

Mustapha Kemal The Man of the Hour

Who is this Ghazir Mustapha Kemal Pasha, the hammer of the Greeks, and how did he arise to fame? To begin with (says *Current Opinion* for November), he is 41 years old and thus in the prime of life. Next, he is a Turkish officer, of high rank, trained in the Military School of Constantinople under German instructors. This means that he is well disciplined and orderly in his methods, able to organise transport and munitions and well acquainted with all that is meant by modern war. During the Gallipoli campaign he was on the Turkish general staff and he thus knows every inch of the ground around Constantinople and the Dardanelles. Like all ruling Turks, he is an accomplished linguist, speaking French perfectly. In appearance, he is almost a Westerner. His uniform is European in cut, and out of uniform he wears an English suit of tweed. His hat is the Asiatic kalpak of lamb's wool, rather larger than the cloth fez. His face is clean-shaven, save for the mustache, and the features are spare of flesh, with no trace as yet of the puffiness which comes of oriental indulgence. Kemal has lived as an ascetic. In American money, his income works out at 180 dollars a month. He is unmarried. And in a very real sense he is homeless. Usually reserved and courteous, he is capable of formidable wrath, and he has a will of cold steel. He is an aristocrat and a gentleman, but absolutely ruthless in the pursuit of his aims.

Those who speak with authority assure us that Kemal is not a religious fanatic, is liberal to the point of feminism, devoted to his country and anxious to give it the fruits of western culture. He has the masked countenance of a good poker player, yet the mask itself betrays certain qualities. The firm chin and straight mouth—there is the fighter who stopped the British at Gallipoli and who has now converted an even more forlorn hope into victory. The high forehead and quick, observant eyes—there is the thinker and idealist.

Indeed, when he wears glasses he might be mistaken for a professor. Withal his face bears the composite imprint of a visionary, imprisoned and exiled for his opinions by Abdul Hamid, and of a man of action whose dream has been in the ashes of the Ottoman Empire.

He is a Turkish-made man, educated entirely in Turkey's common and military schools—to which he had added travel in most European countries—and a self-made man—his father was a petty customs official.

To understand Kemal, you must know where he was born and bred. He and his former friend, Enver Pasha, hailed not from Turkey in Asia but from Turkey in Europe. They were natives of Macedonia, that is, of the territory in the Balkans where the Turk, though in a minority, insists on being top dog. Kemal has seen all these European provinces lost to Turkey. Unless the Turk rules others, he cannot live, and hundreds of thousands have migrated from Europe to Asia Minor, not because they were in danger of oppression by Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, but because, in remaining, they would have had to abandon their many privileges, especially that of plundering others, as tax-gatherers. The background of Kemal's soul is thus a profound embitterment and it is no wonder that he demands from Europe the province of Thrace, on the European side of the Dardanelles, which would give him a bridge-head for further reconquest. He is not interested in Thrace as a province conceded to him by diplomacy. What he wants is a Turkish army again on European soil.

If Turkey had joggled along in the old way, Kemal would have been merely one more of her military satraps, neither better nor worse than a hundred others. But when this century opened, Turkey was breaking up from within: The centre of revolt was Salonica, the same town as Thessalonica to which St. Paul wrote his two epistles, and there Enver led the Young Turk movement which drove the Sultan Abdul Hamid into imprisonment. A parliament met in Constantinople, and it was hoped that Turkey would become truly liberal, granting religious equality to her citizens and emancipating her women. These hopes were disappointed. In 1912, the Balkan War broke out,

Turkey was beaten, and the Young Turks under Enver placed the fortunes of the country in German hands.

Kemal had always been difficult to deal with. He declined to associate himself with Enver's Government and led the opposition at Constantinople. In Gallipoli he quarrelled with his superior officers, and when Turkey surrendered to the Allies, Kemal refused to accept defeat. The Parliament or National Assembly was still meeting in Constantinople where was a phantom Sultan, who had no choice save to submit to the Treaty of Sevres, signed on August 20, 1920. But Kemal gathered up the Turkish Nationalists, led them into Asia and, after various conferences, set up a permanent government at Angora, where he became President, or, as we should say, Speaker of the National Assembly. He announced what seemed to be on paper a liberal and moderate programme. He would have nothing to do with the Pan-Islamic movement, or with a holy war, convulsing India and Morocco and Egypt. He had no wish, he said, to reconquer Arabia, Syria, Palestine, and the Balkans. All he wanted was that the Turks, when in a majority of the people, should govern the country that they had thus made their own. On these lines he proposed to the Christians that they should form a Turkish Orthodox Church, independent of the Patriarch at Constantinople, which also seemed reasonable enough, until you realised that it was equivalent to asking, let us say, an American Catholic to cut off his Church from the Pope and the Vatican. Very soon the same cruelties were imposed on the Armenians by Kemal as had been imposed by Enver and Abdul Hamid, and the character of the man is seen in the fact that in the district of Smyrna, even after the sack of that city, Kemal refused to guarantee the lives of any Christians beyond a certain immediate date. If these dwellers under his authority would not clear out, they must take the consequences.

It is this irreconcilable fanatic, cold, implacable, and merciless, who stands at the gates of Constantinople. Fearing his fury, the City has been in a terror. In refusing to negotiate, Kemal has been, in fact, insisting on conquest by the sword, and the whole available British Fleet has hastened to resist him. Powerful naval forces from the United States are also crossing the ocean. For it may well be that the great American home of learning, Robert College, in Constantinople, is at stake.

Kemal may not always have been as ambitious as he is revealed to-day. But his very success has drawn upon him the hopes of enthusiasts whom he cannot control. In the East, there are and can be no half measures. One is either the Chosen of God and Father of the Faithful or one is nothing but the Slave of the Padisha. Kemal is thus driven forward by the force of his own momentum. The momentum has already upset two sovereigns on their thrones. Constantine, King of Greece, has again abdicated, leaving his palace to Prince George, and the succession is now perceptibly nearer to his brother, Prince Christopher, who married Mrs. Nancy Leeds (Anastasia), an American citizen. Mohammed VI., the Sultan, has also been deposed. For the time being, he is succeeded by his cousin, Prince Abdul Medjid.

For Catholic Journalism

The Congress of La Bonne Presse has recently met in Paris under the presidency of the Cardinal-Archbishop. Many bishops of the various dioceses in France were also present at the reunions, at which distinguished speakers extolled the useful work of the good press. At the opening conference the Abbe Bethleem dwelt on the fact that Catholics sometimes do very little to help the propagation of good literature. Father Calot, S.J., delivered an eloquent address in which he advocated unity amongst good works—that is, he advised the associates of various charitable organisations to work in common. He also appealed for fervent prayer for the diffusion of Catholic literature, and urged those present to support Catholic journalism as best they could. M. Bousquet and Mgr. Lecomte likewise emphasised the necessity of a spirit of prayer, and the former speaker expressed the desire that Catholics should endeavor to be propagators of Catholic journalism.

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