

CHAPTER VIII.

ISLAM AS A FACTOR OF THE PROBLEM.

IT is with reluctance that I approach this side of the question. It is not desirable that the subject be complicated or embittered by religious animosities. But unfortunately these animosities do exist and have always formed a primary and essential feature in all the relations of the Turks with their Christian subjects. A writer who styles himself "Diplomatist," in a recent review article of considerable merit,¹ with a stroke of the pen, disposes of this phase of the subject by characterizing it as "pure moonshine." But real diplomatists do not find it so easy to dispose of, nor do the great historians treat it as moonshine. The fanatical gleam that I have often caught in the eye of Turks and Kurds was never suggestive to me of the mild rays of the lunar orb, but seemed rather like a gleam from the political Crescent, whose baleful influence dominates the East.

The question is not concerning the merits of Mohammed or of Mohammedanism in the abstract. I have a profound respect for the Prophet of Arabia, who might have been another Apostle Paul, but for the fact that the corrupt church of that day failed

¹ *New Review* for January, 1895.

to give that young and ardent seeker after God a true and worthy conception of Christianity. I would fain admit the high conception of the Mohammedan ideal, portrayed so skilfully by Mr. R. Bosworth Smith in his lectures before the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

But such considerations are irrelevant to the present discussion, which is simply, What are the practical bearings of Islam upon the question of reform or of reconstruction in Turkey?

As has been already shown in Chapter VI., the Ottoman Government is a *politico-religious system*. This is the necessary constitution of any Mohammedan sovereign state, but the conception has special force and vitality in Turkey, whose Sovereign claims to be the successor of Mohammed, and thus the Calif of the Mohammedan world. The whole fabric of the Turkish Empire rests on a religious foundation. This religious foundation is not the general religious principle in man, but the particular form of religion established by Mohammed.

To what *extent*, now, does Islam enter into the political structure? We find on investigation that it is part and parcel of the bone and sinew of the organism in Turkey called the State,—called so by courtesy on account of its faint analogy to what is understood in other countries by that name. The Turkish army is exclusively a Mohammedan army, the national festivals are Mohammedan festivals, the official calendar is a Mohammedan calendar, both as to year and month, the laws are based on the Koran and Mohammedan tradition, the expounders of the

law are Mohammedan judges, and even testimony is a religious act of which only true believers are, in the nature of the case, capable. It is not denied that the testimony of Christians is allowed to be *given* in Turkish courts, but that does not signify that it is *valid* evidence in the eyes of the Court, especially when a Mohammedan is involved. Even the different formulæ used show this. In the case of a Mohammedan it is, "His Lordship, So and So, testified to the face of God"; in the case of a Christian it is, "Mr. Blank stated."

In Article 63 of the Treaty of Berlin we read Turkey's solemn (it is hard to suppress a smile) promise to the European Powers in regard to the rights of Christians before the law: "*All shall be allowed to give evidence before the courts without distinctions of creed.*" The practical application of the above clause is shown in the official reports of British Consuls.¹

Mr. Wilson, Consul-General in Anatolia, writes:

"In the greater portion of Anatolia, though Christian evidence may be received, no weight is attached to it. When Moslem and Christian evidence are opposed to each other, the latter is disregarded. For instance, three Christians are travelling along a road, and one of them is robbed by a man well known to all of them; in the action which ensues, the robber has only to prove an *alibi* by two Moslem false witnesses to gain his case."

¹ These extracts are from *Blue-Book, Turkey*, No. 8 (1881), pp. 57-110, as quoted by the high authority, M. Rolin-Jaequemyns, in his *Armenia, the Armenians, and the Treaties*, pp. 74-76. London: John Heywood, 1891.

Mr. Chermiside, Vice-Consul at Sivas, writes:

"As regards the acceptance of Christian testimony, theoretically it is accepted in all *Nizam* courts. Hearing testimony, however, and attaching the relative importance to it that, from its tenor and consistency, it is entitled to, are very different matters; and there is no doubt that, especially in civil cases, tradition, sympathy, and education prejudice the *Hakim*' against it—sentimental considerations, however, are not proof against the love of gain."

According to the latter part of this quotation, the spirit which animates the courts of Asia Minor may be defined as fanaticism tempered by corruption. The following is the opinion of Mr. Everett, Vice-Consul at Erzerum: "The first consideration of the administrators of justice is the amount of money that can be extorted from an individual, and the second is his creed." The only doubt as to the morality of the Turkish magistrates appears to be whether they are more corrupt than fanatical, or more fanatical than corrupt.

The injustice done to Christians even in commercial transactions is shown by Mr. Bilotti, Consul at Trebizond:

"Christian evidence is accepted in the town of Trebizond, but I am assured in the districts, that though the same principle is admitted, no Mussulman has ever been condemned on the testimony of Christians; so much so, that the latter are in the

¹ The *Hakim*, who is a member of the religious body of *Ulemas*, presides over the lower court (*Bidayet*), which is to be found in every *caza* (hundred), and also over the *Sandjak* or district court.

habit of having their bonds witnessed only by Mussulmans."

Much is said in regard to the truthfulness of the Turks. Consul-General Wilson writes: "From the peculiar value of Moslem evidence, most of the false witnesses are Turks."

As a matter of fact, we thus see that the millions of Christians in Turkey neither are nor can be considered and treated as citizens of the state, simply because they do not belong to the religion of the foreign invaders who rule them. No degree of loyalty can secure for non-Moslems admission to the army. Christians are rapidly being excluded from even the humblest positions in the civil lists also, except from such as Mohammedans are incompetent to fill. The status of the Christian before the law is that of an alien in regard to his own rights, and of a slave as far as the interests of Mohammedans are concerned.

And yet we are told that the Ottoman Turks are tolerant of the members of other faiths. This is true in the same sense that the stomach is spoken of as being "tolerant" of certain easily digestible articles of food. Yes, so long as Christians submit to all forms of oppression, and make no claims in regard to rights which are generally supposed to belong to all men, they are gladly tolerated.

That the discrimination against Christian subjects is due to their religious belief, is, further, clearly shown by the fact that Mohammedans, who abandon the creed of the government, immediately forfeit their special privileges, and even incur punishment

as criminals. Apostasy from Islam is treason to the Sultan. Converts to Christianity are arrested and imprisoned. In the rare instances when foreign governments venture to inquire into such cases, the Ottoman authorities blandly insist that they care nothing for the man's religion, but that he must be arrested for "avoiding conscription," or on some other fictitious charge. He is, thereupon, hurried off to some distant military post, or finds a living grave in an unknown dungeon.

Such is the politico-religious organization called the Ottoman Government. Can this union of Church and State be dissolved? It can not be. The bond which unites them, according to Mohammedan doctors, is vital, as in the case of the Siamese twins.

Inasmuch as the bond cannot be cut, the only remaining hope must be in improving the health of the two bodies thus indissolubly united. Unfortunately, no change can be hoped for in the case of either part of this dual patient. *Mohammedanism at its birth was a malformation*, to say the least, and will continue so even though restored to a state of perfect health. In the opinion of every orthodox Mohammedan, the Koran is a "perfect revelation of the will of God, sufficient and final," and "Islam is a separate distinct, and absolutely exclusive religion."

As attempts are frequently made to convey a contrary impression on this point, I quote the words of President George Washburn, of Robert College, Constantinople, an impartial student of Islam, who for thirty-five years has observed its practical work-

ings in the Ottoman Empire. At the World's Parliament of Religions, in Chicago, 1893, he read a paper on "The Points of Contact and Contrast between Christianity and Mohammedanism." His whole treatment is remarkable for its judicial fairness, and his paper is commended to the reader who may desire a brief, comprehensive, and fair estimate of Islam.

To the question whether Mohammedanism has been in any way modified, since the time of the Prophet, by its contact with Christianity, Dr. Washburn thinks that every orthodox Moslem would answer in the negative. He adds: "It is very important to bear in mind that there are nominal Mohammedans who are theists, and others who are pantheists of the Spinoza type. There are also some small sects who are rationalists, but after the fashion of old English Deism rather than of the modern rationalism. The Deistic rationalism is represented in that most interesting work of Justice Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*. He speaks of Mohammed as Xenophon did of Socrates, and he reveres Christ also, but he denies that there was anything supernatural in the inspiration or lives of either, and claims that Hanife and the other Imams corrupted Islam, as he thinks Paul the apostle did Christianity; but this book does not represent Mohammedanism, any more than Renan's *Life of Jesus* represents Christianity. These small rationalistic sects are looked upon by all orthodox Moslems as heretics of the worst description."

Although the Scriptures of the Old and New

Testaments happen to be mentioned one hundred and thirty-one times in the Koran, they are only quoted twice. The fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Resurrection of Christ are specifically repudiated in the Koran.

The reform of Islam as a system is, therefore, not within the range of possibility. How about the reform of the Ottoman Government? On this point I yield the floor to the great historian E. A. Freeman, who will close the debate¹:

"There are some people who say the Turks are no doubt very bad, but that the Christians are just as bad, and have done things just as cruel. Now, as a matter of fact, this is not true; and, if it were true, it would be another reason for setting the Christians free; for if they are as bad as the Turk, it is the Turk who has caused their badness. While other nations have been improving, the Turk has kept them from improving. Take away the Turk who hinders improvement, and they will improve like the others. The slave never has the virtues of a freeman; it is only by setting him free that he can get them.

"When we point out the evils of the rule of the Turk, some people tell us that Christian rulers in past times have done things quite as bad as the Turks. This is partly true, but not wholly. No Christian government has ever gone on for so long a time ruling as badly as the Turk has ruled. But it is true that Christian governments have in past times

¹ *The Turks in Europe.*

done particular acts, which were as bad as the acts of the Turks. But this argument, too, cuts the other way; for Christian governments have left off doing such acts, while the Turks go on doing them still. The worst Christian government is better now than it was one hundred years ago, or five hundred years ago. The rule of the Turk is worse now than it was one hundred years ago, or five hundred years ago. That is to say, the worst Christian government can reform, while the Turk cannot.

"It is sometimes said that we ought not to set free the Christians for fear that they should do some harm to the Mohammedans who would be left in their land. Now, if the question were really put, Shall a minority of oppressors go on oppressing the people of the land, or shall the majority of the people of the land turn round and oppress the minority who have hitherto oppressed them?—this last would surely be the lesser evil of the two. But there is no ground for any such fear. No one wishes to hurt any Mohammedan who will live peaceably and not hurt Christians. No one wishes that any man, merely because he is a Mohammedan, should be in any way worse off than a Christian, or be put under any disability as compared with a Christian. There is no reason why he should be. For the Mohammedan religion, though it does not command that Christians shall be persecuted, does command that Christians shall be treated as subjects of Mohammedans. But the Christian religion in no way commands that Mohammedan shall be treated as the subject of Christian. Christians and Mohammedans cannot

live together on equal terms under a Mohammedan government, because the Mohammedan religion forbids that they should; but Mohammedans and Christians may perfectly well live together under a Christian government. They do so under the governments both of England and of Russia. The few Mohammedans who are left in Greece and in Servia are in no way molested; there are mosques both at Chalkis and at Belgrade. But it is foolish to argue, as some people do, that because men of different religions can live together under a Christian government, therefore they can live together under a Mohammedan government; for both reason and the nature of the Mohammedan religion prove that it is not so. . . .

"The Turk came in as an alien and barbarian encamped on the soil of Europe. At the end of five hundred years, he remains an alien and barbarian encamped on soil which he has no more made his own than it was when he first took Kallipolis. His rule during all that time has been the rule of strangers over enslaved nations in their own land. It has been the rule of cruelty, faithlessness, and brutal lust; it has not been government, but organized brigandage. His rule cannot be reformed. While all other nations get better and better, the Turk gets worse and worse. And when the chief powers of Europe join in demanding that he should make even the smallest reform, he impudently refuses to make any. If there was anything to be said for him before the late Conference, there is nothing to be said for him now. For an evil

which cannot be reformed, there is one remedy only—to get rid of it. Justice, reason, humanity, demand that the rule of the Turk in Europe should be got rid of; and the time for getting rid of it has now come.”



ARMENIAN REBELS WHO WOULD NOT PAY TAXES.

This was written seventeen years ago with reference to the discontinuance of the Ottoman power in Europe. Does it not now apply with equal force to the discontinuance of the same régime in Armenia?

CHAPTER IX.

GLADSTONE ON THE ARMENIAN MASSACRE AND ON TURKISH MISRULE.

ON the eighty-fifth anniversary of Mr. W. E. Gladstone's birth, December 29, 1894, a deputation of members of the National Church of Armenia presented to his son, the Rev. Stephen Gladstone, rector of Hawarden, a silver gilt chalice for the use of the church, in memory of the ex-Premier's sympathy with and assistance to the Armenian people. On that occasion Mr. Gladstone made a long and eloquent speech, in the course of which—after thanking the deputation for their token of sympathy and their grateful references to himself—he said :

“ Well, Mr. Stevenson—I address myself now perhaps more particularly to you and to my own countrymen, to any of them who will take notice of the deputation. I have said that in my opinion this manifestation from the Armenian community in England and in Paris was, on my part at least, quite undeserved. I have done nothing for you in circumstances of great difficulty, and that, let me assure you, has not been owing to indifference. I will explain the cause in very few words. Rumors went abroad, growing more and more authenticated, which repre-

sented a state of horrible and indescribable outrage in Armenia. The impulse of every man in circumstances of that kind is to give way to a burst of strong feeling, but I had the conviction that in a grave case of this kind every nation is best and most properly represented by its government, which is the organ of the nation, and which has the right to speak with the authority of the nation.

“And do not let me be told that one nation has no authority over another. Every nation, and if need be every human being, has authority on behalf of humanity and of justice. (Hear, hear.) These are principles common to mankind, and the violation of which may justly, at the proper time, open the mouths of the very humblest among us. But in such cases as these we must endeavor to do injustice to no one, and the more dreadful the allegations may be, the more strictly it is our duty not to be premature in assuming their truth, but to wait for an examination of the case, and to see that what we say, we say upon a basis of ascertained facts.

“Well, gentlemen, it was, my fate—my fortune, I think—about eighteen years ago to take an active part with regard to other outrages which first came up in the shape of rumor, but were afterwards too horribly verified, in Bulgaria; but I never stirred in regard to those outrages until in the first place, their existence and their character had been established by indisputable authority; and, secondly, until I had found myself driven to absolute despair in regard to any hopes that I could entertain of a proper representation of British feeling

on the part of the government which was then in office. You will see, therefore, that my conduct on this occasion has not been inconsistent with what I then did (hear, hear), and it does not imply, old as I am, that my feelings have been deadened in regard to matters of such a dreadful description. (Cheers.)

“Now I remained silent because I had full confidence that the government of the Queen would do its duty, and I still entertain that confidence. Its power and influence are considerable; at the same time they are limited. It is not in the power of this country, acting singly, to undertake to represent humanity at large, and to inflict, even upon the grossest wrongdoers, the punishments that their crimes may have deserved; but there is such a thing as the conscience of mankind at large, and the conscience is not limited even to Christendom. (Hear, hear.) And there is a great power in the collected voice of outraged humanity. What happened in Bulgaria? The Sultan and his government absolutely denied that anything wrong had been done. Yes, but their denial was shattered by the force of facts. The truth was exhibited to the world. It was thought an extravagance at the time when I said: ‘It is time that the Turk and all his belongings should go out of Bulgaria bag and baggage.’ They did go out of Bulgaria, and they went out of a good deal besides. But, quite independent of any sentiment of right, justice, or humanity, common sense and common prudence ought to have taught them not to repeat the infernal acts which disgraced the year 1876, so far as Turkey was concerned. (Cheers.)

"Now, it is certainly true that we have not arrived at the close of this inquiry, and I will say nothing to assume that the allegations will be verified. At the same time I cannot pretend to say that there is no reason to anticipate an unfavorable issue. On the contrary, the intelligence which has reached me tends to a conclusion which I still hope may not be verified, but tends strongly to a conclusion to the general effect that the outrages and the scenes and abominations of 1876 in Bulgaria have been repeated in 1894 in Armenia. As I have said, I hope it is not so, and I will hope to the last, but if it is so it is time that one general shout of execration, not of men, but of deeds, one general shout of execration directed against deeds of wickedness, should rise from outraged humanity, and should force itself into the ears of the Sultan of Turkey and make him sensible, if anything can make him sensible, of the madness of such a course.

"The history of Turkey has been a sad and painful history. That race has not been without remarkable and even in some cases fine qualities, but from too many points of view it has been a scourge to the world, made use of, no doubt, by a wise Providence for the sins of the world. If these tales of murder, violation, and outrage be true, then it will follow that they cannot be overlooked, and they cannot be made light of. I have lived to see the Empire of Turkey in Europe reduced to less than one half of what it was when I was born, and why? Simply because of its misdeeds—a great record written by the hand of Almighty God, in whom the

Turk, as a Mohammedan, believes, and believes firmly—written by the hand of Almighty God against injustice, against lust, against the most abominable cruelty; and if—and I hope, and I feel sure, that the government of the Queen will do everything that can be done to pierce to the bottom of this mystery, and to make the facts known to the world—if, happily—I speak hoping against hope—if the reports we have read are to be disproved or to be mitigated, then let us thank God; but if, on the other hand, they be established, then I say it will more than ever stand before the world that there is no lesson, however severe, that can teach certain people the duty, the prudence, the necessity of observing in some degree the laws of decency, and of humanity, and of justice, and that if allegations such as these are established, it will stand as if it were written with letters of iron on the records of the world, that such a government as that which can countenance and cover the perpetration of such outrages is a disgrace in the first place to Mahomet, the Prophet whom it professes to follow, that it is a disgrace to civilization at large, and that it is a curse to mankind. (Cheers.) Now, that is strong language.

"Strong language ought to be used when facts are strong, and ought not to be used without strength of facts. I have counselled you still to retain and to keep your judgment in suspense, but as the evidence grows and the case darkens, my hopes dwindle and decline; and as long as I have a voice I hope that voice, upon occasions, will be uttered on behalf of humanity and truth." (Cheers.)¹

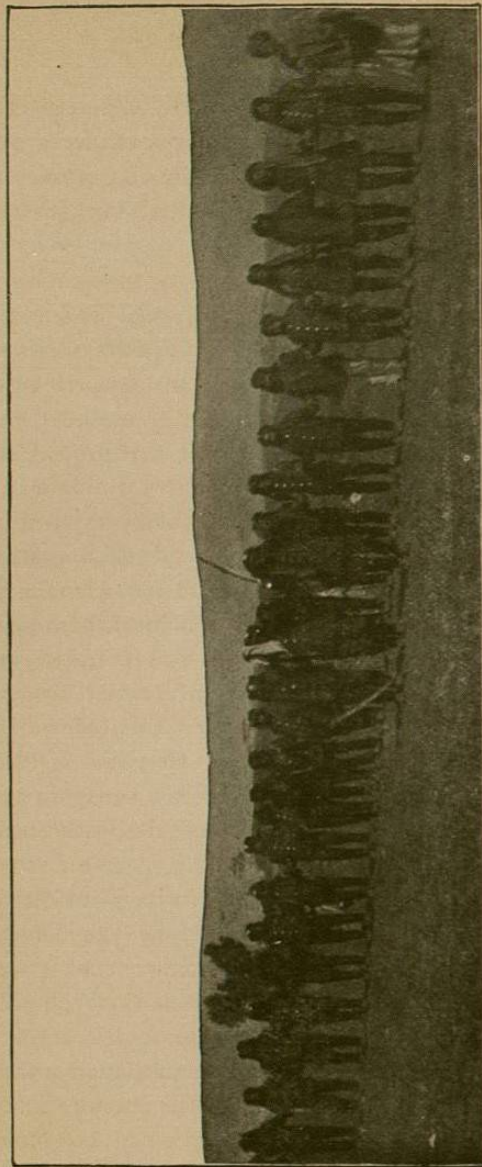
¹ *The London Times*, Weekly Edition Jan. 14, 1895.

In a remarkable paper entitled *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* called forth by the atrocities in 1876, Mr. Gladstone sums up some of the qualities of the Turkish race and of Turkish rule as follows:¹

“Let me endeavor very briefly to sketch, in the rudest outline, what the Turkish race was and what it is. It is not a question of Mohammedanism simply, but of Mohammedanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race. They are not the mild Mohammedans of India, nor the chivalrous Saladins of Syria, nor the cultured Moors of Spain. They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force as opposed to government by law. For the guide of this life they had a relentless fatalism; for its reward hereafter, a sensual paradise.

“They were, indeed, a tremendous incarnation of military power. This advancing curse menaced the whole of Europe. It was only stayed—and that not in one generation, but in many—by the heroism of the European population of those very countries part of which form at this moment the scene of war, and the anxious subject of diplomatic action. In the olden time all Western Christendom sympathized with the resistance to the common enemy; and even during the hot and fierce struggles of the Reforma-

¹ Reprinted from *The Christian Register*, Boston, Dec. 1, 1894.



KURDISH HAMIDIÉH SOLDIERS EXECUTING THE "SWORD DANCE."

tion there were prayers, if I mistake not, offered up in the English churches for the success of the emperor—the head of the Roman Catholic power and influence—in his struggles with the Turk.

“But, although the Turk represented force as opposed to law, yet not even a government of force can be maintained without the aid of an intellectual element such as he did not possess. Hence there grew up what has been rare in the history of the world, a kind of tolerance in the midst of cruelty, tyranny, and rapine. Much of Christian life was contemptuously let alone, much of the subordinate functions of government was allowed to devolve upon the bishops; and a race of Greeks was attracted to Constantinople which has all along made up, in some degree, the deficiencies of Turkish Islam in the element of mind, and which at this moment provides the Porte with its long-known and, I must add, highly esteemed ambassador in London. Then there have been, from time to time, but rarely, statesmen whom we have been too ready to mistake for specimens of what Turkey might become, whereas they were, in truth, more like *lusus naturæ*, on the favorable side,—monsters, so to speak, of virtue or intelligence. And there were (and are) also, scattered through the community, men who were not, indeed, real citizens, but yet who have exhibited the true civic virtues, and who would have been citizens, had there been a true polity around them. Besides all this, the conduct of the race has gradually been brought more under the eye of Europe, which it has lost its power to resist or to defy; and its

central government, in conforming perforce to many of the forms and traditions of civilization, has occasionally caught something of their spirit. . . .

“I entreat my countrymen, upon whom far more than perhaps any other people of Europe it depends, to require and to insist that our government, which has been working in one direction, shall work in the other, and shall apply all its vigor to concur with the other states of Europe in obtaining the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria. Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner—namely, by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas,—one and all, bag and baggage,—shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned. This thorough riddance, this most blessed deliverance, is the only reparation we can make to the memory of those heaps on heaps of dead; to the violated purity alike of matron, of maiden, and of child; to the civilization which has been affronted and shamed; to the laws of God, or, if you like, of Allah; to the moral sense of mankind at large. There is not a criminal in a European jail, there is not a cannibal in the South Sea Islands, whose indignation would not arise and overboil at the recital of that which has been done; which has too late been examined, but which remains unavenged; which has left behind all the foul and all the fierce passions that produced it; and which may again spring up, in another murderous harvest, from the soil soaked and reeking with blood, and in the

air tainted with every imaginable deed of crime and shame. *That such things should be done once is a damning disgrace to the portion of our race which did them, that a door should be left open for their ever-so-barely possible repetition would spread that shame over the whole.*¹ Better, we may justly tell the Sultan, almost any inconvenience, difficulty, or loss associated with Bulgaria,

'Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of thy people and their bane.'

"We may ransack the annals of the world; but I know not what research can furnish us with so portentous an example of the fiendish misuse of the powers established by God 'for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the encouragement of them that do well.' No government ever has so sinned; none has so proved itself incorrigible in sin, or, which is the same, so impotent for reformation. If it be allowable that the executive power of Turkey should renew, at this great crisis, by permission or authority of Europe, the charter of its existence in Bulgaria, then there is not on record, since the beginnings of political society, a protest that man has lodged against intolerable misgovernment, or a stroke he has dealt at loathsome tyranny, that ought not henceforth forward to be branded as a crime."

¹ And yet England by the Cyprus Convention pledged all her resources to *keep the door open*, and the repetition thus made possible has occurred. Author.

CHAPTER X.

WHO ARE THE ARMENIANS?

THAT a field so rich in possibilities for the student of history, ethnology, or language as Armenia and Kurdistan should have remained as yet so little explored, is due, no doubt, to three causes¹: first, the apparent loss of significance of the Armenian nation, which now, like Poland, seems but a stranded wreck in the stream of history; second, to her geographical isolation and the danger and hardship of travel in that region²; third, to the linguistic obstacles to be overcome.

So little clear and accurate information about the Armenians is readily accessible that the following brief outline is offered in the hope of meeting this want at the present time.

HISTORY—The Armenian race belongs to the

¹ "Kurdistan abounds in antiquities of the most varied and interesting character. . . . It may indeed be asserted that there is no region of the East at the present day which deserves a more careful scrutiny and promises a richer harvest to the antiquarian explorer than the lands inhabited by the Kurds from Erzeroum to Kirmanshahan."—Major-General H. C. Rawlinson, *Encyc. Britannica*, article on "Kurdistan."

² Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop, *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan*, 2 vols. New York: Putnam's, 1891. London: John Murray.