

## CHAPTER X

### THE CURTAIN IS UP : NEW TURKEY BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS

**W**HAT he made up his mind to do, he has done. In the solitude of his far-away Angora home, the Ghazi set himself the task of building a new Turkey and the new Turkey is there.

People wondered what he could be doing ; what new surprise he could be preparing ; and all kinds of fantastic stories were whispered about "the Hermit of Angora." It was quite simple. With his plans carefully drawn up, the welfare of his country foremost in his mind, the ruler kept his own counsel and did what he intended to do. Then when he considered the work he had done was sufficiently advanced to bear inspection, he pulled the curtain up himself, and exhibited to all "the remarkable work of a remarkable man."

During my long trip in Asia Minor, I have been able to study the Pasha's work for myself, and test the value of his daring reforms, and their result on the lives of the people with whom I stayed, at the same time, giving it its right value by comparison with the past. For the Turks to have achieved the transformation of their country is a stupendous piece of work. That men and women, too, can have gone into the melting-pot crushed, defeated and finished people, and come out of it, as they have done, strong, healthy, purposeful citizens, has astonished even a sincere friend like myself. To me, with no axe to grind, no newspaper's policy to satisfy, paying my own way and therefore free to say what pleases me, this dangerous operation has

proved a complete success. Thanks to the ruler who has never spared himself ; never for an instant lost sight of his goal ; knew through his knowledge of history exactly what had to be done ; and changed the bigotry, fanaticism and confused religion of the Moslem world into the religion of nationalism : the country has not only been saved but it is going daily nearer the goal he has in view—to raise his countrymen to sit in the councils of Europe on equal terms with the great Powers.

Fifty years ago, Turkey was centuries behind. The people lived, in many cases, as they lived before the time of Our Lord. There was a fanaticism and hatred of everything connected with Western civilization. Gradually, however, they have been going towards the Occident, and now since the skill and superiority of the West has been proved, the Turks have assimilated Western ideals. Further, since the harem has been changed into the home, the desire for good taste in art and life is general ; the appearance of new economic wants and standards of living have been raised ; and though they have remained true to the dictates of their nationality, the Turks have acquired a very high conception of what the soul of the East and West can mean.

And yet after all the “ dangerous ” reforms the Pasha has made—social, artistic, religious and educational—there is but one result ; the forward march of Turkey. Is it to be wondered at that his Ministers trust him absolutely and say “ he cannot make a mistake ” ?

As stated in the preface of this book, of all the reforms the Pasha has brought about, I place the freedom of the women first. The whole dignity and position of the nation has been put on a higher level since women have been raised to the position of companions. The abolition of polygamy, the revision of the religion and the laws of the land are all destined to form a home and to make it a

secure basis on which to build the State. Surely this is the most important reform of all.

For the rest, the Pasha's policy since the beginning of the movement, has been clever, to say the least of it. The way in which the great Powers were first defied and then divided; the Greeks exhausted; the army converted from its loyalty to the Sultan to whole-hearted service and support of the Ghazi; the manner in which the Soviet neighbour was courted for material purposes and to scare the wits out of Lord Curzon, and yet was never allowed to get past "the calling stage," would have surprised our late Foreign Minister, who claimed to know Eastern methods so well. The way the Ghazi held tight to the Moslem brotherhood and used it as a menace to Great Britain, until Lausanne was signed and sealed, and then cast the Kaliphat aside, like a shoe that pinched and could no longer be worn, was daring strategy. The manner in which, being convinced the League of Nations is of little use to Turkey, he has refused to let his country form part of the assembly at Geneva; stated firmly that though he stands for peace, yet he will not diminish the strength of the army, navy or air force, in order to be ready to defend the independence of his country if necessary; the trouble he has taken to have a proper census made (the first time this was ever done in the history of Turkey) to show the Government and all whom it may concern, exactly the force there is behind Turkey, proves he is not afraid to look facts in the face, and that he is no partisan of "bluff."

Believing in a policy of "friends with all," the Pasha has not bound his country to any Power. Yet in spite of his vaunted independence, and the advantages of geographical position, Turkey can never be safe unless she can continue to steer a middle course between England and Russia; as she is doing now, or ally herself to England. The disadvantages of alliance with Russia are, that Communist doctrines

could never be tolerated in Turkey, and that the day will surely come when Russia will again be able to cast covetous eyes on Constantinople.

“Then why not an alliance with England at once? We cannot cast Russia away,” my friends have told me, “till we are more certain of England’s loyalty. Will she once again uphold Greece in her mad dreams of Greater Greece? Will she still continue her flirtations with the Kurds? What is she going to do with our neighbour Irak? We must wait and see; time alone can prove to us whether we can trust England or not.” And England on her side needs time to prove the sincerity of the Turk. His past is not entirely creditable, and unless people have themselves been on the spot to study the regeneration of the Turk from within no one quite believes in its reality.

England still trades with Turkey, but their commerce ought to be tripled. The financial possibilities in Turkey are great, but no country can flourish without British capital. Yet in spite of the great possibilities of Turkish investments, the British investor, accustomed as he has been to the guarantee of the Capitulations, is still waiting for evidence that his trust will be honoured, but this delay is none the less regrettable to both sides.

But why waste time in worrying over Capitulations, now gone forever? The pre-war debt is on its way to be settled. There is a mixed tribunal where all Anglo-Turkish cases can be arranged, also the Ottoman Bank with its solid Franco-British capital to help and advise investors is there. The Bank’s past record throughout the Near East is well known; and in Turkey, now it works in conjunction with the Turkish banks and it gives valuable information on commerce and finance, and renders all kinds of services to its foreign customers.

Naturally a “one man” Government brings upon it severe criticism, especially in foreign lands, where neither the

requirements of the country nor the psychology of the people are well understood. The Ghazi is supposed to be trying to force atheism on his people and flaunting Islam ! Meaningless words to interpret a great reform—the revision of Islam. He is accused of making himself Master of Turkey, and silencing all opposition and criticism. It is true, he has the entire Parliament with him. That he has been able to silence his enemies, chiefly clerics, and those who would take his place, proves he has the strength necessary to rule at this most difficult time. It is too early in the life of the Republic for opposition ; and any signs of weakness on the part of the ruler would be interpreted by those who trust him as a betrayal of that trust and therefore fatal. And furthermore, as I have so often said in these pages, above all, the Pasha knows history and how it repeats itself.

In 1913 an incompetent opposition played havoc with all attempts at progress, and killed the Constitution, for which the people had for years laboured so consistently and bravely, almost as soon as it was born. The Ghazi would not run another risk like this ! Every system has the defects of its qualities. With a superman at the helm, one must expect a superman's legislation. A man who has worked from the age of ten for the salvation and uplifting of his country must be allowed to complete the task. Is it possible to expect him to lead his country out of the depths of ruin and despair to peace, happiness and the promise of prosperity and then to fetter himself with a useless opposition, unable to understand daring, far-sighted and advanced statesmanship ?

The country is now being put solidly on its feet, with careful instructions to carry on, and like a father arranging for the succession of his son, the Ghazi is putting an order for his heir—the " People's Party." The " People's Party " is now united, but one day there must of necessity

come into its ranks division and opposition ; but that will not be until the ruler's task is completed.

Nevertheless without being a prophet, is it not safe to predict that the religion of nationalism, and the love of their country, which the Ghazi has so successfully instilled into the minds of the people throughout the country, will hold firm for many a day ?

As for the great Ghazi, whose story I told at Lausanne in 1923, with the risk of being yet once more accused of "exaggerated optimism," one can say, if God grants him life, he will do even greater things for his country. The people love him with an idolatrous belief and reverence. "He is our creator," said one of his Ministers. "One is surely allowed to adore one's creator." The following extract from a Turkish newspaper article reflects the feeling towards the Ghazi which I felt everywhere, as I travelled through Asia Minor :

"For several days Angora has been feverishly preparing to receive and embrace the great Liberator of the Fatherland whose absence has been so keenly felt. The thought of the wild enthusiasm which will prevail to-day at Angora causes our heart here to beat with a lively emotion. The torrents of joy and love which gush from the hearts of our people everywhere, on every occasion when they welcome the Ghazi, will cause the mountains and the plains of Angora to re-echo. Angora to-day comes to life again with its Ghazi. Everyone in every corner of the country loves and venerates the Ghazi sincerely and from the depth of his soul. The only distinction is that the hero enjoys at Angora a special prestige and a particular value, which have grafted themselves on to the general affection and love, that the great man inspires everywhere else."

Before closing this record of my fifth trip to Turkey, I would like to thank all the kind friends who helped to make

my trip a happy one. It has been my privilege to see this nation putting on its new civilization, and an intensely interesting experience it has been. It is true the artist in me regrets the passing of the picturesque Turks and their primitive surroundings, and yet I quite understand the Ghazi's decision, "We cannot live in the Middle Ages in order to supply Europe with copy."

Every moment of my trip has been delightful. Everywhere I have been welcomed like an old friend; in the villages and towns people came out to meet me, wish me God speed and offer me small tokens of their gratitude. Throughout my long journey I have had only consideration and kindness. The sun of Eastern hospitality has been shining on me everywhere.

In the Turks' march forward may they never lose their fine qualities of hospitality and kindness, for without them to me, at any rate, Turkey cannot be the Turkey I have known and loved for so many years.