

Alice Stone Blackwell Criticises the Recent Article by Thomas G. Allen, Jr.

To the Editor of The Herald:

The interesting article by Thomas G. Allen, Jr., in last Sunday's Herald, on "The Turks and the Armenians," contains several statements which must have been derived from Turkish authority, not of the most trustworthy kind. Mr. Allen admits that there was a time when the Christians under Turkish rule fared badly; but he declares: "All this is now so radically changed that they are the objects of congratulation rather than compassion. They have even some rights not granted to their Moslem neighbors."

Prof. James Bryce, who travelled through Armenia, came to a diametrically opposite conclusion. In his book, "Transcaucasia and Ararat," he says:

Nothing can be more pitiable than the condition of these poor people. The Christians, being unarmed and without any means of legal redress, are practically at the mercy of a neighbor who covets their vineyard, or an official who carries off their daughters. There is absolutely no security for life, honor or property.

Mr. Allen speaks of "the tolerant spirit of the Mussulman religion." Toleration is not a virtue with which history has largely credited the followers of Mohammed.

In 1822 a Turkish army fell upon the island of Chios (which was not in rebellion), massacred 23,000 Greek Christians and sold into slavery 47,000, or nearly the whole population. In 1843 about 10,000 Nestorian Christians were massacred or sold into slavery by the Mohammedan Kurds. In 1860, again, 8000 Christians were massacred in the Lebanon, and many more at Damascus, Sidon and all over Syria. In 1866, on the island of Crete, the blood of Christian women and children flowed like water; and in 1876 took place the enormous massacres in Bulgaria.

Mr. Allen says the Armenians "are allowed to follow out with the utmost freedom their own laudable enterprise in the matter of education." In the same article he tells of a well educated Armenian-American citizen of his acquaintance who went to Constantinople to found a college, and who was "thwarted in his object by the refusal of the Sultan," although he was "provided with influential letters from influential Americans," including one from the wife of the President of the United States.

Rev. Dr. F. E. Clark, president of the National Christian Endeavor Society, travelled through Turkey last year. In a letter to the New York Independent of June 15, 1893, he gives a vivid description of the persecution to which the Christian schools are subjected. He says: "It is with the greatest difficulty that a permit can ever be obtained for the building of a new school. * * * No one doubts that, if it were possible, the Sultan would crush out tomorrow every Protestant school in Turkey."

In an editorial on the same subject, Dr. Lyman Abbott's paper, The Outlook, said, Oct. 7, 1893: "Our countrymen who have spent their lives in Turkey in self-denying work are of one mind regarding the policy of recent years as aiming at nothing less than the extinction of the growing light of intelligence among the Christian subjects of the Sultan."

Next to the chronic insecurity of life, honor and property, the systematic persecution of education is one of the greatest grievances of the Armenians.

Mr. Allen says that owing to their commercial talents and their superior intelligence, the Armenians are "fully capable of taking care of themselves." He even compassionates the artless and honest Mohammedan, in the toils of the wily Christian, and intimates that if any foreign intervention is necessary, it is to rescue the Turks from the Armenians. One might really imagine from his article that it was the Armenians who had just been massacring the Turks.

If a group of European travellers had fallen into the hands of brigands, or a group of American travellers had been taken captive by a hostile tribe of Indians, their intelligence and their superior business talents would hardly save them from being maltreated. The Armenians are forbidden by law to carry arms; their testimony is not taken in the courts, and they live in the midst of savages. This sums up their situation in a word.

Mr. Allen praises the Turks for "honesty and fidelity to their pledged word," and for "truth, manliness, courage and tolerance." There may be many individual Turks who possess all these virtues; but they are conspicuously lacking in the wretched Ottoman government.

Honesty? What is the credit of the Turkish government worth in the money markets of the world? Tolerance? How about these periodical massacres of Christians? Courage? What is the courage of a government that dares not let its Christian subjects carry arms to protect them against brigandage, for fear they should overturn the Turkish empire, although the Mohammedans outnumber them seven to one? Manliness? Where is the manliness in butchering unarmed peasants, ill-treating women and children, torturing prisoners and committing the enormities which have made "the unspeakable Turk" a byword among civilized nations? Truth and fidelity to one's pledged word? Prof. E. A. Freeman says:

From the day of Mohammed the Conqueror to ours, the promise of a Turk has simply been made to be broken. * * * One charter after another has been put forth to say that all the Sultan's subjects, of whatever religion, shall be equally under his protection, and have equal rights. Yet the Christians are everywhere dealt with as bondsmen; the Mohammedan is armed and the Christian is unarmed; the Mohammedan rules and the Christian has to obey; the Mohammedan sits in the so-called court of justice, and refuses to take the evidence of the Christian against the worst Mohammedan offender. Therefore no Christian is safe for a moment in anything. Whatever wrong is done to him, he has no redress. His life, his property, the honor of his family, are at the mercy of every Turk who thinks good to deal with them as he chooses.

Yet Mr. Allen says: "The stories of Armenian oppression which have found currency in the press are for the most part the exaggerations or fabrications of Armenian agitators." It is to be feared that Mr. Allen has been lending too confiding an ear to Turkish representations.

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