

SHOCKING CRIMES OF THE TERRIBLE TURK.

How the Savage Kurds
Murder Helpless Chris-
tians.

EUROPE'S DUTY IS PLAIN.

Rev. E. L. Burnett's Graphic
Account of the Armenian
Atrocities.

INCITED BY THE SULTAN.

Greece Should Regain Constantinople
and the Jews Return to Pales-
tine and Syria.

"Without doubt, the question of all questions to-day is the Armenian question," said the Rev. E. L. Burnett, a Presbyterian clergyman, who is particularly well informed upon the subject, in an interview with a CALL man yesterday. Being requested to give THE CALL readers the benefit of his wide knowledge upon the Armenian situation, Mr. Burnett said:

The Sassoun massacres a year ago shocked and outraged the Christian world. So incredible were the horrors of rape, rapine, torture, wholesale murder and butchery described in the newspaper reports that many candid minds refused to believe them. But, alas, the report of the commission sent out by the powers to investigate, though not yet published, not only fully confirms the worst phases of newspaper reports, but presents a vast array of details too horrible for publication. We have also the reports of eminent travelers and authors who have during the past year visited the scene of lawlessness and bloodshed with a view of presenting to the public inside facts bearing on the Armenian question.

It may be assumed that the outlines of geography, topography and history of this ancient and interesting country and people are generally known; that the ancient seats of the Armenian people are in the mountains and plateaus of Western Asia, whence are the sources of the great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris; that they have been a civilized and Christianized people for fifteen centuries; that they were a nation governed by their own kings for a period of more than a thousand

years previous to their becoming a Turkish province; that tyranny and injustice and persecution have scattered them all over the great western peninsula of Asia, called Asia Minor, and have driven tens of thousands across the great mountain barrier of the Caucasus into Russia where they form no inconsiderable element of population in the southern provinces.

Since 1847 Turkish rule, or rather misrule, has become more and more unbearable from year to year.

So intolerable had it become, that at the close of the late Turko-Russian War, in 1878, in the treaty of Berlin, the Christian powers stipulated for reforms in the government of the Armenian provinces, and insisted that Armenian Christians should be taken under the care and protection of the Christian powers.

From that time dates the settled policy of the Turkish Government to settle the Armenian question by exterminating the Armenians. And for seventeen years a system of spoliation, robbery, murder and worse has been carried on by Kurdish armed bands and Turkish soldiers, aided and abetted by local civil authorities, all incited and directed in later years by the Sultan himself.

To pursue this fiendish policy so long and so successfully, without being called to halt by the Christian powers, is, indeed, one of the

mysteries of Oriental diplomacy and European indifference.

England alone, of all the powers, has from time to time when startling facts of wholesale robbery and murder have been brought to her notice remonstrated with the Sublime Porte, who, with the sublime duplicity of an Oriental despot, would in the same breath promise reform and incite his minions to further deeds of violence and villainy. Said Mr. Burnett:

To carry out his diabolic policy of extermination the Sublime Porte found a ready and willing tool in the wild, savage and blood-thirsty Kurds, who in summer feed their flocks and herds in the high mountain pastures and in winter descend to the lower valleys and plateaus to billet themselves on the industrious and thrifty Armenians, who unarmed and friendless become their easy prey.

Now the Kurds are a brave and warlike people, who from prehistoric times have occupied their mountain fastnesses and lived by plundering the people below them in the lower valleys and plateaus. They are a people in the same condition of savagery as our Sioux and Comanches before they were subdued and brought on to reservations. To the natural hatred of a savage to a civilized people is added the odium theologicum of a Moslem fanatic toward a Christian, for the Kurds are devoted followers of Islam.

The Armenians are variously estimated in numbers from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000, living for the most part in innumerable small villages and hamlets scattered among the high mountain valleys and plateaus stretching from Lake Van westward and northward to the Black Sea. They are engaged mostly in agriculture in a small way, and in towns and cities they form the mechanic and merchant classes.

The Armenian living in cities becomes versatile and accomplished. He is a shrewd business man and knows how to take advantage of the markets and the dullness of his neighbors. He takes naturally to education, speaks various languages and knows how to turn his intellectual attainments to a material profit.

They are devoutly attached to their church, the Gregorian, and to the forms and usages that have come down to them from remote antiquity.

The ruling class is the Turk. He holds all the offices, civil and military. Only Moham-medans bear arms. The Armenian Christians are not permitted to carry arms or to have them in their houses. They are, therefore, utterly defenseless, as sheep among wolves.

To inaugurate their policy of extermination the authorities of Constantinople enlist the Kurds. All the horsemen are armed with repeating rifles and wear the Turkish uniform. They are given to understand that the lives and possessions of the Armenian Christians are in their hands. They may do what they will, rob, plunder, burn, destroy, and no Turkish authority will call them to account for it.

Armed bands go from village to village. They quarter themselves on the inhabitants. They demand forage for their horses and food in extravagant abundance for their hunger, and perpetrate other horrors too black and awful to mention. If resistance is made they shoot down in cold blood all that hinder them or yield not to their wishes. Wives are dishonored in the presence of their husbands; mothers are outraged in the presence of their children; young and innocent girls are debauched and polluted under the eyes of their parents, who are helpless to prevent it. If complaint is made to the Turkish authorities the complainants are maltreated and cast into prison, there to remain, suffering hunger and disease and torture until their friends or relatives have raised the required sum to secure their release.

A common method of extortion is to arrest the men of property on some trumped up charge, cast them into filthy and loathsome dungeons, subject them to torture and nameless mutilations to extort from them the secret of buried treasure or until the relatives out of pity sacrificed all their property to secure their release from the horrors of prison and torture.

Bands of robbers in Turkish uniform descend upon the unarmed Armenian villages, rob, pillage, plunder, rape, burn, driving before them as they retreat flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and bevvies of young women and girls.

In this way thousands of homes have been broken up and thousands of families reduced to beggary. It seems to be the fixed purpose of the Turkish authorities either to destroy them or drive them out of the country.

Now the Armenian hates the Russian, and he knows very well that he has nothing to gain politically from the interference of Russia. Nevertheless, so intolerable has his condition become under Turkish rule that tens of thousands seek safety by flight across the borders into the Russian territories. But in doing so they must run the gauntlet between Kurdish robbers and Turkish armed bands, and they are invariably plundered and beaten and stripped of their clothing and cast naked over the line on to Russian ground.

The Turkish authorities seem perfectly willing that the Armenian Christian should leave the country, but they must carry nothing with them but wounds and blows, and the burning memories of plundered homes and outraged families, said Mr. Burnett, and the Sassoun massacres are simply the culmination of a long series of robberies and murders, extending over large areas and through many years.

During the past five years this work of extermination has been expedited by the personal influence and authority of the reigning Sultan. He is said to be troubled with the big-head. He wishes to reign alone, not only without a Grand Vizier, but he assumes to be Caliph, spiritual head of the Moslem faith; and it is he who has been inciting his coreligionists to fanaticism and to acts of violence against the Christians. Turkophils will tell you that the movement against the Armenian Christians is not religious persecution; has not its grounds in antagonisms of faiths, but is wholly a political uprising to meet the tendencies of the Armenians to conspiracy, sedition and revolt. They affirm that since the Berlin treaty, when the Christian powers assumed the protectorate over the Armenian Christians, efforts have been made from time to time by Armenian patriots, refugees in various European countries, to arouse the Armenians to revolt, by circulating among them inflammatory literature rehearsing their former greatness as a nation, and telling over and over again the story of their wrongs and giving them assurance of assistance from the Christian powers, if they would only rise up and throw off the hated yoke of their oppressors.

It is said that the American missionary schools among the Armenians have revived their ancient love of learning and their hopes of national liberty and greatness in the near future. If it be not religious persecution why should it cease against any individual the moment he turns Mohammedan?

Ordinarily the Armenian Christians will endure robbery, torture and even death itself rather than renounce their faith; but in some instances, under torture or fear of death, or of that which to a pure woman is worse than death, they have feigned conversion to the Moslem faith. Immediately torture ceases, the prison door is opened, the fear of death or of dishonor is taken away. They are henceforth protected by all the power of the Turkish Government.

One of the men sent out to investigate the Sassoun massacres relates that he visited a certain Kurdish chief who had been sentenced to death for robbing a Turkish official and violating his wife. This man was the leader of a Kurdish armed band in the employ of the Turkish Government. He boasted that he had robbed and laid waste many villages, that he had killed with his own hand scores of Armenian Christians, that he had personally ravished dozens of young women and girls; and he seemed to think that he had done something very meritorious.

All this he did at the connivance of the Government; but the moment he carried his lawlessness on the Moslem side and robbed a Turkish official, immediately he was arrested and sentenced to death. This case shows conclusively that the authorities are abundantly able to quell all this lawlessness whenever they choose.

Indeed it has been shown by abundant proofs that in acts of lawlessness and deeds of violence the Turkish regular soldiery surpassed the Kurdish tribesmen.

When the savage Kurds, satiated with blood and gorged to satiety with murder and plunder, seemed to halt in their atrocities, the Turks spurred them on by jeers and example to nameless and still more monstrous crimes.

Recent outbreaks in Betlis and also in Constantinople indicate that the area of violence is spreading westward and that the fanatical element in Islam is being aroused to continue the work of extermination nearer home.

The Sultan bows sullenly to the ultimatum of the Christian powers and promises to stay the tide of persecution. But unless the administration of the Government is placed in the hands of men approved by the commission no reforms will follow; and the work of extermination will go on as before.

Mr. Burnett says he sees no hope for the Armenian Christians unless they follow the example of the Servians and Bulgarians—make successful revolt, call to aid the Christian powers and be set off as an independent state. It has been suggested that the five Armenian provinces be formed into one, over which shall be placed a governor approved by the powers, but he would receive no support from the central authority, and there would be a large element in the province hostile to any reforms.

My judgment is that the only practical method of reform is for the powers to detach the five Armenian provinces, erect them into one, and establish a local government under the protection of the powers to become in time an independent state.

In any case the Armenians must be armed for self-protection. So long as they have no means of defending themselves they will continue to be the easy prey of their enemies. If they were once armed with repeating rifles the lawless Kurds and Turks would soon develop a growing respect for their rights of person and property.

For more than half a century the Turkish empire has been bolstered up and kept from falling to pieces by the jealousy of the Christian powers. If the Turkish Government were left to itself it would fall to pieces of its own rottenness.

Why is this wild Turkish horde still permitted to camp in the fairest lands, in the midst of a peaceful and long-suffering people? If they had proven themselves capable of civilization—if they had improved the condition of the people whom their arms had conquered—there might be some excuse for their continued existence. But for 400 years they have remained a barbaric horde in the midst of European civilization, still living by plundering the peaceful people among whom they are encamped.

I once thought that Russia should be left free to solve the Eastern question by securing the natural gateway to her dominions, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; but the political and religious intolerance which she has shown of late years proves too convincingly the Oriental trend of that empire.

Both the missionaries and the native Christian population of the Orient fear the Russian more than they dread the Turk. For with the iron rule of Russia there would be no longer hope for either civil or religious liberty. I have suggested a possible solution, not alone of the Armenian question, but also of the Eastern question, namely: the restoration of the Greek empire as it was before its overthrow by the insufferable Turk. The modern Greek is European and Western in his mode of thought and life. The Greek language, as pure as in the days of Pericles, is spoken to-day by millions of people.

The daily papers of Athens appear to-day in the same language that was spoken and written 2400 years ago. The Greek people have a natural right to the territories on both sides of the Bosphorus and the Dardenelles which the Turks wrested from them 400 years ago. The people of Macedonia and the dwellers around the coasts of Asia Minor are largely Greek to this day. Let the powers dethrone the Sultan and transfer the Government from Athens to Constantinople.

Let the Greek kingdom be extended northward and eastward so as to include what remains of Turkey in Europe, and in Asia as far as the border of Persia, and southward as far as the northern shores of the Mediterranean and the northern boundary of Syria, and let the five Armenian provinces be erected into one principality under the suzerainty of the King of Greece.

This will give the Armenian people a measure of autonomy and an opportunity of independent development. Let England assume control of Syria and Palestine and the countries eastward to the borders of India. She must eventually secure the possession of these countries in order to preserve her Indian empire.

We need have no scruples about the partition of the Turkish empire. It has existed for fifty years only by the tolerance of the Christian powers. There is no possibility of reform in Turkish rule. The history of their dominance in Europe and Asia is the record of the decline and fall of civilization in these countries which they have cursed with their misrule.

Thus the Greek people will be restored to their just rights and they will have room given them to expand and revive their ancient glory.

Thus the Armenian people, who next to the Greeks are the most capable people in all the Orient, will also be restored to liberty and to the peaceful enjoyment of their lands, which their ancestors have inhabited and ruled over ever since the dawn of history.

And thus Palestine and Syria, under the benign rule of England, Mr. Burnett believes, will invite the return of God's ancient people, the Jews, who are already coming from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south to dwell in the land promised to their fathers forever and ever.