

**THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE.**

*Blemishes and Virtues of an Interesting and Mysterious Race.*

Armenia is just at present in the public eye here in America in connection with the recent murder of H. S. Tavshanjan, perhaps the most prosperous member of the important colony of Armenian merchants in New York. The assassin is one of his countrymen, and it is pretty generally understood that political dissensions and blackmail were the motives of this crime, which is merely one of a long series of an almost identical nature which have been perpetrated in recent years in the United States and in various parts of Europe, notably in London, Venice, Paris and Brussels. But people here are curiously at sea with regard to the political aspirations of the Armenians, as to the rival parties into which they are divided and as to their status. Indeed, save among students and those identified with the American missions in Asia Minor, so useful through their civilizing influences, only the vaguest ideas prevail as to the whereabouts of Armenia, as to whether the Armenians make their home there and as to their origin.

With regard to the latter question it is impossible to blame anybody for ignorance on the subject. For the Armenians themselves are altogether at sea about the beginnings of their race, and whereas some of them claim to be the lineal descendants of the ancient Assyrians, others assert that their nation was founded by Haik, son of Togarmak, who himself was a grandson of Japhet, and a great-grandson therefore of Noah; while there are many, again, who believe the Armenians to constitute one or more of the lost tribes of Israel. Certain it is that they have many points in common with the Jews, whom they resemble in features, character and condition. Like them, they present the phenomenon of a race dispersed throughout the world, intermingling but never fusing with other people, possessed of incomparable abilities in everything relating to commerce and finance, immutably attached to their faith (which is based, however, not on the Talmud, but on the Bible), and cherishing shadowy hopes of a national restoration.

Before proceeding any further it may briefly be mentioned that most of the political murders that have been perpetrated in America and in other countries by Armenians against their co-religionists have been due to the antagonism existing between the Hunchakist secret society and that known as the Arpiarist organization. The Hunchakist association was formed in 1877 by an Armenian journalist, a certain Avetist Nazarbek, in reality for the purpose of providing himself with a means of livelihood, but ostensibly in order to secure the suppression of Turkish misrule in Armenia by means of bringing the woes of the latter before the public of Western Europe and America.

With this avowed object in view, he founded in London a newspaper entitled the "Hunchak," which may be described as the "Tocsin" or "Alarm Bell," and found no difficulty in obtaining generous subscriptions from wealthy Armenian residents in America, in England, in France, Germany and Italy by describing in lurid colors the terrible cruelties and savage oppression to which those of their countrymen were subjected who groaned under the cruel rule of the Sultan in Turkey. As in the case of all these secret political societies, the Hunchakist organization attracted a large number of helers and adventurers, Armenians of the very worst type, who found it more agreeable to

draw money as political agents from the treasury of the society and to live on the subscriptions patriotically offered by their wealthy, industrious and reputable coreligionists than to do any actual hard, honest work.

**GOLD MINE FOR SCOUNDRELS.**

The Hunchakist society proved such a gold mine to scoundrels of this class that, as was only to be expected, another society of a similar character was not long afterward founded by another Armenian newspaper man, of the name of Arpiar, on analogous lines. Of course the two societies began to fight with one another. The Hunchakists accused the Arpiarists of being secretly in league with the Turks, and about four years ago an attempt was made to assassinate Arpiar in Venice, where he was dangerously wounded, presumably by Hunchakists. This greatly incensed the Arpiarists, who are established in strong numbers at Boston, and the Arpiarist paper there practically called on the heads of their society for revenge. Indeed, their opponents assert that they advocated the killing of the principal leaders of the Hunchakists, and this was followed by the shooting of the editor of "Young Armenia," an anti-Arpiarist paper in Boston, and in a murderous attack near Lausanne, in Switzerland, upon M. Nazarbek, the journalist founder of the Hunchakist society.

Shortly afterward another Hunchakist leader, of the name of Sagateli Sagouni, was shot and killed at his home at Nunhead, one of the suburbs of London, and it is alleged that a number of other murders and attempted homicides here as well as in Europe in the last three or four years have been due to the blood feuds between these two rival societies. Of late the more unscrupulous elements of these organizations have received an additional incentive to crime through the withdrawal of the rich and respectable Armenian merchants abroad. The latter, having become alive to the fact that all the money which they had so generously subscribed toward the relief of the sufferings of their coreligionists in Turkey was merely being utilized to maintain in relative idleness a couple of bands of adventurers and desperadoes, who brought both the name and the cause of Armenia into disrepute, declined to continue their contributions and closed their purses.

This led the evil element of the Hunchakist and Arpiarist societies to endeavor to extort by means of blackmail and terrorism the funds which they had previously had no difficulty in obtaining on the plea of patriotic charity, and there is no doubt that there will be many more crimes such as the assassination of Mr. Tavshanjan, the wealthy New York carpet dealer, the other day, unless these societies either purge themselves of the evil element in question or else are broken up by the authorities as organizations the membership in which constitutes an offence against the laws of the land.

It must be thoroughly understood that there is hardly a reputable, well-to-do Armenian who would not welcome the disappearance of these societies as now constituted. For he has ended by regarding them as responsible not only for the increasing evil odor of the cause of Armenia abroad, but also for the persecution to which his co-religionists have been subjected at stated epochs in Turkey. Whenever the treasury of these two secret societies ran low the sympathy of the rich Armenians abroad was excited by stories of massacres and outrages perpetrated by Turks upon the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Sometimes the stories of atrocities were entirely bogus, while in other instances the outrages were deliberately provoked by the members of the society for the purpose of loosening

purse strings. This view has been expressed by foreign consular officials, by students and writers on the Armenian problem, such as H. F. D. Lynch, in his standard work, "Armenia," and by many eminent Armenians, and I have before me an interview published in the Moscow press, and reprinted in the "Official Gazette" of Tiflis, in which one of the most influential members of the Armenian community at Constantinople, while staying at Moscow, asserts that most of the stories of so-called Armenian outrages were "manufactured out of whole cloth," and that in the relatively few instances where massacres had actually taken place they had been "deliberately provoked by unscrupulous agitators" of his own race.

**MASSACRES PREMEDITATED.**

Mr. Lynch, in "Armenia," expresses the firm conviction, based on careful investigation on the spot, that the massacres of 1895 were not the outcome of a spontaneous rising of the Moslems against the Christians, but were provoked from without by Armenian revolutionaries. Of course, the Armenians are not popular in Turkey. Like the Jews, they are too successful in every business they undertake not to excite the jealousy of their Moslem neighbors. And then, too, following as they do the professions of bankers, money dealers, traders and loan mongers, they have most of their less thrifty Moslem neighbors and fellow citizens in their debt. But they are extremely well treated unless there is some deliberate act of provocation, as, for instance, on the occasion of the Armenian outrages at Constantinople some ten years ago, which originated in a disorderly and riotous Armenian demonstration at the Sublime Porte, leading to a sanguinary conflict between the Armenian rioters and the troops sent to restore order, whereupon the turbulent Softas, or Moslem students, took a hand in the game. But the trouble would never have taken place had it not been deliberately provoked by the demonstration at the Sublime Porte, carefully organized by the revolutionary Armenian societies, apparently for the express purpose of instigating a massacre, to excite the sympathy of the civilized world in behalf of the Armenians against the Turks.

It is only abroad that one hears of Turkish cruelties and the oppression of the Armenians, and those of the latter who complain of the persecutions of the Turkish government mostly all reside either in Western Europe or the United States. The vast majority of Armenians in Turkey are perfectly contented with their lot. There is no reason why they should not be so. At Constantinople one finds all the most wealthy, prosperous and influential members of the community to be Armenians, and they may be said to control the financial relations of the Sultan's empire. Nearly all the most beautiful palaces and the finest estates in the neighborhood of the Turkish metropolis are owned by Armenians, and it is they, too, who are the moving spirits in all the railroad, mining and industrial enterprises calculated to develop the welfare of the Ottoman nation. Moreover, nearly all the permanent officials of any importance in the government departments at Stamboul are Armenians, both by race and creed, particularly the permanent under secretaries of state, who, owing to their profound knowledge of the ins and outs of their several departments and to their unrivalled experience in administrative matters, are practically in control of their respective ministries. These men suffer no disadvantage whatsoever from the facts of their being either Christians or Armenians, and the Sultan himself, who has Armenian blood in his veins, has a very large number of Armenians occupying positions of trust and dignity in his household. In fact, old Channes Sakys Effendi, his Treasurer and the Keeper of his Privy Purse, the manager of his entire fortune, official as well as private, and one of his most intimate advisers, in whom he has, in spite of his suspicious nature, reposed the most boundless confidence, is an Armenian.

**THE SCOURGE OF KURDS.**

In Asia Minor, where a few of the bona fide outrages have taken place, all the principal industries, all the finest estates, the largest flocks and all the wealth of the country are in the hands of the Armenians, who perhaps for that reason, and for that alone, become more often the prey of the Kurd than their impoverished Moslem neighbors. The Kurds, who are the descendants of those Carduchians who gave Xenophon and his ten thousand Greeks so much trouble, are the scourge of Asia Minor, irrespective of creed. Time and again the Ottoman government has endeavored to retain control of them by incorporating them into the army as regular cavalry, but the usual result has been to give the army a bad name and to saddle it with the responsibility of the lawlessness of the Kurds. Physically a splendid race, they are men of war from the earliest youth, always fighting for their own hand and preferring to live by means of cattle lifting, robbery and murder rather than by agriculture, industry or trade. If, as I have stated above, the Armenians are their principal victims in Asia Minor it is because the Armenians possess the most wealth.

The Armenians enjoy many advantages at the hands of the Sultan. Thus, whereas every able bodied Turk is compelled to serve a certain number of years in the army, his family during that time being deprived of his assistance and support, the Armenian is freed from military service on the payment of an annual tax amounting to a little over \$1, and which is exacted only during the years which he would have had to serve with the colors did he profess the Mahometan faith. With this exception the taxes which the Armenians pay are identical with those demanded from the Turk, and if anything they are treated by the authorities with a greater degree of consideration than the latter, partly owing to their superior wealth, partly to the influence exercised by their fel-

low countrymen in office at Constantinople, and partly, too, because missionaries, consuls and ambassadors are known to be on the lookout for anything which could be construed into religious and race prejudice on the part of the Turks against the Christian subjects of the Sultan in general, and in particular against the Armenians. Converse with any leading Armenian financier or great banker at Constantinople, with any Armenian proprietor of a manufactory, or with any Armenian government official, and ask him whether he would wish for a restoration of the kingdom of Armenia as it existed a thousand years ago, and be prepared to sacrifice to that object the position, the prestige and the interest which he now enjoys at Stamboul. While he might theorize on the national sentiment of Armenia, he would be just as little disposed to put any project of that kind into execution as the Rothschilds, the Schiffes, the Guggenheims, the Strauses and other eminent Hebrew princes of finance would be willing to abandon their homes and interests in Western Europe and in America in order to spend the remainder of their days in what was once the Kingdom of Judaea.

**NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS.**

The national aspirations of the sensible Armenians, like those of the Hebrews of the same class, are, where they exist, purely theoretical. Whereas the Bulgarians prior to their independence occupied a compact territory, where they were three times as numerous as the Turks, the Armenians are a scattered race. Indeed, the Congress of Berlin in 1878, after a careful investigation of the question, declared itself powerless on this account to define the limits of Turkish Armenia, and unable in consequence thereof to form any project for Armenian autonomy. In the Ottoman provinces comprised in the ancient kingdom of Armenia there are three Turks to every Armenian, while in the remainder of Asia Minor the Turks outnumber them ten to one. All told, there are about 4,500,000 Armenians in the world, of whom at least 1,500,000 are subject to the rule of the Czar. 1,200,000 reside in Turkey, 250,000 in Persia and as many in India. There are many of them in France, mainly in Paris and Marseilles; also in Venice and in London and other parts of England. A considerable number of them are to be found in Boston and in New York, and there are many thousands of them scattered in the Philippines and other Asiatic archipelagos. Wherever they embark in business they prosper and thrive and become useful and respected members of the community. It is only the relatively few lawless, shiftless, political adventurers and the carpet bag element that bring into disrepute this ancient and historic race, which has furnished eminent statesmen to Turkey, to Persia, to Egypt in the person of Nubar Pacha, and to Russia in the late General Boris Melikoff, dictator of the empire in 1880.

Where Armenia has suffered is undoubtedly from having been used so frequently by Russia as a pawn in her political game and as an instrument for her designs to reach the shores of the Mediterranean, if not via the Dardanelles and Constantinople at any rate by the seaboard Armenian province of Cilicia, just opposite the island of Cyprus. Under the plea of liberating the Christian Armenians from Moslem misrule, she has in her successive wars encroached more and more upon those Turkish provinces that in olden times constituted the Kingdom of Armenia. That the Armenians prefer the rule of the Sultan to that of Emperor Nicholas, in spite of all that has been said of their oppression and persecution by the Turk, is conclusively shown by their exodus from Russian to Ottoman territory, which has been in progress for the last quarter of a century. Notwithstanding all the charges laid at the door of the Padishah on their account, they avowedly find his rule more liberal, more humane and more conducive to their happiness and welfare than that of the Great White Czar.

EX-ATTACHE.