century of the Hijra it was believed that Islam was divided into seventy-two (or seventy-three) sects, and though in the sixth century the celebrated theologian Fakhruddin al Râzi (quoted by Dr. Goldziher) maintained that the number of divergences upon the fundamental dogmas of religion was not so great, he yet recognised that if differences of

secondary importance were reckoned this number should be more than doubled. Since Fakhruddin died (606 A.H.) many sects have decayed and many others have sprung up in their place. The great Wahabi movement of the eighteenth century of our era, which came into being in the very cradle of Islam itself, is alone sufficient indication that the capacity of reform resided in Muhammadan society, and was not dependent upon external inspiration. In modern times, under the stimulating influence of European ideas, new sects are multiplying with amazing rapidity under our eyes. In Hughes's *Dictionary of Islam* authority is quoted for the assertion that there are no fewer than 150. In the Panjab, that fruitful nursery of religious dissent, Islam is honeycombed with sects of which very few have ever come upon European records. They are of every variety. At one end of the scale are the Ahl-i-Koran, the people of the Koran, who reject the traditions and interpret the Koran by the Koran itself, which means in practice that they put the spirit above the letter of Holy Writ. At the other extreme are the Ahmadiyya Musalmans, or followers of the recently deceased Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Kadian, who styled himself 'the Promised Messiah'; these sectaries were prudent enough to send a synopsis of their beliefs to the compilers of the census of 1901, from which it appears that 'the characteristic mark of this sect is that it not only reprobates the doctrine of the *jihad* (Holy War) with the sword, but does not even look forward to its enforcement at any future time. Wars undertaken for the propagation of religion it regards as absolutely unlawful.' This, no doubt, was comfortable doctrine to the English officials who had to compile the census, but perhaps the most characteristic teaching of the sect is the emphasis laid by them upon peace and good-will, which the name Ahmadiyya is supposed to indicate. I have purposely selected for mention sects which have grown up in the lap of Islam itself, and which cannot, like the Nechari doctrines of the late Sir Sayyid Ahmad, be traced to a European source; but even in this case the influence of Europe may easily be overrated. The term Nechari is, indeed, derived from the English word 'nature,' and connotes the modern scientific conception that God does not interfere with the course of Nature, for Sir Sayyid was no believer in miracles; but it should not be forgotten that he knew very little English, and that his first impulse to heterodoxy was not given by European speculation but by the teaching of the Wahabis, and that to the end his mind moved in Oriental and not in Western channels of thought. The growth of new sects in Muhammadan India has no doubt its parallel in Persia and Turkey, though where the press is not free such movements long escape observation and record; but in Egypt Lord Cromer has himself observed that the teaching of the late Mufti Muhammad Abduh forms a striking parallel to the teaching of Sir Sayyid Ahmad.

I am tempted to lay stress upon the multiplication of new sects

because evidence of this kind is positive and palpable. The mere number of new sects is in the nature of a statistical criterion of the capacity to reform; but it is a very imperfect measure of the extent to which Musalmans are adapting their religious opinions to the spirit of the time. To join a distinct sect is to make a public profession of a change of view; it is an extreme sacrifice which every man whose opinions have been modified does not feel called to make. Perhaps the greatest changes of all are those which take place almost imperceptibly and without any violent wrench. Men who have imbibed something of modern thought re-read their Scriptures in the light of their new acquirements; those parts of Holy Writ which do not correspond with their present needs make but a slight impression, and fade into the background of their mental vision. Whereas other parts, to which they had perhaps hitherto paid little attention, give a direct answer to the immediate wants of the soul. These are read and re-read, and become of supreme importance. The Scripture indeed remains the same, but the emphasis laid upon its various passages is altered. It would not be just to say that men pick out of Scripture the passages which suit them and disregard the rest, for the process is performed unconsciously. But the result is much the same as if they had done so. The texts which were most commonly in the mouths of the Fifth Monarchy men were obviously not those from which James Martineau drew his inspiration, because the spirit in which they read the Bible was so different from his; and a similar change has come over the Moslem world. In the twentieth century it is natural that Muhammadans should be most attracted to those passages in the Koran in which the spiritual side of Islam is most emphasised; to an outsider it appears as if the whole creed by this re-reading had become more humane. In India a not inconsiderable number of my Muhammadan acquaintances believe that

- (1) The use of force for the propagation of the faith is forbidden by Islam.
- (2) That Islam enjoins monogamy.
- (3) That slavery is inconsistent with Islam, which asserts the brotherhood of man.

These opinions indicate a stupendous advance. Half a century ago no friend of the Muhammadans, however sympathetic, would have believed in the possibility of their existence. Hughes, in his *Dictionary of Islam* (published in 1885), declares that Muhammadanism teaches the exact opposite in all three cases. Other departures from that rigid code which Europe persists in ascribing to Islam occur to me, such as

- (1) Moslems ought to welcome science and knowledge from whatever source.
- (2) The sacrifice of animals is undesirable and not obligatory.
- (3) Islam does not impose the dogma of predestination.

The last, indeed, was a doctrine of the Mutazilah (founded in the second century of the Hijra), who contended, among other things, that man was a free agent; in many respects the young generation, as Mr. Ameer Ali has said, is tending unconsciously towards these Mutazalite doctrines. The point however which I wish to emphasise is that these opinions are not peculiar to Europeanised Moslems, but are held by many who are scrupulous in the observation of fast and prayer, and who have never cut themselves off from the communion of the orthodox. I have known a case in which the more modern, or liberal, view was defended by a Muhammadan who knew no European language, and was attacked by a man educated in Europe. A Turkish doctor, who had come to India to study the treatment of cholera, once came to lunch with me at Aligarh, and I asked the distinguished Indian scholar, Maulavi Shibli Nomani, to meet him. Our conversation dragged a little at first because it had to be conducted in three languages, French, Persian, and Urdu, but it happened to fall upon the question of polygamy, and then it became brisk enough. The Turkish doctor, in defence of his views, was explaining to me in French what charm there was in variety, and, pointing to some roses on the table, he remarked how much more pleasing it was to have a bunch of them than a single flower. Maulavi Shibli, who knew just sufficient French to understand the drift of our remarks, grew visibly more agitated as we proceeded. At last he broke forth in indignant reprobation, rained upon the unhappy doctor a shower of texts from the Koran and the Hadis, and triumphantly demonstrated that the views he held were directly repugnant to the true faith; the man of science was completely discomfited and had to withdraw under cover of the excuse that he was no theologian. Examples such as this could be multiplied indefinitely, and show to my mind that the reform of Muhammadan opinion which is said to be impossible is actually taking place in India. From all I can learn, the same change is taking place in other civilised Muhammadan countries, and I was not surprised to observe that one of the demands presented by the populace to the Sultan of Turkey during the revolutionary crisis was that he should put away his liberal establishment and restrict himself to one consort in the future.

I know that some Christian controversialists say, 'Oh, if Islam is so changed as to tolerate liberal ideas, it is no longer Islam.' Why not? If the people continue to call themselves Moslems and continue to derive their inspiration from the message of Muhammad, I cannot see how they can be denied the name. No religion is ever an unchanging body of doctrine; from generation to generation it is readjusted to satisfy the changes of human thought. Christianity can rightly boast that it has always shown itself singularly capable of such development, and that in spite of Ecumenical Councils its real creed has never been stereotyped. Had an observer as intelligent as Lord Cromer visited Europe in the fifteenth century, he might with great

plausibility have argued that Christianity without a priesthood was Christianity no longer; but would anybody in the twentieth century dream of asserting that Presbyterians are not Christians? For my part I would not deny the epithet Christian to any one of the links in that long chain of ideas which connects General Booth with Calvin and Hildebrand, and for the same reason I do not withhold the name Moslem from any body of men who express their outlook upon the universe in terms of Islam. I confess I look forward not only with hope but with confidence to a great reform in the Muhammadan world, to 'the regeneration of a fallen people,' as we say at Aligarh. I see that the Muhammadans find no obstacle in their religion, rightly conceived, to the adoption of European education and scientific ideas; that the men who hold these views are not only intellectually but morally superior to their forefathers; and that, though there has been a loosening of the hold which their faith has upon some of the young men, a large proportion of them retain an unquestioning belief in their religion, and all of them, including even the agnostics, cherish a singularly warm affection for the Prophet Muhammad and a pride in their Moslem heritage.

I see, then, no reason for accepting Lord Cromer's dictum that Islamism as a social system is moribund; but, for reasons which are in no way connected with the Muhammadan faith, I fear that many obstacles will be found in the path of political reconstruction. It is true that social reform is an indispensable condition of political reform, but the possession of the domestic virtues does not necessarily imply political capacity; it cannot be pretended that because a people are virtuous in private life they are therefore capable of originating and working political institutions competent to replace the despotism by which all Muhammadan countries have hitherto been governed. That Turks and Persians should desire to start some sort of Parliamentary government is natural. The evil against which they are for the moment most anxious to protect themselves is arbitrary despotism, and as Mr. Reshid Sadi said in the *Times* of August 4, 'human ingenuity has so far devised no efficacious means of controlling such sovereign power but parliamentary institutions.' But parliamentary institutions cannot be established and put at work as machinery can be erected and set running; they depend for their success upon the people who have to work them—that is to say, upon a great mass of individuals who have had no previous experience of politics. If it were merely a question of reforming the public services, and even of nominating a capable assembly, that would not present a very grave difficulty. There must be patriotic and educated Turks in sufficient numbers to fill all these places. But representative institutions postulate that this patriotism and this education and capacity for dealing with public questions should be diffused among the people at large. The whole

body of the people, or at least the whole electorate, must have the capacity to associate together for public ends, and this capacity is not so much a matter of intelligence or even honesty as of temper and habit. Men who have been used to work together, in whatever public cause, it may be only to collect subscriptions or to run an orphanage or to safeguard a threatened interest, learn to give and take, to subordinate private to public interests, to trust each other, to follow a leader, in one case to guide opinion and to take responsibility in another; they acquire rather by practice than precept the temper necessary for working political institutions.

It must be confessed that Muhammadans have hitherto had little practice in this association for public purposes. Arbitrary monarchs have always been jealous of the existence of power in local bodies, and, indeed, of any power that was not derived from themselves. Louis XIV, as Saint-Simon tells us, was jealous of the few privileges which remained to the French nobility, because

il ne vouloit de grandeur que par émanation de la sienne. . . . Il sentoit bien qu'il pouvoit accabler un seigneur sous le poids de sa disgrâce, mais non pas l'anéantir ni les siens, au lieu qu'en précipitant un Secrétaire d'Etat de sa place ou un autre ministre de la même espèce, il le replongeoit, lui et tous les siens, dans la profondeur du néant d'où cette place l'avoit tiré.

The same malignant vanity in Oriental despots has killed out all but the rudest germs of political institutions in Muhammadan countries. Muhammadans like to think that because the Commander of the Faithful was in early days elected by a sort of popular vote, therefore democratic government is natural to all Moslems. I fear that a precedent which has been in abeyance for twelve centuries carries little weight in practical politics. I do not see that Socialism in Christendom derives any assistance from the fact that the early Christians held all their goods in common. Muhammadans must build up their institutions with the materials which the last two or three hundred years have put into their hands, and I am compelled to recognise that their task is a difficult one, for these materials are extremely scanty. But the difficulty of their task is not due to their religion, but to the previous existence of a centralised despotism, and it is only fair to recognise that Christian Russia is confronted with exactly the same problem. Indeed, any autocracy which manages all a people's affairs for them and permits them to do nothing for themselves, weakens their power of self-government, and the more efficient the autocracy the more the political capacity of the people is atrophied. This may partly explain the fact mentioned by Lord Cromer that 'the Turco-Egyptians, who might perhaps have been able to govern the country in a rude fashion in 1883, were incapable of doing so when the full tide of civilisation had set strongly in'—that is to say, by the time that Lord Cromer had raised the Administration to so high a pitch of efficiency.

Perhaps it is of good augury for the political future of Muhammadan

countries that Oriental despotisms, though excessively centralised, have rarely been highly efficient, and that, through weakness rather than policy, they have usually been obliged to leave some power in the hands of sections of the people. Thus, for example, the village has usually been allowed to manage its own affairs; the religious leaders of certain communities have often been given authority over their own co-religionists; and certain noble families exercise, *de facto*, a great deal of power in their own localities. These are germs from which indigenous political institutions might perhaps be developed. These and all other forms of self-government native to the soil should be carefully cherished, for the people will work them better than any theoretically superior institutions with which they are not familiar. Situated as the Muhammadans are, they need to preserve all the elements which conduce to the stability of their social order, for if they attempt to reconstitute their government upon abstract principles, they may find, in the pregnant words of Taine, that what they hoped was a revolution may prove to be dissolution.

THEODORE MORISON.

TURKEY IN 1876

A RETROSPECT

At a time when the attention of Europe has been arrested by recent events in Turkey it may not be amiss to recall something of the history of that country during the period which immediately preceded the promulgation of the short-lived and ill-fated Constitution of 1876. By so doing we shall, perhaps, gain some insight into the causes which led to the cold and even hostile reception accorded to it in England—a reception which unfortunately greatly encouraged the Sultan to set about quickly to recover his authority and to re-establish the autocratic form of government which had been so fatal to the prosperity of the Empire.

In many respects the political position of Turkey to-day closely resembles that of 1876, but there are now two hopeful factors which were then entirely absent: namely, the friendly attitude of Russia and the sympathetic disposition of Europe in general towards the new Constitution. In 1876 great ignorance prevailed as to the conditions of the country, and people were accustomed to divide the inhabitants roughly into 'Turks' and 'Christians.' This ignorance has very largely disappeared, and the world has realised something of the difficulty attending on the government of so many different nationalities, whose mutual antipathies and sympathies depend far more on racial than religious distinctions.

The troubles which came upon Turkey, beginning with the Herzegovinian insurrection in 1875, followed by the wars with Servia and Montenegro, the rising in Bulgaria with its bloody repression, the unfortunate Conference of Constantinople, and the disastrous war with Russia, were beyond all question attributable to the once famous though now almost forgotten *Drei-Kaiser-Bund*, or league for common action between the Governments of the three Northern Empires. The effect of it was to secure for Russia the whole weight of Austria in pursuing her traditional policy of weakening and embarrassing Turkey, though this was far from being contemplated or intended by Count Andrassy, who was then at the head of the Austro-Hungarian Government. Austria, when she went into the alliance, no doubt hoped to check the Russian intrigues in Turkey, but she

speedily became entangled in the tortuous Muscovite policy. The consequences of the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* quickly became apparent in the breaking-out of the Herzegovinian insurrection in July 1875, which began immediately on the return from banishment to Montenegro of a number of turbulent Bosnians in favour of whom the Russian Embassy had strongly interceded. They first attacked and murdered a party of Turkish travellers, and then robbed and burnt the villages whose inhabitants refused to join them, and in this way their numbers were soon increased, though at first by very unwilling recruits. The country had been so quiet that there was no force at hand to put down the disturbance, and when the Governor asked for a couple of hundred men the Russian and Austrian Embassies remonstrated, urging the Porte not to give unreal importance to an insignificant rising. Advice to do nothing being always agreeable to the Porte, that course was followed, and this farce took place again and again. The Governor-General continued to beg in vain for reinforcements as the movement acquired greater extension, his applications being always counteracted by the objections of the three Embassies. So little did Russia conceal her sympathy with the rebellion that the chiefs used to meet and concert their plans at the house of M. Yonine, her Consul-General at Ragusa, and on one occasion when an insurgent chief was killed the Russian flag was displayed at half-mast, and the Consul attended the funeral in full uniform. The Austrian frontier was under the charge of Count Rodich, Governor-General of Dalmatia, and his feelings being strongly Slavophil he permitted the armed bands when too hotly pressed to pass over the frontier, where they could not be pursued. They received supplies and ammunition, and reappeared in another quarter, and this in spite of assurances from Vienna that any armed body crossing over into Austria would be at once disarmed and *interné*. Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the insurrection grew in extent and went on for month after month, till the three Powers determined to take the matter in hand, and the Andrassy Note was issued in December 1875. This proving fruitless, it was followed in the month of May by the famous and equally fruitless Berlin Memorandum, which our Government were afterwards blamed for having rejected instead of amending, by which course it was said they had prevented common action by the European Powers. There is little justice in the accusation, for the *Drei-Kaiser-Bund* itself had put an end to all general concert.

The Prime Ministers of the three Emperors—Prince Gortchakow, Prince Bismarck, and Count Andrassy—met at Berlin, and there, without consultation or communication with any other Government, drew up the famous Memorandum, simply informing the different Cabinets by telegraph¹ of its substance, and contemptuously asking that their

¹ May 13th. See Turkey 3, 1876, No. 248.

adherence should at once be telegraphed back ; for the three Chancellors did not consider it necessary to remain at Berlin long enough to allow of their receiving written answers, or discussing any observations or objections which others might wish to make. The Memorandum was flung to us as an intimation of the decision of the three Emperors, to which, indeed, we might give our adhesion, but without a hint that any amendment would be listened to. The terms of the Memorandum were such as to make it difficult to believe that its authors can ever have supposed it likely to lead to a pacification, for it was evidently far more calculated to insure a prolongation than a termination of the struggle. The objections to the Memorandum were mercilessly exposed by Lord Derby in a conversation with Count Münster, the German Ambassador,² and the refusal of the Government to have anything to do with it was, at the time, unanimously approved by all parties in England ; it was not till later that Mr. Gladstone reproached them for the course they had followed. This famous document had at last rather an ignominious end. It was to have been presented to the Turkish Government by the representatives of the three Powers on the 30th of May 1876, and on the morning of that day Sultan Abdul Aziz was deposed. There was then a little hesitation as to what was to be done about it ; for, while the Russians wished it to be presented to the Ministers of the new Sultan as soon as he was recognised, Count Andrassy supported by Prince Bismarck was in favour of delay, the result being that after standing over for a time it was allowed to drop without ever having been presented at all. Such was the end of this famous instrument, which, though never acted upon, contributed much to keep alive the insurrection and to encourage the Servians and Montenegrins in their preparations for war, by convincing them that foreign pressure would in the end be laid upon the Turkish Government.

For some time before the year 1875 grave symptoms of discontent had manifested themselves throughout Turkey. The government of the country had up to 1871 been in the hands of Aali and Fuad Pashas, two men of such marked ability and strength of character that even Sultan Abdul Aziz felt their authority, and, though he chafed under it, could not emancipate himself from their control. During their administration Turkey had made slow but distinct progress, but when both Aali and Fuad Pashas died in 1871 the Sultan made Mahmoud Nedim Pasha Grand Vizier, and from that time forward began a reign of corruption and oppression throughout the land. Appointments of all kinds were purchased through the Imperial harem ; the salaries of officials of all grades remained in arrears or unpaid, while the Sultan and his favourites squandered millions with the most boundless extravagance. This state of affairs brought to the front a strong party of reform, at the head of which stood Midhat Pasha. This remarkable man had distinguished himself as Governor-

² See Turkey 3, 1876, No. 259.

General of the vilayet of the Danube by his firm, impartial rule, his probity, and the success with which during his Governorship he developed the resources of the province. He saw that nothing could save the country from ruin but a complete change in the whole system of government, and to this end he applied himself with the most absolute fearlessness and self-abnegation.

It was in the year 1875 that the word 'Constitution' was first pronounced,³ when a Pasha of high position came to our Ambassador, Sir Henry Elliot, and explained to him that a 'Constitution' was the object the reforming party had in view. It may perhaps be said that while Midhat Pasha and a few enlightened men who had enjoyed the advantages of a more liberal education saw the necessity for drastic reform the bulk of the nation was indifferent; but this is far from the truth. Behind Midhat Pasha and his principal henchmen stood a large and determined body of men, Mussulmans and Christians, who fully realised that the only salvation for the Empire lay in the adoption of a representative form of government which would completely control the finances and would not only guarantee personal safety and liberty to all men, irrespective of race and creed, but insure an absolutely impartial administration of justice. The most conspicuous of Midhat Pasha's followers were the Softas or students of the Sheri, or sacred law, and many Mollahs and Ulema also played a prominent part in promoting the cause of reform. The revolution brought about by the Constitutionalists, including the deposition of Sultan Abdul Aziz, was conducted with such moderation and in so orderly a fashion that there is little doubt English sympathy would have been warmly enlisted had not two events occurred which aroused throughout Europe such intense indignation that all other feelings were utterly extinguished. These events were the Salonica massacre and the Bulgarian atrocities. In both these cases, as in almost all of those where the Mohammedans have given way to an outburst of fanatical violence against the Christians, it was the latter who had themselves provoked it. Even at times when the most perfect goodwill prevails between Christians and Mussulmans anything like a slight upon their religion, or of the nature of an insult to their women, will in a moment rouse a quiet Mohammedan population to a state of frenzy, rendering them capable of every excess; and in the case of Salonica both these causes of provocation had been given in the most offensive form. A Bulgarian girl, living in a village not far from Salonica and belonging to a not over-respectable family, had a Turkish lover, and one day, declaring that she had become Mohammedan, she went to her lover's home. His family refused to keep her till her conversion to Islamism had been registered by the authorities. In order that this formality might be gone through she was sent next day by rail to Salonica,

³ See 'The Death of Abdul Aziz and of Turkish Reform,' by Sir Henry Elliot, *Nineteenth Century*, February 1888.

accompanied by the Hodja of the village and an Arab woman, and her mother went by the same train. On her arrival at Salonica a Christian mob collected, and in spite of the efforts of the police they pulled off her yashmak and feridgee, hustled her into the American Vice-Consul's carriage, and took her to the American Consulate. The Turkish population were now aroused. They armed during the night, and on the day following a large body of Mussulmans went to the Government House or Konak and demanded that the girl should be brought back, warning the Governor that if he could not deliver her from the Christians they would attack the American Vice-Consulate and rescue her themselves. The Pasha thereupon sent a message to the Vice-Consulate demanding the immediate presence of the girl, but received as an answer an intimation that she had left the house. The angry crowd then left the Konak and went to a neighbouring mosque, where it was soon swelled by a still greater number of Mussulmans. About this time M. Moulin, the French Consul, and Mr. Henry Abbott, the German Consul, passed the mosque; they were seized by the crowd and forced into it. The mob was fast becoming furious, and notice of the Consuls' danger was sent to the Governor, who arrived on the spot with a few of the principal Turks. He entered the room adjacent to the mosque where the Consuls had taken refuge, and strove to pacify the crowd. Meanwhile a message was sent by Mr. Henry Abbott to his brother desiring him to deliver up the girl; but a delay occurred in her arrival, the mob forced its way into the room, and killed the two Consuls before the eyes of the Governor, who behaved with disgraceful cowardice, for, though striving to calm the rioters with words, neither he nor his police used their weapons. After murdering the two Consuls the mob was proceeding to the American Vice-Consulate when, most providentially, they were met by the girl, who had been discovered mainly through the efforts of Mr. Blunt, the English Consul, and who was being escorted to the Konak to be handed over to the authorities; the crowd thereupon fired a *feu de joie* and dispersed.

While these events were taking place at Salonica, Constantinople was in the midst of a revolution. The deposition and death of Sultan Abdul Aziz and the murder of the Ministers, followed by the war with Servia and Montenegro, the attempted insurrection in Bulgaria and its barbarous suppression, and the illness and deposition of Sultan Murad the Fifth, succeeded each other within the space of a few months; and the following extracts from letters written at the time by the writer of this article may perhaps serve to give some idea of the state of feeling then prevalent among all classes and races at Constantinople during these memorable weeks:

Constantinople: May 17th, 1876.

You may be glad of an account of what is taking place here. After the murder of the two Consuls at Salonica great excitement prevailed at Constantinople; the Softas and Mollahs were known to be arming, and the Christians concluded

that these war-like preparations were directed against them, and began to arm in self-defence, though the Turks took advantage of every occasion that offered itself to impress upon the Europeans and the native Christians that they had no designs against them. On Friday the 11th a large body of Softas went to the Palace, demanded to see the Sultan's first secretary, and gave him a petition, which he was made to swear he would give to his master. Among other requests the petition insisted upon the removal of the Sheikh ul Islam and the Grand Vizier, Mahmoud Nedim Pasha, whom the Softas justly considered the author of many of the troubles now crowding on Turkey; and another petition containing the same demands was handed to the Sultan as he returned from a drive. All these proceedings were conducted with the utmost decorum; and in the evening, when the fall of the obnoxious Grand Vizier became known, the panic would have entirely subsided had not General Ignatiev chosen to surround his Embassy and Consulate with a guard of three or four hundred Croats and Montenegrens. Pera was, of course, fearfully agitated. Many people watched all night, and others sent to see if the British Embassy was also defended; these, hearing all was quiet round our Embassy, went away reassured. Next day, when the new Grand Vizier Mehemet Rushdi Pasha went to the Porte, a great crowd was assembled to see him pass; in this crowd there were many Softas and Mollahs, but they all vied with each other in showing civilities to the Christians present. Mehemet Rushdi Pasha is highly respected by all parties, but he is an old man, and the Softas consider—as almost everyone whose opinion is worth having does—that Midhat Pasha is the only man that can do anything to save Turkey.

So far the Revolution reflects great credit on its authors. They have shown discretion, moderation, and judgment; but if they do not obtain their requests no one can tell what may arise. Perhaps it is hardly possible for anybody who is not on the spot to comprehend the general detestation in which the Russian Ambassador, General Ignatiev, is held. Greeks and Turks alike declare that he is responsible for much of their misery; he is the talk of the town, and even his friends do not attempt to conceal the fact that there is no man in the Empire—not even Mahmoud Pasha excepted—who is looked upon with such hatred. The English, on the contrary, are in high favour, and I think it would touch many people in England if they knew how the Turks look up to us and feel that our country is their only friend. I think, too, many people would sympathise with the Softas if they understood their motives. They wish for a constitution and for better government; they are never tired of assuring the Christians that they have nothing to fear, that they wish for the happiness of all the Sultan's subjects; and they have behaved so admirably that everyone gives them credit for the best intentions. When their patience was put to the test by the Russians and Austrians surrounding themselves with the natural foes of Turkey they took every precaution, and effectually prevented any disturbance by forbidding any of their followers from going to Pera. I suppose the Bulgarians are now objects of pity and sympathy to many people. They certainly deserve pity, for their country is laid waste—but not by the Turks. Bands of Christians enter the villages and order the men to join them, and if refused obedience fire the village; in many places Greeks and Christians assist the Turks against the insurgents, who often behave with great barbarity. The English community were much alarmed at one time, and numbers of the women and children have left. I confess I am glad; for if there is to be any kind of row, women are better out of it, and of course the *mob* cannot be trusted in any large town. A curious episode that took place two or three days ago may serve to show you the kind of feeling there is here with regard to General Ignatiev. The *Levant Herald* published an article against him; it was excessively impudent, offensive, and personal, but perfectly true. It was read

by all classes with so much delight that here, where public opinion usually goes for nothing, many people thought the Government would not dare to suspend the newspaper. The insult offered to the Russian Ambassador was too great to be overlooked, and the paper was suspended; but hundreds of cards have since poured in upon Mr. Whitaker from Pashas and Christians of every kind. In spite of the universal poverty that number of the *Levant Herald* is now selling at two francs apiece, and various offers have been made to indemnify the editor by subscriptions, all of which, however, he has very properly refused.

A control over the finances is what the Softas particularly wish to obtain, as they cannot submit any longer to see millions squandered by the Palace.

Constantinople : June 1st, 1876.

A great event has taken place: Abd-ul-Aziz is deposed, and Murad the Fifth has ascended the throne, amid general acclamations, and without a drop of blood being spilt. Ever since the Softas' demonstration and the fall of Mahmoud Pasha perfect tranquillity has reigned in the city, but the most remarkable freedom of speech prevailed. The Turks of all stations did not hesitate to declare that they must have a Constitution, adding that if the Sultan did not grant one it would be obtained without his consent. Almost everyone expected some great event to take place soon, but it was hardly to be hoped that so complete a revolution could be made in so orderly and peaceable a manner. Everything was admirably disposed, so as to insure the public safety, and the only inconvenience from which we suffered was the occupation, for a few hours, of the telegraph offices, which did not receive or transmit messages till past noon. But this was, after all, a wise precaution, which no doubt prevented false or alarming messages from flying all over Europe. The accounts of how the revolution took place all agree pretty well. The most generally received version is that Hussein Avni Pasha, the 'Seraskier,' was at the Palace the evening before the blow was struck, that he requested the Sultan to pay the troops from his private funds, that the request was badly received, and that he left the Palace; that he was sent for back again, but made an excuse, and received a second order to appear, coupled with a threat, upon which he communicated with his colleagues, and settled with them to hasten the hour. At half-past four A.M. the Palace of Dolmabahçhe was surrounded, on the land side by troops, on the water by steam-launches and boats, and a message was sent to the Sultan intimating that he was deposed by the will of the people, and that he was requested to leave the Palace in his caïque, which was waiting for him, and to go to a kiosk on the Seraglio Point. On seeing that he was helpless he submitted to his fate with dignity, and obeyed. A salute of a hundred and one guns was fired in honour of Murad the Fifth. At half-past six A.M. the new Sultan drove to the Seraskierat, where he was received with enthusiasm. He sat on a *daïs* in the kiosk, with the gates wide open; and high and low, from the greatest Pasha to the poorest *hamal*, entered to do him homage and kiss his feet. After about two hours he was told it would be well to return to take possession of the Palace, which he accordingly did, driving over in a private carriage. The great news was heard with joy by all. When a crier proclaimed the Sultan, Murad the Fifth, in the streets, a Christian crowd assembled at the 'Bourse,' seized him, carried him round in triumph, and finished by presenting him with 150 pounds as a reward for being the bearer of good news. In the provinces the same delight is felt, Christians and Turks being bound together by the same feelings of joy and relief. As yet little more is known, except that Murad the Fifth has given up all his valuable farms and the treasure found in the Palace to the State; but some disappoint-

ment is felt that the sum found in *bullion* is not large, as great expectations have been entertained, and are hardly realised, though there is about eight millions in *Consolidés*, a mass of diamonds, and about 350,000 pounds, all of which will probably go to help to get the State out of its difficulties. Of course it would have been better if more ready money could have been found, though this is better than nothing.

June 2nd.—It was known last night that a million and a half of ready money was found, and more is expected to appear, but this will at any rate pay the troops. The ex-Sultan has been treated with kindness and respect; he is allowed to have his family with him, and his nephew sent to assure him that he should always continue to treat him with deference, and asked if he wished for anything. The ex-Sultan replied that he had hardly room enough in the Seraglio, and begged for a larger Palace. This was immediately promised him, and he is to go to one which was built for Sultan Murad, near Chérégan, but which he did not inhabit. Do you not think that the Turks have acted admirably? They have got rid of a man who ruined the country, proclaimed religious equality, and all without any disturbance, in the most orderly manner possible.

England, France, Austria, and Italy dressed ship in honour of Sultan Murad, but the Russian and Prussian ships remain undressed.

Constantinople: June 15th, 1876.

Since I last wrote everything has remained quiet, and nothing has disturbed our equanimity, save the suicide of Sultan Abd-ul-Aziz. Even that did not disturb people's minds much. A few evil tongues, of course, declared that he had been murdered, but they are effectually silenced by the unanimous verdict of the doctors who attended the inquest. I believe that as far as can yet be seen affairs are progressing tolerably well. Economy is the order of the day, and the Sultan has so far given up the sumptuous habits of his predecessor that he goes out driving in Pera in a simple open carriage, attended only by four servants. If he carries the same simplicity into all his actions, it may do something towards checking the ridiculous expenditure of the Palace. All the accounts we have received of his character are decidedly good. There seems to be no doubt that he is amiable, liberal, and inclined to do what his Ministers think fit; what remains to be seen is, if he has determination enough to stand by the right men should difficulties arise in the Cabinet. His father was certainly deficient in strength of mind, but his grandfather, Mahmoud IV., had enough for many generations. The Greek population is overcome with joy at the change of government, and have throughout these difficult times behaved with a discretion and moderation which are certainly as much to be admired as wondered at. The fact of the matter is that they saw the country was on the brink of ruin, and they feared that the much-hated Russians would step into the shoes of the Turk. Now, though they do not love the latter, they all agree that he is a far better master than the former would be, and hatred of the Russians has caused a reaction in favour of the Turk. I am afraid horrors go on in Bulgaria, on both sides, to a dreadful extent; but one thing is satisfactory, and that is that not a single complaint has been brought against the *regular* troops. Even men who are decidedly anti-Turkish bear witness to this, and say that the Bashi-Bazouks are the perpetrators of any atrocities that occur, so that if only troops enough could be sent to the revolted provinces all horrors would at once cease. My father is much better than he was, though not nearly so strong as he ought to be; at any rate, he has the satisfaction of not having worked in vain. English influence is everything, and the enthusiasm and love for England boundless; the soldiers and common Turks have learnt the words 'God save the Queen,' and greet any Englishman they meet with them.

When Mamma and I went to see the Sultan go to mosque at St. Sophia we were cheered by the crowd, and the only national anthem played besides the Turkish was 'God save the Queen.'

June 19th.—When I last wrote to you all was quiet and peaceful, but next day Constantinople was startled and horrified by the murder of Hussein Avni Pasha and Reshid Pasha. I think almost everyone's first thought was: What a mercy it is that Midhat Pasha has escaped! It would indeed have been a misfortune which nothing could have mitigated. The murderer was a young Circassian, brother to the late Sultan's third wife and former aide-de-camp to Prince Yussuf Izzeddin. He had been several times ordered by Hussein Avni Pasha to join his regiment at Bagdad, but, strong in his Palace influence, had always refused; he had been placed under arrest two or three days before the murder was committed, and was only released that evening on his declaring himself ready to start for Bagdad next day, and begging to be allowed to spend the evening with his family. He went first to Hussein Avni's own house and asked to see him. On finding that he was attending a Council at Midhat Pasha's house he followed him there, and managed, after some difficulties from the servants, to enter the room where the Ministers were sitting; he then drew a revolver and shot Hussein Avni. As you may imagine, there was a great commotion among all those stout, unarmed old men. The Minister of Marine, Achmet Kaiserly Pasha, seized him from behind, but he cut and slashed at him with a long knife and compelled him to leave go and take refuge with the Grand Vizier in the next room. He then finished Hussein Avni, shot Reshid Pasha, and attempted to force his way into the room where the Grand Vizier and one or two others were holding the door shut with all their might. He would just have effected his entrance into the room when the Zaptiehs arrived, and he turned and stood at bay defending himself with four revolvers, his sword and knife. After he was taken, having received six bayonet-wounds, one of which was right through his body, he managed to kill another man, having in all slain seven men and wounded eight others. He was hung the day before yesterday on the plane-tree in the open space in front of the Seraskierat; his body was left exposed all that day, and crowds went to see it. He had refused to have his wounds seen to, but still had strength to walk up to the tree and fasten the rope round his neck himself. He seems to have been a regular wild beast, his only motive for all that hideous slaughter being private revenge. The only thing one can say of him in his favour is that he was reputed the best shot among the Circassians, and, like many other wild beasts, was desperately brave. His antagonist, the courageous old Minister of Marine, is fortunately not seriously hurt. Before it was known that the murder was a mere act of vengeance, considerable uneasiness prevailed everywhere, but now it has subsided. Indeed, a curious and not very generous feeling has arisen in many minds, and that is that it is perhaps a mercy that poor Hussein Avni Pasha did not survive. It was thought by many that, in spite of the excellent part he had lately played, he would become a great danger and oppose the more liberal party. Be this as it may, his death is not very deeply regretted, as far as I can see, by any; but Turks and Christians all rejoice in the most unfeigned manner that the bullet aimed at Midhat Pasha missed its destination. It is a fearful thing when so much depends on the life of one man. I fear there must be considerable danger to the leading Pashas and the Sultan from the number of people lately dismissed from the Palace. Abd-ul-Aziz's household consisted in all of *six thousand souls*, the present Sultan's comprises only *three hundred*; so that there must be about four thousand four hundred discontented men wandering about, if you allow nine hundred as the women's part of the establishment, which is, of course, powerless. It would have been

better if they could have been more gradually dismissed, but that would have hardly been consistent with the present system of rigid economy.

I am sorry to hear from you that the late Sultan's suicide is not believed in. There really is no doubt that he put an end to his days himself, and that the poor Sultana Validé herself gave him scissors with which to do the deed, after they had been refused him by his attendants. I wish you could talk to Dr. Dickson about it; he is perfectly convinced that no hand but the Sultan's own *could* have inflicted the cuts which caused his death. There was not the slightest mark or bruise about him, and several other circumstances render it certain that there was no foul play. It seems rather hard on the present Sultan that his uncle's death should be attributed to him, for from what is known of him he seems more likely to sin from over-kindness of disposition than the contrary. The sword-girding has been put off on account of the Sultan being unwell. I am sorry; for, as it is sure to produce a great crowd and excitement, I cannot help wishing it well over. It would be very undesirable that any ill-will should be manifested by the crowd towards the Russians, whose unpopularity rather increases than diminishes, and a crowd can never be quite trusted not to display its real feelings.

The extract following is from a letter written after the Servian war had broken out:

July 8th.—The nation is really responding very nobly to the appeal for help to carry on the war which has been made to it; those who have money give it, not only the rich but the poor, and those who have none bring sacks of flour, rice, &c. I was a good deal struck the other day by an Armenian lady, who used to be very violently anti-Turkish, taking the Turkish side and talking about *notre patrie*, a thing she would never have done formerly; but I hope the feeling is general, for the Christians seem as determined to resist foreign aggression as the Turks. Numbers of Albanian Christians and others join the Turkish standard as volunteers. If any danger to the Christians is ever to be apprehended here, it will be entirely owing to the way in which a crusade has been preached, and is being preached, against Mohammedanism. The war has had as yet nothing of a religious character, but it may become so if the Turks are at length persuaded that all Christians are against them.

July 30th.—The Sultan's illness is the gravest preoccupation we have. It was at first kept a dead secret, but now everyone is talking about it, and we are almost the only people who still lower our voices when it is mentioned, and all Constantinople is kept in a state of great anxiety by it. The poor man himself is certainly much to be pitied, for when he ascended the throne he had, there is no doubt, the very best intentions, which would have been carried out had not his health given way from the repeated shocks which he sustained immediately after his accession, and which have, I fear, completely broken him down.

When we saw him two months ago he was a pleasant, very young-looking man—ridiculously young-looking for his age, almost boyish; now those who have lately seen him go to mosque say he looks like an old man, and his hair is quite white. He must have suffered terribly to turn grey so rapidly.

August 31st.—The boom of a hundred and one guns has just announced to us the accession of a new Sultan! Heaven grant that Abdul Hamid the Second may reign longer and more happily than Murad the Fifth, though it seems almost foolish to look forward very hopefully to the new reign, after the cruel disappointment that blighted our high hopes at Sultan Murad's accession.

It is certainly the most melancholy accession a Sovereign can have. Sultan Abdul Hamid mounts the throne by deposing a brother with whom he had always been on good terms. He finds his country surrounded by foes and his treasury empty—it is, indeed, a cheerless prospect.

The insurrection which for years past had been planned by the Slav committees broke out in Bulgaria on the 2nd of May. The revolutionists, led by priests and schoolmasters, intended first to destroy the railways and bridges throughout the vilayet, but an accident led to the premature outbreak of the revolt and they resorted to the less efficacious method of massacre. At Otloukeuy⁴ eighty Mussulmans were slain, and at Bellova⁵ and other places the rising was attended with unspeakable horrors. The Mussulmans rose in self-defence, and their reprisals more than equalled the excesses which had called them forth. Unfortunately there were but few regular troops in the country, and the uncontrolled Bashi-Bazouks carried fire and sword through defenceless villages. The whole of England was roused to indignation; the cruelties practised on the Christians were represented as being part of an unprovoked attack on an unarmed and peaceful population, the provocation was entirely overlooked; Mr. Gladstone lent the aid of his genius and influence to the cause of the insurgents, and few people dared to raise their voices in opposition to the outburst of abuse now poured out with almost equal fury upon her Majesty's Government, the British Ambassador, and the Turks. Before this storm had spent itself Servia declared war on the 1st of July, and Montenegro followed her example a few days later. The Progressive Government at Constantinople thus found itself confronted by all the difficulties arising not only from a change of *régime*, but by insurrection, war, and the state of health which incapacitated the new Sultan from governing.

The delay in the inauguration of the new era which was thus occasioned caused much uneasiness. The Grand Council had already pronounced that an organic reform was necessary, and Midhat Pasha would have been ready to take the bold course of promulgating the Constitution even before the change of Sovereigns, which had become imperative, had been effected, had not Mehemet Rusdhi Pasha, the Grand Vizier, shrunk from the responsibility of such a step. He pointed out that the proposed object of the Constitution was to limit or abolish some of the prerogatives of the Crown, and asked if such concessions could be made by a Sovereign who was not in a condition to understand them. Would not their validity be contested by all who were opposed to them and by the new Sovereign? In spite of the strength of these arguments the bolder course would probably have proved the better and safer.

Sultan Murad's illness having been pronounced by a well-known specialist to be incurable, Sultan Abdul Hamid ascended the throne

⁴ Turkey 3, 1876, No. 57.

⁵ Turkey 3, 1876, No. 289.

on the 31st of August, and six weeks later a proclamation was issued announcing a general scheme of reform for the whole Empire, but the formal Constitution which was to give it effect was still withheld.

Meanwhile quiet had been restored in Bulgaria; the Mussulmans had recovered from the panic under which they had committed their excesses, any renewal of which was now made impossible by the presence of a large body of regular troops; the devastated villages were being rapidly rebuilt—partly by the Government and partly by public subscriptions—and the dispersed inhabitants, including many hundreds who had been counted among the slain, were quietly returning to their homes. On the other hand, no progress was made towards repressing the insurrection in Bosnia; Servia and Montenegro were still at war with Turkey; and although Montenegro had obtained some advantages, Servia, in spite of all the underhand Russian assistance in money, arms, and officers, was so hopelessly beaten that the Russian Government, which had originally declared that if the Servians chose to make an unprovoked attack they would leave them to their fate, now felt it necessary to come forward in their defence. They proposed therefore that a Conference should be held at Constantinople at which, without the presence or participation of a Turkish representative, conditions should be laid down and forced upon the Sultan; but none of the other Governments were willing to fall in with a proposal which was regarded, especially by England and Austria, as an attack on the independence of Turkey. While rejecting the Russian proposal, however, her Majesty's Government declared their readiness to take the initiative of inviting a general Conference of the Powers, including Turkey, at which it was hoped that it might be possible to come to some arrangement; and in the invitations sent to the other Governments the object was stated to be, first, the conclusion of peace between Turkey, Servia, and Montenegro, and, secondly, the pacification of Bosnia and Herzegovina by means of a system of local or administrative autonomy, which, as far as was applicable, should be extended to Bulgaria, so as to insure the populations there from further maladministration. The Porte was very unwilling to agree to the holding of a Conference, and only gave way on receiving the most solemn assurance that the independence of Turkey should be fully respected. Had this engagement been observed all might yet have gone well; but when the Conference at length assembled, after nine formal meetings of the foreign plenipotentiaries had been held at the Russian Embassy, *without* the participation of the Turkish representatives, the latter found themselves confronted by a scheme of which General Ignatiew was the principal author, and which he designated as 'the irreducible minimum of the demands the acceptance of which,' he said, 'his Government felt sure all the Christian representatives would consider themselves in honour bound to impose upon the Turks.'

The scheme which was thus roughly to be forced upon the Turks contained several clauses utterly inconsistent with the independence of the Empire, which we had so lately promised to respect; but Lord Salisbury, our leading plenipotentiary, placing undue confidence in General Ignatiev's knowledge of Eastern affairs, refused to believe that the Porte would dare to reject any demands which were supported by all the Powers. Finding, however, that the Turkish plenipotentiaries' objections to the 'irreducible minimum' could not be overcome, some of the demands most objected to by them were subsequently considerably modified. These demands were: The proposed new territorial divisions affecting five of the existing Vilayets, the admission of a body of foreign troops under the orders of an International Commission, and the confinement of the Imperial troops to the fortresses and principal towns. The Porte met the new proposals in a conciliatory spirit, and when the plenary Conference assembled for the ninth and last time the only points about which any difficulty remained were those respecting the nomination of the Governors General and the International Commission, and so anxious was the Turkish Government to avoid war that with a little goodwill these difficulties would also have been overcome. But, hopeful as the situation then was, the leading members of the Conference were too deeply committed to the principle of coercion to bring themselves to adopt a conciliatory course, and an ultimatum was embodied and delivered to the Porte by the envoys collectively, an answer to which was requested within a week. If it proved unsatisfactory the Ambassadors were at once to leave Constantinople.

Two days before the last Conference the Porte, according to custom on very serious occasions, convoked a Grand Council of the most important personages of the Empire—to the number of 237—comprising, besides Mohammedans, representatives of all the different Christian communities, the Patriarchs being represented by their delegates, in order that they might be informed of and consulted upon the proposals submitted by the Conference. The scene, according to accounts given by both Christian and Mussulman members, was most deeply impressive. Midhat Pasha opened the proceedings by a speech of such a pacific tendency, and pointed out in such strong language the dangers to which the Empire would be exposed by war with Russia, that murmurs of disapprobation were raised against him, and without a single dissentient voice the Council pronounced an unequivocal rejection of the proposals concerning the nomination of Governors and the International Commission, which, it was declared, must be rejected at all hazards, however great these might be. The Council unquestionably represented the universal feeling of the populations, Mussulman and Christian, between whom there was exhibited a cordiality and good-fellowship such as there had probably never before been an example of in the Turkish Empire.

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A striking appeal to the Grand Vizier was made by the representative of one of the Christian Churches with the warm approval of all the others. He said that as the decision to be come to might lead to war it was essential to know the character to be given to that war. If it was to be a religious war, the Christian populations could not be expected to sympathise with it; but if, on the contrary, it was to be a war for the honour and independence of the Empire, in which all felt an equal interest, then the Christians would join with their Mussulman fellow-subjects. The speech was universally applauded by members of the Ulema, who called out: 'You go to church and we go to mosque, but we all worship the same God; we are subjects of the same Empire, and mean to live together as brothers.' As a further proof of the harmony then prevailing, it may be mentioned that after the breaking-up of the Conference, when it was universally known that Sir Henry Elliot had strongly opposed the demands of the Russian Ambassador, who professed to have been acting solely in the interests of the Christian populations, the heads of all the Christian Churches in the Empire—the Greek Patriarch, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch, and the Vekil of the native Protestant Church—as well as the leading Mussulmans sent him addresses conveying the expression of their regret at his departure and a warm recognition of his services.

The first object for which the Conference had been called was stated to be the conclusion of peace with Servia and Montenegro, an object which might have easily been attained, but the Conference had so exclusively devoted itself to a scheme of administration for Bulgaria that when its final dissolution was announced it was found that the first object for which it had been convoked had been *forgotten*. Thus the war continued, a condition of affairs eminently favourable to Russia in the hostilities upon which she was herself resolved.

Meanwhile the Constitution had been proclaimed on the 23rd of December, the day of the first plenary meeting of the Conference, the members of which, imagining it to have been invented merely as a pretext for refusing some of the proposals on which they were insisting, received it not only with coldness but with scarcely veiled hostility. Had they been at all aware of the serious nature of the reform movement and of the earnestness of the men who were striving to carry it through, they would, no doubt, have assumed a very different attitude. The Constitution as now promulgated differed in several important respects from that originally drafted by Midhat Pasha, the Sultan having refused to accede to clauses regulating the amount of the Civil List, and providing for the foundation of mixed schools open to all creeds, and the abolition of slavery. Still, incomplete as the new Constitution undoubtedly was, and falling short of what had been hoped for by its authors, it is certain that this derided Charter contained much that would have proved of inestimable value in reforming the Turkish administration in the only way in which it can ever be reformed—

that is to say, by recognising in the people the right of control over the finances, by rendering the Ministers and officials responsible to the representatives of the nation, by establishing the absolute equality of all Ottoman subjects irrespective of race or creed, and by guaranteeing their persons and property against arrest and spoliation. Owing, however, to the hostile attitude assumed by Europe towards the Turkish reformers, it became possible for the Sultan to banish Midhat Pasha and his principal followers and to recover unchecked the whole of his despotic power.

During the two sessions held by the National Assembly before its final extinction the representatives of both the Christians and Mussulmans fully vindicated their fitness for Constitutional institutions. Though bereft of their leaders, they acted with great fearlessness, criticising the acts of the Government with perfect freedom, making known the abuses going on in the provinces, and refusing to vote the money asked for when they deemed the amount excessive or the object undesirable. There was no jealousy between the members representing the different races, and nothing could have been more promising.

Thirty-two years have elapsed since these events, and the Young Turkey party have steadfastly kept before them the ideal then first proclaimed, of freedom and equality for all. Quietly and untiringly they have worked, in exile and danger, never losing heart, with the one great object in view. Is it too much to hope that with England as a sympathetic observer of their efforts, and Russia no longer bent on conquest but herself occupied with internal reforms, the hour has at length struck when the united progressive elements in the nation may accomplish what has hitherto seemed past the wit of man—namely, the peaceful solution of the Eastern Question?

GERTRUDE ELLIOT.

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