

Fall of Poland.

the vacillation of a republic without its energy, and the oppressor of a monarchy without its stability. The Poles obstinately refused to march with other nations in the only road to civilization; they had valor, but it could not enforce obedience to the laws; it could not preserve domestic tranquillity; it could not restrain the violence of petty feuds and intestine commotions; it could not preserve the proud nobles from unbounded dissipation and corruption; it could not prevent foreign powers from interfering in the affairs of the kingdom; it could not dissolve the union of these powers with discontented parties at home; it could not inspire the slowly-moving machine of government with vigor, when the humblest partisan, corrupted with foreign money, could arrest it with a word; it could not avert the entrance of foreign armies to support the factious and rebellious; it could not uphold, in a divided country, the national independence against the combined effects of foreign and domestic treason; finally, it could not effect impossibilities, nor turn aside the destroying sword which had so long impended over it."

But this great crime was attended with retribution. Prussia, in her efforts to destroy Poland, paralyzed her armies on the Rhine. Suwarrow entered Warsaw when its spires were reddened by the fires of Praga; but the sack of the fallen capital was forgotten in the conflagration of Moscow. The remains of the soldiers of Kosciusko sought a refuge in republican France, and served with distinction, in the armies of Napoleon, against the powers that had dismembered their country.

The ruin of Poland, as an independent state, was not fully accomplished until the year 1832, when it was incorporated into the great empire of Russia. But the history of the late revolution, with all its melancholy results, cannot be well presented in this connection.

REFERENCES. — Fletcher's History of Poland. Rulhière's Histoire de l'Anarchie de Pologne. Coyer's Vie de Sobieski. Parthenay's History of Augustus II. Hordynski's History of the late Polish Revolution. Also see Lives of Frederic II., Maria Theresa, and Catharine II.; contemporaneous histories of Prussia, Russia, and Austria; Alison's History of Europe; Smyth's Lectures; Russell's Modern Europe; Heeren's Modern History.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

Saracenic Empire.

WHILE the great monarchies of Western Europe were struggling for preeminence, and were developing resources greater than had ever before been exhibited since the fall of the Roman empire, that great power which had alarmed and astonished Christendom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, began to show the signs of weakness and decay. Nothing, in the history of society, is more marvellous than the rise of Mohammedan kingdoms. The victories of the Saracens and Turks were rapid and complete; and in the tenth century, they were the most successful warriors on the globe, and threatened to subvert the world. They had planted the standard of the Prophet on the walls of Eastern capitals, and had extended their conquests to India on the east, and to Spain on the west. Powerful Mohammedan states had arisen in Asia, Africa, and Europe, and the Crusaders alone arrested the progress of these triumphant armies. The enthusiasm which the doctrines of Mohammed had kindled, cannot easily be explained; but it was fresh, impetuous, and self-sacrificing. Successive armies of Mohammedan invaders overwhelmed the ancient realms of civilization, and reduced the people whom they conquered and converted to a despotic yoke. But success enervated the victorious conquerors of the East, the empire of the Caliphs was broken up, and great changes took place even in those lands where the doctrines of the Koran prevailed. Mohammed perpetuated a religion, but not an empire. Different Saracenic chieftains revolted from the "Father of the Faithful," and established separate kingdoms, or viceroyalties, nearly independent of the acknowledged successors of Mohammed. The Saracenic empire was early dismembered, and the sultans of Egypt, Spain, and Syria contested for preëminence.

But a new power arose on the ruins of the Saracen empire, and became the enthusiastic defenders of the religion of Islam. The

Turks were an obscure tribe of barbarians when Bagdad was the seat of a powerful monarchy. Their origin has been traced to the wilds of Scythia; but they early deserted their native forests in search of more fruitful regions. When Apulia and Sicily were subdued by the Norman pirates, a swarm of these Scythian shepherds settled in Armenia, probably in the ninth century, and, by their valor and simplicity, soon became a powerful tribe. Not long after they were settled in their new abode, the Sultan of Persia invoked their aid to assist him in his wars against the Caliph of Bagdad, his great rival. The Turks complied with his request, and their arms were successful. The sultan then refused to part with such useful auxiliaries, and moreover, fearing their strength, designed to employ them in his wars against the Hindoos, and to shut them up in the centre of his dominions. The Turks rebelled, withdrew into a mountainous part of the country, became robbers, and devastated the adjacent countries. The band of robbers gradually swelled into a powerful army, gained a great victory over the troops of the Sultan Mohammed, and placed their chieftain upon the Persian throne, (1038.) According to Gibbon, the new monarch was chosen by lot, and Seljuk had the fortune to win the prize of conquest, and became the founder of the dynasty of the Shepherd kings. During the reign of his grandson Togrul, the ancient Persian princes were expelled, and the Turks embraced the religion of the conquered. In 1055, the Turkish sultan delivered the Caliph of Bagdad from the arms of the Caliph of Egypt, who disputed with him the title of *Commander of the Faithful*. For this service he was magnificently rewarded by the grateful successor of the Prophet, who, at that time, banqueted in his palace at Bagdad—a venerable phantom of power. The victorious sultan was publicly commissioned as lieutenant of the caliph, and he was virtually seated on the throne of the Abbassides. Shortly after, the Turkish conqueror invaded the falling empire of the Greeks, and its Asiatic provinces were irretrievably lost. In the latter part of the eleventh century, the Turkish power was established in Asia Minor, and Jerusalem itself had fallen into the hands of the sultan. He exacted two pieces of gold from the Christian pilgrim, and treated him, moreover with greater cruelty than the Saracens had ever exercised. The

Rise of the Turks.

extortion and oppression of the Turkish masters of the Sacred City led to the Crusades and the final possession of Western Asia by the followers of the Prophet. The Turkish power constantly increased with the decline of the Saracenic and Greek empires but the Seljukian dynasty, like that of Abbassides at Bagdad, at last ran out, and Othman, a soldier of fortune, became sultan of the Turks. He is regarded as the founder of the Ottoman empire, and under his reign, from 1299 to 1326, the Moslems made rapid strides in the progress of aggrandizement.

Orkham, his son, instituted the force of the Janizaries completed the conquest of Bithynia, and laid the foundation of Turkish power in Europe. Under his successor, Amurath I., Adrianople became the capital of the Ottoman empire, and the rival of Constantinople. Bajazet succeeded Amurath, and his conquests extended from the Euphrates to the Danube. In 1396, he defeated, at Nicopolis, a confederate army of one hundred thousand Christians; and, in the intoxication of victory, declared that he would feed his horse with a bushel of oats on the altar of St. Peter, at Rome. Had it not been for the victories of Tamerlane, Constantinople, which contained within its walls the feeble fragments of a great empire, would also have fallen into his hands. He was unsuccessful in his war with the great conqueror of Asia, and was defeated at the battle of Angora, (1402,) and taken captive, and carried to Samarcand, by Tamerlane, in an iron cage.

The great Bajazet died in captivity, and Mohammed I. succeeded to his throne. He restored, on a firmer basis, the fabric of the Ottoman monarchy, and devoted himself to the arts of peace. His successor, Amurath II., continued hostilities with the Greeks, and laid siege to Constantinople. But this magnificent city, the last monument of Roman greatness, resisted the Turkish arms only for a while. In 1453, it fell before an irresistible force of three hundred thousand men, supported by a fleet of three hundred sail. The Emperor Constantine succeeded in maintaining a siege of fifty-three days; and the religion and empire of the Christians were trodden to the dust by the Moslem conquerors. The city was sacked, the people were enslaved, and the Church of St. Sophia was despoiled of the oblations of ages, and converted into a Mohammedan mosque. One hundred and twenty thousand

Turkish Conquerors.

Sack of Constantinople.

manuscripts perished in the sack of Constantinople, and the palaces and treasure of the Greeks were transferred to semi-barbarians.

From that time, the Byzantine capital became the seat of the Ottoman empire; and, for more than two centuries, Turkish armies excited the fears and disturbed the peace of the world. They gradually subdued and annexed Macedonia, the Peloponnesus, Epirus, Bulgaria, Servia, Bosnia, Armenia, Cyprus, Syria, Egypt, India, Tunis, Algiers, Media, Mesopotamia, and a part of Hungary, to the dominions of the sultan. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman empire was the most powerful in the world. Nor should we be surprised, in view of the great success of the Turks, when we remember their singular bravery, their absorbing ambition, their almost incredible obedience to the commands of the sultan, and the unity which pervaded the national councils. They also fought to extend their religion, to which they were blind devotees. After the capture of Constantinople, a succession of great princes sat on the most absolute throne known in modern times; men disgraced by many crimes, but still singularly adapted to extend their dominion.

The progress of the Turks justly alarmed the Emperor Charles V., and he exerted all his energies to unite the German princes against them, but unsuccessfully. The Sultan Solymán, called the *Magnificent*, maintained his supremacy over Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, ravaged Hungary, wrested Rhodes from the Knights of St. John, conquered the whole of Arabia, and attacked the Portuguese dominion in India. He raised the Turkish empire to the highest pitch of its greatness, and died while besieging Sigeth, as he was completing the conquest of Hungary. His empire was one vast camp, and his decrees were dated from the imperial stirrup. The iron sceptre which he and his successors wielded was imbrued in blood; and discipline alone was the politics of his soldiers, and rapine their resources.

Selim II. succeeded Solymán, and set the ruinous example of not going himself to the wars, and of carrying them on by his lieutenants. His son, Murad III., penetrated into Russia and Poland, and made war on the Emperor of Germany. Mohammed III., who died in 1604, murdered all his brothers, nineteen in number, and executed his own son. It was usual, when an emperor

mounted the throne, for him to put to death his brothers and nephews. Indeed, the characters of the sultans were marked by unusual ferocity and jealousy, and they were unscrupulous in the means they took to advance their power. The world has never seen more suspicious tyrants; and it ever must excite our wonder that they were so unhesitatingly obeyed. But they were, however, sometimes dethroned by the Janizaries, who constituted a sort of imperial guard. Osman II., fearing their power, and disgusted with their degeneracy, resolved to destroy them, as dangerous to the state. But his design was discovered, and he himself lost his life, (1622.) Several monsters of tyranny and iniquity succeeded him, whose reigns were disgraced by every excess of debauchery and cruelty. Their subjects, however, had not, as yet, lost vigor, temperance, and ambition, and still continued to furnish troops unexampled for discipline and bravery, and bent on conquest and dominion.

The Turkish power received no great checks until the reign of Mohammed IV., during which Sobieski defeated an immense army, which had laid siege to Vienna. By the peace of Carlovitz, in 1699, Transylvania was ceded to the Emperor of Germany, and a barrier was raised against Mohammedan invasion.

The Russians, from the time of Peter the Great, looked with great jealousy on the power of the sultan, and several wars were the result. No Russian sovereign desired the humiliation of the Porte more than Catharine II. A bloody contest ensued, signalized by the victories of Galitzin, Suwarrow, Romanzoff, and Orloff, by which Turkey became a second class power, no longer feared by the European states.

From the peace of Carlovitz, the decline of the Ottoman empire has been gradual, but marked, owing to the indifference of the Turks to all modern improvements, and a sluggish, conservative policy, hostile to progress, and sceptical of civilization. The Turks have ever been bigoted Mohammedans, and hostile to European influences. The Oriental dress has been preserved in Constantinople, and all the manners and customs of the people are similar to what they were in Asia several centuries ago.

One of the peculiarities of the Turkish government, in the most flourishing period of its history, was the institution of the Janizaries — a guard of soldiers, to whom was intrusted the guardianship

Janizaries.
of the sultan, and the protection of his capital. When warlike and able princes were seated on the throne, this institution proved a great support to the government; but when the reins were held by effeminate princes, the Janizaries, like the Prætorian Guards of Rome, acquired an undue ascendancy, and even deposed the monarchs whom they were bound to obey. They were insolent, extortionate, and extravagant, and became a great burden to the state. At first they were brave and resolute; but they gradually lost their skill and their courage, were uniformly beaten in the later wars with the Russians, and retained nothing of the soldier but the name. Mahmoud II., in our own time, succeeded in dissolving this dangerous body, and in introducing European tactics into his army.

Turkish Institutions.
The Turkish institutions have reference chiefly to the military character of the nation. All Mussulmans, in the eye of the law, are soldiers, to whom the extension of the empire and the propagation of their faith were the avowed objects of warfare. They may be regarded, wherever they have conquered, as military colonists, exercising great tyranny, and treating all vanquished subjects with contempt. The government has ever been a pure despotism, and both the executive and legislative authorities have been vested in the sultan. He is the sole fountain of honor; for, in Turkey, birth confers no privilege. His actions are regarded as prescribed by an inevitable fate, and his subjects suffer with resignation. The evils of despotism are aggravated by the ignorance and effeminacy of those to whom power is intrusted, although the grand vizier, who is the prime minister of the empire, is generally a man of great experience and talent. All the laws of the country are founded upon the precepts of the Koran, the example of Mohammed, the precepts of the four first caliphs, and the decision of learned doctors upon disputed cases. Justice is administered promptly, but without much regard to equity or mercy; and the course of the grand vizier is generally marked with blood. The character of the people partakes of the nature of their government, religion, and climate. They are arrogant, ignorant, and austere; passing from devotion to obscenity; fastidiously abstemious in some things, and grossly sensual in others. They have cherished the virtues of hospitality, and are fond of conversation

but their domestic life is spent in voluptuous idleness, and is dull and insipid compared with that of Europeans. But the Turks have degenerated. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they were simple, brave, and religious. They founded an immense empire on the ruins of Asiatic monarchies, and filled the world with the terror of their arms. For two hundred years their power has been retrograding, and there is much reason now to believe that a total eclipse of their glory is soon to take place.

REFERENCES. — See Knolle's History of Turkey. Eton's Survey of the Turkish Empire. Upham's History of the Ottoman Empire. Encyclopædia Britannica. Heeren's Modern History. Madden's Travels in Turkey. Russell's Modern Europe. Life of Catharine II.