

## The Shame of Smyrna

(By P. W. WILSON, in *Current Opinion* for November.)

What is the secret of this sudden shame of Smyrna? How comes it that the city where Homer was born, where arose one of the seven earliest Christian Churches addressed in the *Book of Revelation* by St. John the Divine, the leading seaport of the Levant, with a population of 250,000 souls, is stricken in a day with fire, plague, the rape of women, the murder of men, the utter destruction of commerce, of education, of human happiness? What happened and who is to blame?

It is the latest scene in an age-long drama. Glance for a moment over a thousand years. Six centuries after Christ, Mohammed arose. He preached one God and supplied the sleeping East with a sword. That sword was wielded by the Arabs or Saracens who over-ran the Christian provinces of North Africa, turned them into the Moorish States of Algiers, Tunis, Morocco and even established themselves in Spain.

When the Saracens were weary, there arose the Turks, an even fiercer and more barbaric race. They conquered Asia Minor, captured Constantinople in the year 1453, and subjugated Greece, with the entire Balkan Peninsula. Islam thus secured a second bridgehead in Europe.

In the year 1609 Spain expelled the Moors and western Europe was thus rid of Islam. For the last hundred years, Europe has been similarly expelling the Turk which will liberate her eastern frontier. It has been a terrible struggle. At every stage there have been wars, atrocities, and massacres. And the reason has been not the strength of the Turk, not even his cruelty and cunning, but the quarrels and rivalries of the so-called Christian nations.

Slowly but surely, however, the Turk has been driven back. In 1830, Greece became again a nation. Serbia was already autonomous and was declared independent in 1878. Rumania was united in 1861. Bulgaria dates from 1878. And Albania was recognised in 1912. Thus did the tide of Mohammedanism recede.

But Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine were once as Christian as ever Europe has been. The tyranny of the Turk over the Armenian is just as severe as the tyranny of the Turk over the Greek or Serb or Bulgar. Constantinople is the metropolitan or capital city of the Eastern or Orthodox Church. The great mosque of St. Sophia, on the model of which most other mosques are designed, was not built by Moslems at all, but by Christians and was taken from the Christians by the Turks. When, therefore, the Turks were beaten in the late war, there arose at once the question of what to do with Constantinople and Asia Minor.

It is the United States that has rendered the most valuable of all service to the Near East. She has sent there not armies and navies, but missionaries, teachers, and doctors. She maintains great colleges at Constantinople and at Beyrout, with numerous hospitals, schools, orphanages, and stations for relief. One suggestion has been that the United States should undertake a political mandate for Constantinople and Asia Minor, or at least for Armenia. For this responsibility we were as yet not prepared. Our mandate would have entangled us with Russia and with Europe as a whole.

The second suggestion was obvious. In Asia Minor was a mixed population. The Christians were not strong or wise enough to govern the Turks, and the Turks, who had massacred a million Armenians in the war, were obviously unfitted to govern either themselves or the Christians. On the other hand, no one European nation could take up the task of restoring and maintaining order without encountering the jealousies of the others. Why not hand over the Near East, then, to the League of Nations, which would hold Constantinople, keep the Dardanelles free for the navigation of all countries, and so solve the entire problem? This would have been the ideal and the sensible solution. But the United States had not then joined the League of Nations. And in the League of Nations, Europe herself had not come to believe. Hence the tragedy.

Three powers, Italy, France, and Britain, decided to act together. Each of them sent troops to Constantinople. And each contingent occupied its own section of the city, the British, Pera; the French, Stamboul; and

the Italians, Scutari. The Sultan, Mohammed VI., was on his throne and the city was administered in his name.

On August 10, 1920, just two years ago, the Allies signed among themselves the Treaty of Sevres, with certain other agreements. The effect of this Treaty was that

(1) Greece should have Thrace which means what was left of Turkey in Europe, with the exception of

(2) Constantinople, which would be Turkish in name but under international control.

(3) The Dardanelles and the Bosphorus should be free for the shipping of all nations.

(4) Asia Minor should be Turkish, with four reserved areas, namely Armenia for the Armenians, Cilicia for the French, Adalia for the Italians, and Smyrna for the Greeks.

This is the settlement that has broken down. Why?

First, the Moslems all over the world rallied to the support of the Turk, and especially in India. This weakened the European Powers. Next, the Russians, who under Czars had opposed the Turk for religious reasons, changed sides under the Soviets and supported the Moslems, whether in India, Afghanistan, Persia, Mesopotamia, or Turkey. The Armenians were not strong enough to maintain an effective republic. The Italians did not take up their sphere of influence. And the French in Cilicia, finding that 100,000 troops were needed to hold the Turks in the interior, first asked that their British comrades be withdrawn from that area and then withdrew themselves, making a new and separate peace, dated October 20, 1921. This left the Greeks alone and unsupported.

The story of the Greek collapse is simple. In May, 1919, Greece was ruled by Venizelos. Believing in Venizelos, the British, with their fleet, helped the Greeks to occupy Smyrna. And against the Turks, some outrages were committed which, however, soon ceased. But in December, 1920, King Alexandros was mysteriously slain by the poisonous bite of a monkey, and the abdicated King Constantine was recalled to the throne. Venizelos fled the country. Constantine unwisely embarked on a war against the Turks. In March, 1921, the advance from Smyrna began. By July, the Greek area of 16,000 kilometers, allotted under the Treaty of Sevres, had been increased to 100,000 kilometers. The population assigned had grown from 1,000,000 to 3,000,000. The Greek army was 300,000 men and they had spent the equivalent of \$100,000,000.

But the Turks had found a leader, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, whose career is described elsewhere in this magazine. He opposed the Greeks with ever increasing forces. When the French retired from Cilicia, with their 100,000 troops, it meant that a similar number of Turks were released for employment against the Greeks. Also, the French gave Kemal equipment for 40,000 troops and military instructors were promised the Turks. Despite these facts, the Greeks again advanced but were held at the Sakaria River. The battle there lasted from August 23 to September 2, 1921; the Greeks lost 25,000 men and the Turks twice that number. The Greeks had, therefore, to retreat to a line known as Eski-Shehr to Karahissar, which commanded the railways from Constantinople to Angora, Kemal's headquarters, and to Konia, the ancient capital of Turkey, familiar in the New Testament as Iconium. Winter then set in and, at altitudes of at least 4,000 feet, war became impossible. But Kemal had already begun to attack. For nine days he had 60,000 men trying to turn the Greek flank.

It is this counter-offensive that has culminated in the complete rout of the Greeks in the last few weeks and the capture and the ruin of Smyrna. Constantine had actually conceived the idea of forcing his way into Constantinople by way of Europe and this had brought him into conflict with the great powers. Kemal seized the opportunity and delivered his blow, as a result of which Constantine abdicated in anticipation of the abdication of Mohammed VI.

Reprehensible is the fashion of reading the unwholesome literature which is often paraded under the name of light summer fiction. Truly, there is nothing light about bad books. On the contrary they are weighted with the heavy freight of their own noxious poisons.

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