
FOREIGN SOURCES AND AUTHORS ABOUT ARMENIA AND ARMENIANS

T R A V E L S
IN THE
THREE GREAT EMPIRES
OF
A U S T R I A, R U S S I A,
A N D T U R K E Y.

BY
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TRAVELS IN THE THREE GREAT EMPIRES OF AUSTRIA, RUSSIA, AND TURKEY **Volume 2 (London: 1838)**

by Charles Boileau Elliott

About the author

Charles Boileau Elliott was an English travel writer. After retiring from the military service in the Bengal Horse Artillery he then occupied different religious offices in England. His extensive diaries present the political, social, and economic conditions of several territories of what is now Austria, Russia, Hungary, Prague, Slovenia, Crimea, Macedonia, and Turkey. The excerpt from his diary is a detailed account of religious life and habits of two Christian nations of the Ottoman Empire – Greeks and Armenians.

CHAPTER XIV

TURKEY, HER CHRISTIAN SUBJECTS

Rayahs. - Bératlees. - Jews. - Roman Catholics. - Greeks. - Their numbers, personal appearance, dress and character. - Civil degradation. - Anecdote. - Present condition whence originating. - Brighter prospects. - Religious doctrines. - Public services. - Burial-service. Patriarch. - Bishops and clergy. - Marriage of priests. - Curious construction of law. - Deacons. - Avarice. - Simoniacal sales. - Chicanery. - Anecdote. - Armenians. - Their numbers. - Papal and "schismatic." - Anecdote. - Their political influence. - Character. - Person. - Dress. - Females. - Antiquity of language. - King Abgarus's letter to our Lord. - Separation from church. - Catholicos. - Patriarchs. - Bishops. - Priests. - Their qualifications and character. - Ceremonial purity. - Respect for bible. - Translation to Armenian. - Fasts. - Sacrifices. - Masses for dead. - Worship of cross. - Various modes of making sign of cross. - Doctrines. - Monophysitism. - Creed. - Confession. - Worship of virgin and saints. - Sacraments. - Judaism of Armenians. - Doctrines of Greek and Armenian churches compared. - Missionary proceedings in Turkey. - Difficulties and encouragements, State of religion and education among Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Turks. - Anecdotes. - Concluding reflections.

The subjects of the Ottoman Porte are divided into Mussulmans and rayahs;* the latter name comprehending Jews and Christians, or all who are not followers of the

* The word rayahs is employed throughout this work, as being more familiar to the generality of readers than (riaya), the proper plural of rayah or rayat; the first of which is commonly used by writers on Turkey, the last (generally spelt ryot) by those on India, though the two words are, in fact, identical; the pronunciation of the final letter as *h* or *t* depending on two diacritical points.

prophet. A tax, called *kharaj*, for permission to retain his faith is demanded from every *rayah*, except the *Bératlees*, a small privileged class which includes some of the principal merchants and those who have rendered a service to the state. Besides the exemption referred to, these are liable only to the same custom duties as Europeans, and are entitled to wear yellow slippers: moreover, they are amenable to no courts but those at the seat of government, where they have authorized representatives of their body who defend their rights, and to whom they refer in all cases of injury or affront. It is a remarkable fact that in Turkey during four centuries no amalgamation between the conquerors and the conquered was affected; and no modification attempted of tyranny and slavery. But the present sultan resolved to pierce the cloud of Moslim prejudice which obscured the perceptions of his people, to recognize man as man apart from the prepossessions of bigotry, and to enthrone himself in the affections of the more enlightened, that is the Christian, portion of the population. This, however, was no easy task. By carrying his wishes into full operation, he would have forfeited the hold he yet retained on the hearts of his Mohammedan subjects, and he has therefore been compelled rather to keep within his desires and to await a happier season. At the same time, the *rayahs* are alive to their favorable position and to the views of their sovereign; nor are they wanting in tendering him a return; very few are to be found who are not grateful for the amelioration of their condition; and their attachment to his person may be regarded as one of the strongest bonds which now hold together the crumbling elements of the empire.

Jews in Turkey, like Jews in every other part of Asia, are objects of pity, whether we regard their physical, moral, or civil condition; they cherish the disease engendered by dirt, because they believe it purifies the blood; they cling to ignorance, because they interpret each effort to instruct into an attempt to Christianize them; and they submit, because without resource, to a double portion of every indignity which a capricious government is pleased to inflict on its helpless dissenting dependents. They are trampled on even by the persecuted Greeks; and are actually obliged, during the week preceding Easter, to confine themselves to their houses, lest they should suffer violence from those whose feelings are more than ordinarily exasperated against the murderers of their Lord at the time when they commemorate his crucifixion. They are addicted to gain because the aristocracy of wealth is the one to which alone they can aspire, and yet poor because the indulgence of their passion enriches only their persecuting lords. Inoffensive and quiet, yet despised and hated, they are compelled to carry about with them a badge of degradation and a lure to insult in the purple color of their slippers and in a peculiar headdress of figured cloth twined round a circular black hat. Thus, while the patois they speak, corrupted from the languages, of Italy and Spain; pants to the latter of those countries as giving them a claim to be regarded as Europeans, they exhibit a condition scarcely to be rivalled by that of the most debased Asiatics.

Of the four great classes of Christians only three are known among Turkish *rayahs*, as the Protestants resident in the empire are all foreigners, enjoying the protection of the respective European governments to which they are subject. Many of the Roman Catholics are similarly circumstanced: of those who are not so a few are

converts from the Greeks, while some are Armenians and some Syrians by birth. All the other rayahs, constituting the great mass, belong to the Greek and Armenian churches, if we except an inconsiderable number attached to minor sects, inhabiting chiefly Egypt and Syria, as the Copts and Abyssinians.

About two hundred thousand Greeks reside in Constantinople and the neighbouring villages. The principal families have acquired the name of Fanariotes from the quarter they occupy, called the Fanar, which was originally consigned to their ancestors by Mohammed II. when he conquered the last of their emperors, and which has been retained ever since as the residence of their patriarch and of the old Greek nobles, some of whom still live in great splendor.

Both sexes are handsome; the young men particularly so; and the women have bright dark eyes and regular features. The usual robe of the higher classes flows from the neck to the feet, and is buttoned above and girt with a ceinture. Over this is another similar one, or a jacket, the material of which may be cloth, cotton, or silk, according to the weather and the finances of the wearer: when it is of cloth, the edges are often trimmed with fur. For these two garments the lower orders substitute a coarse tight jacket. All use the petticoat trousers of the Turks; while their legs, if not bare, are covered either with stockings or with some of the superabundant folds of the anomalous trousers. The poor wear Frank shoes; the rich, black slippers. The turban is formed by a long strip of cotton cloth rolled round and round a scarlet cap, or fez: it differs from the Moslim head-dress in being very low on the crown, like the slippers restricted by law to a dark color, and tightly twisted; while the Turkish turban, formed of larger folds and raised much higher, exhibits a fuller surface and handsomer appearance. The priests wear a black cloth hat without a brim and with a flat projecting crown. The mass of the Greek women dress in a tight bodice and full petticoat; but the ladies are gradually losing the nationality of their costume, assimilating it to that of western Europe, except the head-dress: this consists either of a scarlet cloth cap, covering the crown and decorated with a silk tassel and a piece of black velvet richly worked in gilt wire, or of a preposterously large toque, shaped like the expanded wings of a butterfly.

The Greeks, for upwards of four centuries groaning under a galling yoke, exhibit in their character all the qualities which servitude engenders. Avaricious, intriguing, treacherous, timid, servile, and immoral, they appear to adapt themselves to every change of circumstances, while vanity prevents them from deviating a single point from their ancient self. In business proverbially dishonest, a Greek's word is ever at discount: his one object is to grasp all he can reach, and it is said that to give a merchant the price he first asks is to render him miserable; for, having obtained it so readily, he is vexed that he did not demand a larger sum.

But more serious charges are brought against them. Scarcely a single Greek family is free from the stain of some disgraceful imputation. The conversation of the ladies, even in the presence of the other sex, is said to be indecorous in the extreme; and so common is it for unmarried females to retire for a few weeks into the country under circumstances the least creditable, that girls of unimpeachable character have

been known to deny themselves the gratification of a temporary absence from home, lest reports unfavorable to them should be circulated.

The civil degradation of this people has already been hinted at. Justice itself can be obtained only by bribes; their vanity is wounded by a prohibition against the use of any bright color either on their houses or in their apparel and against carrying weapons, which form a component part of the dress of the meanest Turk; they cannot even worship God according to the religion of their fathers without purchasing permission; and every now and then their blood is made to boil by some special act of cruelty or oppression. The following occurrence fell under our own observation. A young Greek, while walking in the streets of Smyrna, was seized by order of the governor and hurried to the altar, where, *malgre' lui*, he was united to a girl, whose parents, desiring the match, had bribed the bey to take forcible possession of him. The bishop happened to be in attendance at the church and, not daring to refuse obedience to the mandate of the Moslim, was compelled to perform the ceremony without heeding the remonstrances of the unfortunate bridegroom. A few days after the transaction, the father of the youth calling on one of our acquaintance, bitterly lamented this cruel act of injustice, but concluded his invective against Turkish cruelty with a desponding exclamation, "Yet, what can we do?"

Still, notwithstanding their character and circumstances, the Greeks enjoy some consideration. Religion unites them by a common bond, and this union ensures to them a greater degree of influence and respect than is conceded to either of the other classes of rayahs; at the same time, peculiar causes have tended to raise them from the abyss of degradation in which they were originally sunk under their present masters. The natural indolence of the Turks prompts them to disengage themselves, as much as possible, from all cares, even those of government; and in their Greek subjects they found men at once able and willing to relieve them of the duties which involve labor, either in execution or previous qualification; accordingly, the office of dragoman was, at an early period of their history, entirely resigned to Greeks, who consequently assumed the management of all diplomatic negotiations. The Turks thus became more and more dependent on their interpreters, who acquired increased influence, which they never failed to exert for the exaltation of themselves and their nation; till, by degrees, the Greeks were relieved from the most irksome of the restraints with which they were shackled; the demand of every fifth child to be made a soldier and a Turk was suspended; and the government of the two large principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia was set apart as a prize for the most deserving or the most powerful among them. But this boon has lately been "taken out of their hands to be restored to those of native boiars, and their influence has proportionately suffered.

Great, however, as is this loss of political power, it may be more than repaired, if the nation itself shall awake to the destinies that seem to be opening upon her, and to those principles from which alone permanent honor and excellence can emanate. In this case, the Greeks will not be suffered to constitute an ignoble exception to the advance that every nation of Europe is making in education and intelligence. The spirit of the ancient men of Athens, which has for many centuries slumbered the grave of a nation's

liberty, is already re-exhibiting signs of animation, rousing itself to throw off the incumbent weight of despotism and ignorance, and preparing to infuse a new principle of vitality into elements long mouldering in decay. The descendants of Plato and Solon, endowed, as they are, with remarkable acuteness and intelligence, are now putting forth their native talents, and the time is probably approaching when the name of Greek will cease to be associated with a state of moral and intellectual degradation such as has hitherto debased the slaves of Turkey. - Is it altogether visionary to indulge a hope that at some future period this name will attain to a glory exceeding that with which it was invested in ancient days; when the *pure* light of Christianity shall shed its hallowed radiance over the successful efforts of genius and learning?

The Greeks hold many tenets at variance with the creed of the Roman Catholics. The Bible and the first seven general councils are the standard of their faith. They maintain that the Holy Ghost proceeds not from the Father and the Son, - a doctrine they regard as blasphemy, - but from the Father only. They admit no previous dispensation for the omission of any religious duty; but yield full absolution after the commission of sin, and reject the doctrine of purgatory. They deny the pope's infallibility; and refuse to admit images into their churches and houses, though they advocate the legitimacy of picture worship. They baptize by immersion; and use leavened bread and wine unmixed with water in the sacrament of the eucharist, which they administer in both kinds to the laity by dipping the bread in the wine, but from which a restored apostate is entirely excluded, except in the hour of dissolution. They require their priests to be ceremonially clean when administering mass, and prohibit women from participating in it till forty days after the birth of a child. They fast, not on Friday and Saturday, but on Wednesday and Friday; urging that it was on a Wednesday that Christ foretold that he should be betrayed, and on a Friday that he was betrayed.

Like the Latins, they acknowledge the corporeal presence, encourage confession, venerate saints, and pray to the virgin, whom they designate Παναγία, (Panagia), or Most Holy, maintaining zealously her perpetual virginity.

The Greeks have three daily masses; namely, at 4 and 7 A.M., and at sunset; all performed in the ancient language, unintelligible to the people: and the priests are further required to repeat forty Kyrie eleesons thrice every day, and the book of Psalms once a week. Some of their offices are very solemn, particularly that for the dead. The corpse, preceded by a number of the clergy, is carried through the streets on an open bier, dressed in the ordinary costume of life and covered with flowers, with a hat or turban on the head and the face exposed to view. After a service in the church, from which the following is an extract,* the friends and acquaintance assemble round the deceased and kiss his forehead; they then follow the body to the grave, in which it is deposited in a common wooden coffin.

* The author is indebted for this translation, and for some valuable information regarding the peculiar tenets of the various sects in the Ottoman empire, to the Rev. William Jowett's *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*.

"Come, Brethren, and let us give the last embrace to the deceased, thanking God! He hath left his kindred; he is borne to the grave, no longer heeding the things of vanity and of the burdensome flesh. Where now are kindred and friends? Now we are separated! Whom let us pray the Lord to take to his rest.

"What a separation, O brethren! What woe, what wailing, in the present change! Come, then, let us embrace him who a little while ago was with us. He is consigned to the grave; he is covered with a stone; his abode is with darkness; he is buried with the dead! Now we are separated! Whom let us pray the Lord to take to his rest.

"Now all the evil and vain festivity of life are dissolved, for the spirit hath left its tabernacle, the clay hath become black; the vessel is broken, speechless, void of feeling, dead, motionless! Whom consigning to the grave, let us pray the Lord to give him rest for ever.

"Truly, like a flower, and as a vapor, and as morning dew, is our life. Come then, let us look down narrowly into the grave! Where is the comeliness of the body, and where is youth? Where are the eyes and the beauty of the flesh? All are withered like grass, all are vanished. Come then, let us fall before Christ in tears!

"Come hither, ye descendants of Adam! Let us behold committed to the earth one who was of our likeness; all his comeliness cast away, dissolved in the grave, food for worms; in darkness, covered with earth! Now we are separated! Whom let us pray the Lord to take to his rest!"

The head of the Greek church is the patriarch who resides at Constantinople, being chosen by twelve archbishops and bishops, and approved by the sultan: he retires after a certain time from the duties of his high station, and lives upon what he may have accumulated, always retaining the title of expatriarch. Besides the metropolitan there are three other patriarchs in Turkey, and about a hundred and twenty bishops and archbishops.

The clergy are divided into two classes, monastic and secular. The former reserve to themselves all the high ecclesiastical offices by enforcing the law which requires every parish priest to marry, and precludes him, when married or a widower, from rising to any superior dignity in the church: but though, when bereaved of his partner, he be thus debarred from promotion, yet he is not suffered to unite himself to a second wife; for the Greek church forbids its disciples to marry more than three times, and applies the rule to the holy order with this curious construction: their first marriage is to Christ in their ordination as deacons; their second to Him in their ordination as priests; their third to their wives; and, as no one may marry four times, if they lose their wives they must remain widowers till death.

To convey an adequate idea of the degradation of the clergy and of their ignorance would be difficult. They are generally very illiterate and taken from the dregs of the people; thus, our cook was a candidate for the ministry; and each is compelled to act for some time in the capacity of servant to a clerical superior, performing the most menial offices, before he is eligible to the order of priesthood: in this state he is called a deacon, is boarded by his master, and receives from the community a suit of clothes

and three or four pounds a year: many are deacons all their lives; and few, when entering into holy orders, venture to aspire to the high office of a preacher.

Avarice appears to be the besetting sin of the Greek clergy; and even when due allowance has been made for their inadequate provision and the struggle they have to maintain with poverty, they still appear grasping and mercenary in the extreme. Money is the god at whose shrine they sacrifice; and the essentials of religion may be said to be unknown to men whose minds are diverted from its spiritual requirements by the ceremonies, processions, and fasts enjoined by their ritual. Every sacred service is made a matter of barter; and in their churches we have seen two large desks, at which, during divine worship, approaching marriages, funerals, and even sacraments are estimated and paid for. How would such traffic have been regarded by Him who scourged the money-changers out of the temple?

Nor, unhappily, is the love of gold confined to the inferior clergy; it governs the proceedings of the ecclesiastical department, from the highest to the lowest, and gives rise to a system of intrigue which pervades the whole hierarchy and enters into every transaction between themselves and their rulers. Would a priest be invested with a mitre? He must fee his immediate superiors. Would a bishop secure the office of patriarch? He must present a handsome sum to the principal Turkish ministers, and distribute his favors among the influential of his own party. Would a patriarch retain his seat on the "patriarchal throne" with his title of Ἀγιώτατος, or "Most Holy?" His protectors must be continually bribed, and the envy of his episcopal brethren similarly warded off. To answer these demands, he must rob the church; and while so doing, he must secure something for himself against the probably approaching day of deposition or exile. But even among the most depraved, the voice of conscience will sometimes be heard. The owner of an English merchantman trading between Trebizond and Smyrna told us that two of his passengers were a bishop and archbishop of the Russo-Greek church. The vessel encountered a severe gale and was nearly wrecked. The two prelates manifested the greatest terror, and began to confess their sins to one another. They then implored our informant to put back; and, conscience-stricken, declared, like Jonah, that the storm was sent in token of divine wrath against their impiety. Shortly after, the captain succeeded in making a port, when they left the ship and pursued their journey by land.

The number of Armenians now residing in Constantinople and its environs is about three hundred thousand, of whom about thirty thousand owe allegiance to the see of Rome. These, as well as their brethren acknowledging the pope in all parts of Turkey, consider themselves more as Franks than as Asiatics; they court the society of Europeans, and dislike their own countrymen, yielding to the efforts of Roman Catholic emissaries, whose object is to substitute attachment to Rome and her people for national prepossessions. Only six years ago an order was issued, on a suspicion that the Papal Armenians sided with the Russians, requiring them all to quit the metropolis within a few days. It was the depth of winter and snow lay deep on the ground;

consequently, very many died, and many more would have perished had it not been for the humanity of the Turks living at Scutari, who received them into their houses.*

With the exception of this comparatively small number, all the Armenians, much more than the Greeks, assimilate with their rulers in habits and manners. Being originally Asiatic, and having no connection with Europe, there is only the one point of religion which forms a necessary distinction between them and the Turks. They are consequently contented and loyal. Engrossed in mercantile concerns and occupying the chief posts as bankers, they not only have their all at stake in the country, but by means of their wealth they exercise over its administration an influence of a most extensive and peculiar character: in fact, they may be regarded as the secret machinery which regulates the internal movements of the government. By giving security to the sultan for the payment of the whole annual revenue of each province, of which they are every year required to advance a portion on behalf of the native governor before it is collected, they hold all the pashas as their debtors, and can ensure a compliance with the most unreasonable demands under a threat of insisting on an immediate payment of their bonds. Thus they become the virtual viceroys of the provinces, in which their sway is almost unrestricted; and no pasha is in a position to object to any impost which his banker may choose to levy on the people, when reminded by the man of money that the tribute he has advanced, with the interest it bears, - an interest limited only by the means of extortion, - is yet unpaid. Nor is the power of the Armenians confined to oppressive exactions in the interior of the country: in the capital their collective body possesses so great an influence that they can generally obtain the deposition of any pasha who refuses to submit to the conventional laws they have established for the regulation of a system which involves their wealth and aggrandizement.

As individuals, the Armenians are mild, peaceable, and diligent, but proud, vindictive, dishonest, and immoral. In person, the men are good-looking. The women are pretty, but destitute of expression, to obtain which they anoint their eyelids with antimony and their cheeks with rouge. The costume of the men resembles in its main points that of the Greeks, but it is distinguished by some peculiarities, the most striking of which is the *kalpack*, a head-dress resembling a balloon put out of shape by a square frame of wire fitted into it, so as to form four angles. This *kalpack* is either white, brown, green, or half black and half scarlet. The outer and inner robes are always long, reaching from the neck to the feet; the one closed in front by means of a girdle; the other open. The women can scarcely be distinguished from the Turkish, except that, like their countrymen, they are forbidden to wear yellow slippers, and make use of red.

Armenian females are in a state of degradation equal to that exhibited under the influence of Mohammedanism; and their education is wholly neglected, since they are regarded in other light than as appendages to the other sex. Marriages are effected without the consent of the parties, who are often betrothed as early as three or four years of age, and wedded, the girls at ten, the boys at fourteen. A man's mother

* The order was subsequently evoked through the interference of the three great powers, and the Papal Armenians were permitted to return.

generally rules his house, while his wife is a mere cipher in it, and obliged, on every occasion, to submit her will to that of her mother-in-law: she is not permitted to sit while her husband is in the room, nor to speak unless spoken to, till she bear a child; she takes no share in the entertainment of her husband's guests, unless it be that of a servant, in which case she appears with her face concealed; and it is considered indelicate for a young woman to raise her voice above a whisper before a stranger. A husband and wife may be separated by mutual consent, or on account of the last excesses of immorality on the part of the latter, but neither is at liberty to contract a new marriage; and divorce is not sanctioned by the law nor the church.

The Armenians have a tradition that their ancestors were taught astronomy and husbandry by Noah. They believe their language to be of greater antiquity than the Hebrew, the first medium, in fact, of communication in the garden of Eden; and they argue that, as the ark rested on Ararat, the descendants of those who settled in its neighbourhood were the most likely to retain the original tongue: Their conversion to the Christian faith is referred by them to the time of our Lord himself. Their king Abgarus, having heard of his miracles, despatched two messengers with a prayer that he would heal him of a severe disease, sending, at the same time, some valuable presents, including the "sacred and mysterious" coat without seam, for which the soldiers subsequently cast lots. In the letter transmitted by these deputies he addressed Christ by his own titles as sovereign of Armenia and Assyria, offering him those kingdoms, and stating his own readiness and that of his people to submit themselves entirely to him. Our Lord, being about to suffer, replied that he must fulfil the Holy Scriptures, and could not, therefore, accede to the king's request to visit him in person; but that he would shortly send an apostle to restore him to health. Accordingly, St. Thaddeus afterwards went to Edessa, where, preaching the gospel to Abgarus, he healed and baptized him. The baptism of their sovereign was followed by the adoption of Christianity as the religion of his subjects, who have held, as they consider, the faith of Jesus undefiled from that day to the present. Tradition adds that one of these deputies was a painter, and wished to take the Saviour's portrait on a cloth prepared for that purpose; but, as his face was illuminated by so bright a halo of glory that the artist could not succeed, Christ, willing to gratify his laudable desire, caused his likeness to be miraculously impressed on the cloth, which he directed to be given to the king with a written reply to his letter. The genuineness of the first of the two letters referred to has been a subject of much dispute among the learned: it was maintained by St. Augustine, who says that our Lord promised Abgarus that his city of Edessa should be impregnable; and Addison on the same subject observes, "Had we such an evidence for any fact in pagan history an author would be thought very unreasonable who should reject it."*

The Armenians separated from the Christian church A. D. 535, eighty-four years after the council of Chalcedon: the secession was perfected in sixteen years; and in the year 551, in the patriarchate of Moses the first, they commenced an era of their own, which has ever since been substituted by them for the Christian. Their patriarchs are

* Addison on the Christian religion. Sect. I.

five in number, who reside respectively at Cis near Tarsus, Constantinople, Aghtamar on the great lake Van, Jerusalem, and the monastery of Etchmiazin near Erivan. The last-mentioned is the head of the church, and is called *catholicos*¹. He is the only person who has power to ordain bishops and to consecrate the *meiron*, or holy oil, used in confirmation, ordination, and other religious ceremonies; whose virtue consists in a miracle said to be performed at the time of consecration, when it is made to boil without the application of heat. The patriarchs of Cis and Aghtamar have the powers and privileges of a *catholicos* within their own narrow limits; but, with these small exceptions, the authority of the prelate of Etchmiazin has been admitted by the whole Armenian nation ever since the year 1441, when Armenia proper seceded from the jurisdiction of the see of Cis. A few years ago, however, Etchmiazin fell into the hands of Russia; since which period the Porte has striven to sever the link which unites the Armenians of Turkey to their spiritual head by directing their allegiance to the patriarch of Cis, who is still a Turkish subject.

While the *catholicos* of Etchmiazin is the spiritual superior, the patriarch of Constantinople is the avowed secular head of the Armenian church: he is elected by twenty-four lay primates, chosen to fill that office on account of superior wealth, talents, or influence; and is then confirmed by the sultan. In ecclesiastical matters he does not rank above any other bishop; but, with the Turkish government, he is the only acknowledged representative of the Armenian rayahs: through him all applications are transmitted, and all orders issued; and he receives an annual tribute from every bishop, which was paid even by his spiritual superior of Etchmiazin, till the latter became a Russian subject. From these tributes he satisfies the one impost levied by Turkey on the Armenians as a body; except that collected by the patriarch of Jerusalem, who pays direct to the Porte, and is independent of his brother at Constantinople. He is, moreover, vested with a certain judicial authority over his own people, in virtue of which he presides over a court of "prèmiere instance" he takes note of births, deaths, and marriages; and supplies the certificate, without which no Armenian can obtain a passport.

Formerly the prelate resident at the capital had no powers beyond those of any other bishop; but after his elevation to a patriarchate, the *catholicos* of Etchmiazin resigned to him the appointment of suffragans to their dioceses within the limits of his jurisdiction. The number of prelates is not limited by the number of sees; and any convent that presents a petition in favor of an individual whom it desires as its president may ensure his consecration by a handsome present. In the Armenian, as in the Greek, church, every secular priest must be married; but this is not enough; he must be a father before he can undertake the charge of a parish: if he become a widower, he must enter a convent and remain such; but, unlike the Greek priest similarly circumstanced, he is eligible to the highest ecclesiastical honors. No qualification is required of a candidate

¹ This word was originally only a prefix to episcopos, just as the pope is called "universal bishop," and has a similar, though more limited, signification.

for holy orders but that he should be able to read; many cannot write; and few, by comparison, are familiar with the old and dead language of Armenia, in which all their theological works are written, and which differs as much from that now spoken, as ancient Greek from Romaic: they do not generally maintain a high moral character; but, on the contrary, are as careless, indolent, and self-indulgent, as they are illiterate. Pastors are never nominated to parishes by the bishop, but selected by the congregation; the diocesan, however, has the power of deposition. The parish priest very seldom preaches; this duty being performed by a *vartabed*, or preacher, appointed for the purpose; while the former confines himself to the daily routine of church services, confessing, baptizing, marrying, and burying. As the sons of Aaron were required to be ceremonially clean when offering sacrifices, so is the Armenian priest when celebrating the mass, which is a supposed renewal of the sacrifice of Christ; and with this view, he is called upon to separate himself from his family and to devote himself entirely to religious services, passing his nights as well as his days in the temple for a month and a half: this period is divided into three, during the first and last of which he is occupied in baptizing, administering extreme unction, celebrating marriages, and making wafers for the use of the church; and only during the middle period of fifteen days is he permitted to celebrate the mass. A similar seclusion and appropriation of himself to religious duties is required for fifteen days before and after every repetition of that sacrament.

The Armenians entertain a profound respect for the Bible, copying it on their knees, and covering it with a binding enchased with silver: the laity are obliged to solicit a special permission to read it, which they do with the head uncovered. For a hundred and twenty years after their conversion to Christianity, they made use of the Greek language in their public services; but no sooner had they formed for themselves an alphabet than the Bible was translated from the Greek, A. D. 410, into their vulgar tongue. This translation is still used: it is the oldest Armenian book, and one of the oldest manuscripts of the Sacred Scriptures, now extant; and, as such, it would be invaluable, were it not for the alterations effected in the thirteenth century by the false zeal of Hethem (Hethum – ed.), king of Armenia, who became a Franciscan friar, and introduced into it from the vulgate several corruptions favorable to the papists.

The Armenians are exceedingly rigid in their fasts. Besides the whole season of Lent, they have ten others of five days each; and one of eight, together with every Wednesday and Friday, making in all two hundred and two days in a year. During these periods they abstain from flesh, fish, butter, oil; milk, and wine: and in addition, their priests observe two other fasts of fifty days each, one before Christmas, the other before the anniversary of the transfiguration; but during these two seasons they indulge in eggs, butter, and milk; and on Saturday and Sunday they drink wine.

One of their modes of dispensing charity is very peculiar. They say that when, after a long defection, a portion of their nation reembraced Christianity at the preaching of St. Gregory Loosavoritch, the priests, who used to be supported by the heathen sacrifices, requested him to provide for their sustenance. He accordingly directed that they should have a tithe of the produce of the land; and that the people, now relieved from the burden of sacrifices to other gods, should dedicate them to Jehovah in the

name of the dead, "as a charity to the hungry". On the strength of this tradition they occasionally devote as an offering for their deceased friends an ox or a sheep, taking it first to the door of the church, placing salt before the altar, reading the Scriptures, praying for the departed, and finally giving the salt for the animal to be eaten. The victim is then slain and shared between the priest, the poor, and the friends of the deceased; while, with Levitical scrupulosity, they guard against any portion remaining till the following day. Similar sacrifices are offered at Easter and on the great festivals of the saints; but always in the name of the dead, and as an eleemosynary gift, never as a propitiatory oblation.

Though they profess to deny the existence of a state of purgatory, yet occasionally, and on certain days, they say masses for the dead, in memory of whom they keep lamps burning all night. The stated seasons are the day of the funeral, and the seventh, fifteenth, fortieth and three hundred and sixty-fifth day after it. Besides praying for their deceased friends, they burn incense over their graves, especially on Saturday evening, and give alms on their behalf, believing that this will redound to their merit. For a whole year after the loss of a near relation, women never quit their houses, even to attend divine service. Every person bequeaths to the church a silver cross bearing his name, which varies in size with the means of the testator.

They hold the original cross in high veneration, regarding it as an effective intercessor with the Father for the sins of the world, as is proved by the following words in their prayer book: -"Through the supplications of the holy cross, the silent intercessor, O merciful God, have compassion upon the spirits of the dead:" and again, "Let us supplicate from the Lord the great and mighty power of the holy cross for the benefit of our souls." Imitations of this sacred object in wood and metal are much in vogue with them; but these, prior to use, must be dipped in water and wine: to worship them before this immersion is a breach of the second commandment; to worship them after, is consistent, they say, with Scripture; for in the ceremony Christ has united himself to the cross, making it his "throne," his "chariot," his "weapon;" and the spiritual eye sees not the material substance, but Him who is united to it.

It is this veneration of the cross which confers on its sign such a virtue. One of the chief Christian duties, in the estimation of an Armenian, is to cross himself frequently, and, above all, in the due canonical form, placing the thumb and three fingers together, then touching, in succession the forehead, the bottom of the chest, the left breast, and the right breast, saying with this action the following words, to synchronize exactly with the quadruple movement of the arms," In the name of the Father,- and of the Son,-and of the Holy-Ghost." The Armenians and Papists perform this ceremony alike; the Greeks, besides touching the right before the left breast, (an unpardonable sin!) use but two fingers and the thumb, intending thereby to symbolize the Holy Trinity; while the Jacobites, Copts, and Abyssinians manifest their monophysitism by employing only one finger. The Armenians reason curiously regarding the merit of making the sacred sign. By it they "profess to signify, First, a belief in the Trinity, since the three persons are named; and Secondly, in the mediatorial work of Christ; since the act of carrying the hand from the forehead to the chest represents his descent from heaven to earth, and

its motion from the left to the right breast intimates that he delivered the saints that were in *hades*, and made them worthy of heaven." They make this mystical sign as often as they kneel, rise from prayer, retire to rest, get up, dress, wash, eat, drink, or enter upon any important business. They believe it will render their prayers, acceptable and facilitate their work, guard them from evil spirits, and strengthen them against sin.

The leading feature in the Armenian creed is the error of Eutyches, who maintained that there was but one nature in Christ, the human being wholly absorbed in the divine. Though they rejected the council of Chalcedon, and though an assembly of bishops who met A.D. 491 anathematized Eutyches, yet in a council, held A. D. 520, under the patriarch Nerses the Second at Thevin, the monophysite doctrine was avowedly espoused, and the words "who wast crucified for us" were inserted in the trisagion*, thus making God the Father the passible victim of his own justice. This was the consummation of the heresy for which, upwards of twenty years before, the rest of the Christian church had denounced the Armenians; and their separation became from that time inevitable and permanent. On this doctrine, however, it is extremely difficult to ascertain accurately their opinion. Their own statement is, that they hold but one nature in Christ, not denying the human as did Apollinaris, nor confounding the two as did Eutyches, nor dividing them as did Nestorius, but believing that the divine and human natures were so united as to form but one, in the same way that the soul and body constitute but one person. An ecclesiastic in Armenia informed an American missionary of our acquaintance that his church maintains the existence of only one will, as well as only one nature, in Christ; thus representing it as tainted no less with the monothelite, than with the monophysite, heresy.

The creed, which the Armenians repeat daily, is peculiar to themselves, and involves, among much that is scriptural, some doctrines in which they differ from Papists, Greeks, and Protestants. The following is the translation of a portion of it*. The priest, standing with his face to the west, says, "We renounce the devil and all his arts and wiles, his counsel, his ways, his evil angels, his evil ministers, the evil executors of his will; and all his evil power renouncing, we renounce." Then turning towards the east, he says, "We confess and believe; with the whole heart, in God the Father, uncreated,

* The trisagion is the following ejaculation, with the objectionable words inserted: "O holy God, holy strong, and holy immortal, who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us!"

* Messrs. Smith and Dwight, two American missionaries now in the Levant, were among the first, if they be not still the only, Protestants who have explored Armenia, with the express object of collecting information regarding the religion and habits of the people. To the journal and conversation of these gentlemen, especially Mr. Smith, under whose hospitable roof he was entertained at the foot of mount Lebanon, the author is indebted for this creed and the following form of confession, as also for nearly all the little information he has gleaned respecting the habits and doctrines of the Armenians. Regarding their statements as peculiarly authentic, he has been induced to dilate on a subject at once so new and so interesting to many readers: in doing which, he has entered into some details that, perhaps, more strictly apply to the Armenians of Armenia Proper than to their brethren at Constantinople, who may have lost some little (though less than might be expected) of their peculiarities as a nation and a church.

unbegotten, and without beginning, both begetter of the Son, and sender of (literally, *from whom proceeds*,) the Holy Ghost. We believe in God the Word, uncreated, begotten and begun of the Father before all eternity; not posterior nor younger, but as long as the Father is Father, the Son is Son with him. We believe in God the Holy Ghost, uncreated, unbegotten, but proceeding from the Father, partaking of the Father's essence, and of the Son's glory. We believe in the Holy Trinity, one substance, one divinity, not three Gods but one God, one will, one kingdom, one dominion, creator of all things visible and invisible. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, in the Holy Church, with the communion of saints. We believe that one of the three persons, God the Word, was before all eternity begotten of the Father, and perfect God became man, with spirit, soul, and body, one person, one attribute, and one united nature; God became man without change, and without variation. As there is no beginning of his divinity, so there is no end of his humanity, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

After this creed a form of confession is used for the whole congregation, which, at the conclusion of the service, is repeated by each individual who wishes to be absolved; when the priest sits on the ground in a corner of the church, and the penitent kneels by his side with his, or her, head in his lap. The form is in all cases the same. With a few expressions omitted and the indelicacy of others corrected, it is as follows: "I have sinned against the most holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and I confess before God, the holy mother of God, and before thee, holy father, all the sins I have committed. For I have sinned in thought, in word, and in deed; voluntarily and involuntarily, knowingly and ignorantly: I have sinned against God. I have sinned with my spirit and its faculties, with my mind and its acts, with my body and its senses. I have sinned with the faculties of my spirit; by cunning and by folly, by audacity and by cowardice, by prodigality and by avarice, by dissipation and by injustice, by love of evil, by desperation, and by mistrust: I have sinned against God. I have sinned with the evil devices of my mind; by artifice, by malice, by vindictiveness, by envy, by jealousy, by dissoluteness, by unchaste propensities: I have sinned against God. I have sinned with the lusts of my body, by sensuality, by sloth, by the yawning of sleep; by the acts of the body and by the commission of divers kinds of impurity, by the hearing of my ears, by the shamelessness of my eyes, by incontinence, by gluttony, and by drunkenness: I have sinned against God. I have sinned with the evil speaking of my tongue; by lying, by false swearing, by perjury, by contentiousness, by disputing, by defamation, by flattery, by tale-bearing, by idleness, by mockery, by vain conversation, by talking heresy, by cursing, complaining, backbiting, and blaspheming: I have sinned against God. I have sinned with every joint of my frame and every member of my body, with my seven senses and my six operations: I have sinned against God. I have also sinned by committing the seven transgressions, the mortal sins; by pride and its varieties, by envy and its varieties, by anger and its varieties, by sloth and its varieties, by covetousness and its varieties, by gluttony and its varieties, by lasciviousness and its varieties. I have also sinned against all the commands of God, both the positive and the negative; for I have neither done what is commanded, nor abstained from what is forbidden. I have received the law, and come short of it. I have been invited to the rites of Christianity,

and by my conduct have been found unworthy; knowing the evil, I have voluntarily debased myself, and of myself have departed from good works. Ah me! Ah me! Ah me! which shall I tell? Or which shall I confess? For my transgressions cannot be numbered, my iniquities cannot be told, my pains are irremissible, my wounds are incurable! I have sinned against God! Holy father, I have thee for an intercessor and a mediator of reconciliation with the only begotten Son of God. That by the power given unto thee thou wouldest loose me from the bands of my sins, thee I supplicate!"

This form has the merit of being so general that no one repeating it can stand acquitted at the bar of conscience; at the same time, it is open to the charge of being so minute that few will acknowledge themselves guilty in every point adverted to. The simple and beautiful confession which our church puts into the mouth of her children is entirely free from this fault, and strikingly exhibits that excellence; for each clause is equally adapted to, and equally convicts, every individual: the sinner overwhelmed with a sense of guilt could not say more, while the saint on the point of entering into glory would not express less, than is included in its comprehensive and deeply penitential strains. It is worthy of remark that the Armenians themselves are so conscious of the impossibility of particularizing every possible species of transgression, an attempt to do which constitutes the main defect of their form, when cleansed of its indelicacies, - that, previous to absolution, another confession is generally called for of the peculiar sins, not specified in the canonical summary, which the penitent may feel to weigh heavily on his conscience.

In several respects the Armenian church is chargeable with errors similar to those of the Roman Catholic. Saints and angels are so exalted that the "One mediator between God and man" is almost lost sight of. Prayers and supplications are offered "through the intercession of the holy mother of God, and of John the Baptist, and of St. Stephen the protomartyr, and of St. Gregory Loosavoritch, through the memory and prayer of the saints, and for the sake of the holy cross;" and even when they are addressed directly to the second person in the Trinity, they are urged with some such plea as this: "O gracious Lord, for the sake of thy holy, immaculate, and virgin mother, and of the precious cross, accept our prayer and make us live." The virgin is over-estimated quite as much by the one church as by the other. The German missionaries at Shoosha heard an emissary of the *catholicos* of Etchmiazin preach a sermon in which he made use of these words: "As Adam could not live without the woman, neither can Christ be mediator without Mary; she is the queen mentioned in the 45th Psalm; the most beautiful of women whose charms are celebrated in the Song of Solomon; and as Christ did all that she required at the marriage in Cana, so will he now always regard her intercessions." On another occasion the same divine is said to have asserted, not only that Christ could not be mediator without Mary, but even that he would take upon himself to affirm that she is equal to either of the persons in the holy Trinity!"* In the

* Though instances of this character serve rather to exhibit the ignorance of an individual than the errors of the church to which he belongs, yet enough has been already stated to prove that the doctrines and acknowledged formularies of the Armenian church lead to such excesses.

common prayer-book she is called the "mediator of the world, seraph of dust, more famous than the cherubim." Though the Armenians do not hold her freedom from original guilt, so strongly advocated by Greeks and Papists, yet they assert that she ceased to be susceptible of sin from the moment that the incarnate Word was conceived in her, and they believe in the miraculous assumption of her body into heaven.

Like the Romanists also, they hold seven sacraments; namely, baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction; and in the celebration of the Lord's supper they use unleavened bread. With the Papists, too, they maintain the corporeal presence of Christ in the consecrated elements, declaring that the human soul and the divinity of our Lord, as well as his body, are present in the bread and wine; therefore they pray, " May these (the bread and wine) be for justification, propitiation, and remission of sins, to all of us who draw near!"

In the administration of baptism and the eucharist the Armenians follow the Greeks, except in a few trifling particulars. Like them, they baptize by immersion, first sprinkling water thrice over the face in the name of the Holy Trinity, and then immersing the body as often to intimate that Christ remained three days in the grave. This sacrament, which can under no circumstances be administered out of a church, is generally celebrated on the eighth day; and, strange as it may appear, the child is confirmed at the same time by anointing with the meiron the forehead, and the organs of the five senses; that is, the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and hands and feet: the infant is made a partaker of the communion immediately after, by rubbing his lips with the sacred elements ; and, lest he should, at the moment of death, be so circumstanced as not to be able then to receive extreme unction from the hand of a priest, that sacrament also is administered with the other three to a babe eight days old! Again, like the Greeks, in opposition to the Papists, the Armenians use wine unmixed with water in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, of which they allow the laity to partake in both kinds by dipping the consecrated wafer in the wine. On the exhibition of the host, the priest exhorts the congregation to salute one another with a holy kiss, in token of congratulation for Christ's presence among them; and the exhortation is compiled with either in fact or in form.

In some respects the Armenians Judaize: for instance, they offer up sacrifices of animals on the festival of the virgin, besides those referred to for the souls of deceased friends; they abstain from unclean meats, as pork and hare; and enjoin on females and priests ceremonial cleanness, as above noticed.

As the differences between the Greek and Armenian churches relate to very minute points, and are yet maintained with a violence which engenders mutual hatred exceeding that borne by either party to any other class of religionists, it may be interesting to exhibit those discrepancies in juxtaposition as accurately as a limited acquaintance with the subject will allow.

1. The Armenians use *unleavened* bread in the sacrament of the eucharist.
2. They do *not* maintain the virgin's freedom from original sin.
3. They touch the *left breast before the right*, in making the sign of the cross.

4. They offer *sacrifices*.
5. They *abstain* from unclean meats.
6. They never admit *females* as baptismal sponsors, nor suffer a *layman* to baptize.
7. They *allow* ecclesiastics, who have been married and have lost their wives, to attain higher grades in the church.
8. Their sacred *festivals differ* both in the time of celebration* and in number, the Armenians *not* having increased their's since the date of their separation from the universal church.
9. But the principal difference consists in the attachment of the Armenians to the *monophysite* heresy, which teaches that the human nature of Christ was absorbed in the divine, and, therefore, that God *suffered*.

Considerable efforts have been made by English and American missionaries to instruct the rayahs in Constantinople, as well as in other parts of the Ottoman empire, especially in Smyrna. Several schools have been established, in which, after learning to read and write, the children are taught the doctrines of Scripture without any direct reference to the heterodoxies of their own creed. The inculcation of truth is found to be the surest safeguard against error; and though, in after years, some may love darkness rather than light, yet there is ground to hope that many will continue to hold the essentials of Christianity learnt in childhood, without yielding to the heresies promulgated by their mother-church.

But the anticipations of those who expect much to be effected in a very short time by mere human agency are not likely to be realized. A rapid transition from a state of extreme debasement to moral excellence is an anomaly in the history of man; and here, the peculiar character of the people opposes more than ordinary barriers to the introduction of truth. The object of every one is to conceal his transactions, his plans, and his feelings; to be "politic;" to steer between extremes; to keep well with all parties: and this spirit infects the converts to Protestantism in common with all their countrymen. Such as are convinced of the errors of their church and wish well to the missionary cause are long, very long, before they will express boldly their opinions or commit themselves by any overt act of participation; and even when they have once done so, their continued adherence is by no means certain. Thus, the missionary's difficulties are increased, his patience tried, and his harvest deferred. Still, the work is progressing; the seed is being sown; and here and there a plant, springing up in the ungenial soil, bears fruit.

Of all the rayahs the Armenians are in the most hopeful state. Among them a spirit of enquiry on religious subjects has been excited: many are dissatisfied with their own teachers and, like Pilate, enquiring "What is truth?" Some young men were pointed out to us who always carry their Bibles in their bosoms; and a peculiarly interesting and

* Thus the Armenians celebrate our Lord's nativity fourteen days after the Greeks; and, as they believe that on the thirtieth anniversary of that event he was baptized, the nativity and baptism are commemorated on the same day. Like the Greeks, they adhere to the old style.

encouraging circumstance lately occurred here. An Armenian, of good family and unusual talent, was led to see the anti-scriptural nature of many of the doctrines in which he had been educated, and yielded his unqualified assent to the simple truths of the word of God, as set before him by Protestant ministers. After much deliberation, he decided that he would not voluntarily leave his own church, as by so doing he should diminish his sphere of usefulness; he therefore abstained from any formal act of separation, but continued to associate intimately with the American missionaries, and even to teach in their schools. The keen and jealous eye of his ecclesiastical superiors did not long overlook this advance of truth against error: the convert was accused by a priest of holding heterodox opinions, and was summoned to answer the charge before a council appointed by the patriarch to enquire into the matter. In his defence he referred exclusively to the Sacred Scriptures; such evidence could not be gainsaid by men professing themselves Christians; and after an examination, extended through several days, he was declared perfectly orthodox, while his accuser was denounced as an infidel. The Armenian convert having identified himself with the "Bible-men," (as the missionaries are designated,) his cause was theirs: with his theirs would have fallen; and with his it was confirmed and established to the great dismay of the hostile party, who, in full assurance of victory, had prepared a list of eight hundred persons to be arraigned on the same account, as soon as their first victim should be condemned. His acquittal, however, resulted in their confusion, which was rendered the more complete by the episcopal president patting the accused on the shoulder and saying, "I wish there were more of your way of thinking." This occurrence interestingly exhibits the superiority of the Armenian priesthood to their Greek and Romish rivals as regards their veneration for the word of God; a feature in their character which alone can account for the acquittal of the young convert, and which at the same time holds out a hopeful promise of self-renovation to the church.

Of the Greeks, not less than seven hundred were, till lately, receiving education, through the agency of the English Church Missionary Society, in Smyrna and the neighbouring towns; and the schools were a source of light and instruction to the children, while the parents joyfully acknowledged the benefit they received. We witnessed their operations with exceeding interest; and heard both boys and girls read the Scriptures in their mother tongue and answer the questions proposed to them with an accuracy which reflected honor on the native teachers and on the Rev. Mr. Jetter, their unwearied superintendent. But this was not to last. The priests had long watched the missionaries with envy, and at length resolved to put a stop to their proceedings. They first demanded the dismissal of one of the masters, on the plea that he was a convert to Protestantism who had shown himself very zealous for the reformed religion, and must therefore necessarily be anxious to shake the faith of the children in the dogmas of the Greek church. Failing in this effort, they circulated a report that the English and Americans had sent missionaries to convert the Greeks to Protestantism, they fabricated the vilest calumnies against them, and at length they obtained from the patriarch of Constantinople an order, which was read in all the churches of Asia Minor, denouncing every parent who should continue to send his children to be instructed under their superintendence. From that time the schools have been deserted; and an

ignorant and superstitious clergy have succeeded in robbing their fellow-countrymen of the key of truth and knowledge. The fact is, that their own influence over the minds of the people can be preserved only by a systematic effort to shut out all intellectual and spiritual light. But the conflict between light and darkness is begun, and it remains to be seen how long the latter will prevail. The people are at this very time bitterly lamenting the loss they have sustained in the schools, and it is not improbable that the missionaries may be requested to re-open them.

But while the condition of the Christian rayahs is one which leaves the mind to fluctuate between hope and despair, that of the Jews is still less favorable. Among them a persecuting spirit prevails, and many who desire to be taught are afraid to hold intercourse with the missionaries. Not long since, a Hebrew, anxious to enquire into the truth of Christianity, was seen going to one of their houses. On leaving it, he was seized, imprisoned, and bastinadoed. Another, who, with his wife, was known to have sought instruction, was ejected from the city; the woman was poisoned, and their three children were violently taken from the father to be brought up in Judaism. A third Israelite was lately converted under the ministry of an enlightened Roman Catholic, who continued for a short time to preach the gospel faithfully; but was soon compelled to desist; and his proselyte was driven out of Constantinople.

While directing their attention principally to the rayahs, the indefatigable missionaries have not neglected their Mohammedan fellow subjects. A school was established some years ago for Turkish youth, which continued in a flourishing condition till the jealousy of the imams was excited. They impeached the native master before the governor, and he was committed to prison; the boys were forbidden to attend under a heavy penalty, the books were destroyed, and the room was stripped of forms and tables. Since that occurrence, the attempt to instruct the Turks has not been renewed; but each year is making inroads on their superstition and exclusiveness, and every obstacle that is thrown in the way of introducing the truth to the rayahs tends to stimulate the efforts of the missionaries to place it before their rulers; who, though they still refuse to trust their children in the hands of the "*giaours*" are very willing to receive schoolbooks and maps, while some will even accept and read with interest copies of our sacred Scriptures. Such is the state of morals and religion in the great metropolis of Turkey; and such the picture which the whole empire presents. All, or very nearly all, is darkness; and the few and feeble rays which pierce the gloom serve only to make the "darkness visible," and to "discover sights of woe." The faith of the Saracen impostor, itself holding forth no inducement to moral or spiritual excellence, not only operates as a debasing principle upon its own disciples, but, with an upas influence, blights every germ of virtue in those subjected to its control or example. Nevertheless, in spite of all, the Christian is encouraged by the word of God to hope against hope for the dawn of a day when Mohammedanism shall be superseded by the religion of the Bible, and when that religion itself, now exhibited in this country under forms so vitiated that it can hardly be recognized as Christianity, shall burst the veil which superstition and idolatry have thrown over it, and shall attest by its fruits the efficacy of divine truth on the heart of man.