

AFTER THE WAR



It may appear to be a hazardous proceeding to attempt to estimate the effects of the present war between Turkey and the Balkan allies while yet the cannon has not spoken its last word, and while European complications are still a possibility. The future of the Balkan Peninsula is a question which we do not desire here to touch. It is no longer a Turkish question; and having ceased to be a Turkish question, it has ceased to be a Moslem problem. Whether the new confederacy remain united, or whether the allies quarrel among themselves after the signing of a treaty of peace with Turkey, and turn their arms against each other in their disputes over the division of the spoils, whether Austria-Hungary and Russia seek to realize their long-dreamed dreams of aggrandizement in the near or distant future—are questions which now lie outside the problem of the future of Turkey, and the future of Islamic power.

What we desire to consider is the result of the present war on Turkey as the leading Islamic Power, and the effect that her defeat will have on non-Turkish Moslems towards her as the head of Islam. Even when thus circumscribed, the question is one with regard to which many points still remain dark and indeterminate. Yet there are certain facts which have already emerged, and which the future, whatever it may still hold in its lap in the way of surprises, cannot change.

The principal of these facts is that the rule of Turkey in Europe is at an end. Whether she retain Constantinople, or whether the want of foresight and the inexperience in diplomacy, which are so apparent among the members of the Young Turkish Party, entail the loss of that city, one thing is certain and irrevocable: Turkey will no longer be a European Power. As the German ambassador at Constantinople lately said in his speech

on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the Kaiser's birthday, "The future of Turkey lies in Asia Minor." We may well doubt, however, whether that future will be a great one ; for it is very evident that the political and economical interests of the European Powers in the Turkish provinces of Asia will, from now onwards, become more clearly defined and more vigorously maintained. The Eastern question is not yet closed ; it has only entered on a new phase. The jealousies of Europe will only change their sphere of operation, and Anatolia, Syria and Mesopotamia will become the scenes of diplomatic rivalries such as have kept Europe busy for the last thirty years, and from time to time have brought her almost to the verge of war.

The year 1912 has, indeed, been a fatal one for Turkish prestige and Turkish influence throughout the world. The opening of the year saw Turkey engaged in a war with Italy, in which, owing to her weakness at sea, Turkey was unable to prevent the occupation of the coast lands of her one remaining African possession, and was compelled to sit still in angry impotence while port after port was seized by the enemy. The loss of Tripoli, however, did not in itself involve any very great loss of prestige in the eyes of Moslems throughout the world, though undoubtedly it was a severe blow to Turkish pride : for the Turkish troops in that country, assisted by and assisting the inhabitants of the various districts invaded by the enemy, put up a good fight, and on many occasions showed that the warlike spirit of the Turk was still alive.

There were, in particular, one or two circumstances which prevented real loss of prestige. One of these was the sedulous and unwearied effort made to disseminate the news of imaginary victories over the Italians. It was this false news which kept alive among Moslems throughout the world confidence in Turkey and in the wisdom of her government. No one who did not come into daily contact with the "news" supplied by the Egyptian Arabic newspapers, for instance, can have any idea of the completeness with which the mass of the population was duped. Victories were announced with such a

wealth of detail and circumstance that even those who knew better than to believe the reports were often compelled to say: "Surely there must be some truth in such reports? There may be much exaggeration, but there cannot but be some grains of truth in these long circumstantial records." Events, however, proved later, beyond dispute, that the "news" supplied was on most occasions not merely unreliable, but wholly and entirely false. But memories are short in such circumstances, and much is forgiven; so that the main result was beneficial to Turkish prestige. And now that other and more serious matters have called away the attention of Moslems throughout the world from this question, it is very doubtful whether the loss of Tripoli will weigh heavily on the heart of anyone but those who inhabit the land itself.

Another fact which tended to lessen the blow which the loss of Tripoli might otherwise have caused to Turkish prestige was the universally recognized inferiority of the Turkish fleet. The weakness of the Turkish fleet was known and discounted, and the feeling was strong that if the Turkish army could but get at the Italians it would be able to give them some severe lessons in the art of warfare.

A third reason which prevented any great loss of prestige was the fact that the war was with a nation that was regarded as one of the great Powers of Europe, to be beaten by whom was at least no disgrace, however distasteful it might be to Turkish pride or to Moslem arrogance.

When we turn now to the Balkan war we see at once how completely circumstances are altered.

The allied states were despised. They were looked upon as being scarcely worthy of a mobilisation of the Turkish army. The following quotation from *The Comrade*, of 12th October, 1912, shews clearly how, even in India, the only fear was that Europe might intervene to save the stricken enemy from some of the consequence of their audacity. The Allies were looked upon with open contempt and the real danger—for it was felt that Turkey was fighting for her place in Europe—was

supposed to lie in the purposes and intentions of the Powers, who even after a Turkish victory might demand of the Porte the concession of reforms which would be tantamount to the renunciation of the larger part of European Turkey. "Turkey is strong enough to deal with those turbulent and fanatical brigands at her frontiers. If the war becomes general [at the time of writing these words, Montenegro alone had declared war], as is probable, her army may be trusted to carry the Ottoman flag and plant it once again in the heart of Athens, Sofia and Belgrade. It is not, however, the military issue of the struggle—of Turkey wrestling against the combined forces of the new-born 'Confederacy'—that constitutes the menace of the situation. The real danger lies in the future development of the diplomatic moves that have called this 'Confederacy' into being . . . the issues of the present struggle are, therefore, big with fate. They involve the question of life and death for the Ottoman Empire in Europe."

It is clear, then, how differently the war in the Balkan Peninsula appeared to the eyes of Moslems from that in the distant and little-considered African province of Tripoli: and it is due largely to the fact that the pride and glory of the Ottoman Empire was crumpled up in three short weeks by these same despised "brigands," that the effect of the defeat has been so great.

Another point which makes the defeat of Turkey a source of despair and a cause of shame among Moslems throughout the world, is the fact that the religious element has entered into this war much more clearly than into that of the war in Tripoli. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, in his appeal in proclamation to the nation and army, stated in so many words that the war on which the Allies were embarking was in reality a war for the emancipation of their Christian brethren from the oppressions of the Turk. This was rightly or wrongly understood by Moslems to mean that the war was a crusade, and that the conflict was one between Christianity and Islam. There can be little doubt that this way of putting it was hardly what was in the mind of the Bulgarian ruler when he issued his proclamation. For it is one thing to fight for

one's co-religionists against an oppressor whatever the religion of that oppressor may be, and another thing to fight for the overthrow of an opposing religion and for the establishment of one's own faith. The distinction is a vital one, but the Moslem interpretation of the ambiguous sentence has had its influence.

Much was made of this appeal in Constantinople and elsewhere, and the action of the King was denounced as savouring of fanaticism. Mohammedan writers everywhere were not slow to claim that the attitude of Turkey was liberal and less bigoted than that of her opponent, seeing that she had not officially described the war as one in which religious motives were uppermost and even strong. Much of this boasting, however, was disingenuous, for the one bond of union among Moslems and the one source of sympathy for Turkey among non-Turkish Moslems have been wholly and solely religious : and all throughout the war Moslem writers have described Islam as being attacked. The Turkish army is regarded as being the army of Islam, and the defence of Turkey is in all eyes the defence of the Faith.

Turkey stands as the embodiment of Islam—political and militant Islam. Not merely so, but Turkey is the last hope of militant Islam, and everywhere throughout the world of Islam it is felt that the defeat of Turkey is synonymous with the defeat of militant Islam.

Should Turkey be practically driven out of Europe, as now seems almost certain will be the case—for even though she may retain Constantinople she loses all her European provinces—she will become but a second-rate Asiatic Power, and more than ever will fall under the tutorship if not the guardianship of Europe.

Shorn of her European provinces, she will still retain her Asiatic possessions with an estimated population of about 15,000,000. But these are far from homogeneous, and have no inherent cohesion or unity of interest. Already the seeds of disintegration are springing up in Asia, where she will reap in the near future the harvest which oppression and mis-government have sown and watered so unsparingly in the past. The Armenians, the Syrians, the dwellers in the Hauran, and even the Kurds,

are said to be putting forward claims for local government, which amount, in some instances, to practical autonomy; and the greater the defeat of Turkey is seen to be, the greater and more insistent will these demands become.

An Empire which has been held together only by respect for a strong central government—whether that government was good or bad seldom mattered so long as it was felt to be strong—will at once tend to disintegrate when the hand of the central government is seen to be weakened.

Respect for the authority of Constantinople has become almost a second nature in the Nearer East. So much is this so, that some even maintain that he who holds Constantinople rules Asia Minor and the adjoining lands. And should Turkey lose Constantinople itself, as is now quite possible, it is difficult to see how, except by a most wise and skilful system of administration, such as those at present at the head of the Turkish Empire seem unable to comprehend or even imagine, it will even be possible for an authority residing at Brusa or any other city of Asia Minor, to hold the provinces together.

The revolutionary tendencies in Arabia, for example, which have been at work for years past, will soon again manifest themselves when the war is over, and the common bond of "the defence of the Faith" is no longer strongly felt. In fact, with the closing of the Macedonian question, Turkey finds no real peace. In its place there will arise the Armenian, the Syrian and the Arabian questions, and these will undoubtedly come to the front in the course of the next few years.

The only hope of a strong Turkey in the future would lie in the establishment of a strong Moslem rule of the old and orthodox type, if that were possible, but the day of that is already past. The nationalities which comprise the Turkish Empire in Asia have already become imbued with a spirit which will not tolerate such a system of government.

Another fact also militates against the establishment of such a rule. Those who at present seek to guide the destinies of the Empire are no longer hearty believers in

Islam. They may use the catchwords of Islam, but the faith is not in them ; and with the loss of the faith they have lost the power to rule.

In saying this we do not mean to assert that none can rule Moslems but "true believers." The experience of England in India and elsewhere, the experience of France in Tunis and Algeria, show that this is not the case. But when once it is felt by the Moslems of the Turkish Empire that the central government is no longer Moslem in heart and fact, there will be a tendency to resent her rule by so much the more as that rule is oppressive and unjust. Much will be endured when it is believed that in such endurance the interests of "the faith" are being supported : but should ever the feeling become general that obedience to the orders of the central authority is in no way conducive to the interests of "the religion," the one bond of submission will be snapped, and only good government in the interests of local and provincial welfare will induce the subjects of Turkey to remain quiet.

Already there have been put forward suggestions by Indian Moslems that the true interests of Islam would be better furthered by the establishment of an Arabian Caliphate at Mecca, under the protection of Great Britain, if necessary, than by the continuation of the Turkish Caliphate which even now, in many respects, is Moslem only in name.

The interests of Islam and the interests of Turkey are gradually being seen more and more clearly to be antagonistic : and the feeling that the Caliphate of right belongs to the Koreish, and has during all these centuries been usurped for its own ends by the House of Othman, is one which will probably become stronger in the near future. An Arabian Caliphate is thus quite a possibility, and any further weakenings of Turkish rule will almost certainly bring forward this possibility into the region of practical politics.

There are those who seem to think that the defeat of Turkey and her expulsion from Europe will have as its result a consolidation of Moslem interests throughout the world, and that Moslems will rally round a defeated

Turkey and combine for her support. Islam, it is thus argued, will emerge from the catastrophe purified, as it were, and strengthened, so that there will, indeed, be a gain in spiritual power and efficiency from the very fact of union having become a vital necessity.

This, however, is very doubtful. Such a union will be theoretical and ideal rather than practical and political. The true ideal of Islam—union of political and religious authority in the person of the Caliph—will no longer exist ; and Islam without the power of the sword will be something which the world has not yet seen and which is almost a contradiction in terms. Under such an unpractical union, the general tendency would probably be towards that freedom of religious life and belief which makes the Indian Moslem almost an unbeliever in the eyes of the old orthodox school of Mohammedanism.

The near future will probably see a severe and prolonged struggle in Asiatic Turkey between the ideas of liberalism and the old school of Moslem theological thought, according to which church and state are one indissoluble whole. Which of these will ultimately gain the upper hand cannot now be foreseen. But the result, as regards the future of Turkey, will be the same, whichever of these tendencies ultimately triumphs. The success of the former would mean the destruction of Turkey as a purely Mohammedan power : the success of the latter would be but the prelude to the final disruption of the Turkish Empire through internal revolution and foreign intervention. And the disruption of the Turkish Empire would be the beginning of the end of Islam as a political power in the world. Her future would lie with that school of thought which has transformed the Indian Moslem into a modern Mu'tazilite, and when once Islam casts off the fetters of tradition none can say whither she will take her way.

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