

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## FOUR CENTURIES OF MASSACRE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—During the many discussions of the Armenian atrocities of the last two years, and more recently of those in Crete, it has often been assumed that what happened was a mere episode due to exceptional circumstances. It will be useful, then, to review a few of the facts of Turkish history, which show that extermination has always been a recognised means of dealing with subjects who were likely to give trouble. If this shall appear, it will be clear enough why paper reforms have had no good effect, and perhaps may induce us to save our trouble for the future.

It may help us to understand the nature of Turkish rule, and its complete disregard of human rights, if we begin by describing the means by which the Turks first consolidated their power after the fall of Constantinople. The Sultan wished to organise a body of troops who should not only defend his power against the efforts of subject-races, but should be a safeguard against the powerful Turkish nobles. The truly diabolical plan was hit upon of filling the corps of Janissaries by levying a blood-tax upon the Christians. At first each family was bound to furnish one male child to the Porte, but afterwards all the boys of a family were often taken. At fixed intervals, the inspector would arrive in a village; all the boys of the required age were produced, and the strongest, handsomest, and most intelligent were carried off to be the Sultan's slaves. They were brought up as Moslems, trained to hate their own people, and to obey their master implicitly. Most of them were drafted into the Janissaries, while the remainder were placed in such positions as their mental powers suggested. Most of the posts requiring intellectual ability were filled by those of Greek race, or by other Christians; thus of the forty-eight Grand Viziers that first succeeded the fall of Constantinople, only twelve were Turks. By this means the Christian population dwindled away; and in one part of Albania alone, between the years of 1629 and 1650, it fell from three hundred and fifty thousand to fifty thousand. In fact things came to such a pass, that the Porte began to fear that there would not be left sufficient Christians to pay the taxes. This alone caused the Turks to relax their wholesale conversions, and this it was that prevented the Sultan from carrying out a plan, which was on one occasion seriously discussed, of exterminating the whole Greek population of his dominions.

In 1463, during the desperate war between Mahommed II. and the Venetians, some of the people of the Morea were induced to revolt from the Sultan. Mahmoud Pasha soon appeared on the scene with eighty thousand men, and after recovering the towns which had rebelled, he sent five hundred prisoners to Constantinople. These were, by order of the Sultan, immediately "cut into two parts." Seven years later we find Mahmoud Pasha busy in the work of bloodshed among the Ægean islands. He attacked Eubœa, and besieged the Venetian stronghold of Chalkis. When at length the walls were breached, the assailants rushed in, massacring all they met. But even worse was the fate in store for the defenders of the inner fort. The treaty of surrender stipulated that their lives should be spared; but in defiance of their promise, the Turks put every soul to death, some perishing at the stake, some being flayed alive, some stoned. The Governor was sawn asunder, and his daughter was murdered for rejecting the solicitations of Mahommed II.

One of the most notable expeditions of the latter part of the fifteenth century was that against the island of Rhodes, then held by the Knights under their Grand Master D'Ambusson. When, after one futile attempt at a storm, and unsuccessful negotiations for surrender, Mesich Pasha ordered a final assault, no fewer than eight thousand stakes were prepared for the Knights, and a sufficient number of chains and ropes for the boys and girls of Rhodes. Fortunately this time the Turks were disappointed of their prey, and had to raise the siege after a great loss of life. The next massacre to notice is that of 1494. Charles VIII. of France had contemplated a crusade, which so alarmed the Sultan Bajazet that he seriously thought of evacuating Constantinople and retiring to Asia. The crusade came to nothing; and no sooner did the Turks realise that they were safe than they proceeded to "punish" the Greeks in the same way as they have lately punished the Armenians. In 1522 Sultan Suleiman succeeded where Mahommed II. had failed. His conquest of Rhodes, at the cost of one hundred thousand men, does not come within the scope of this sketch; but we notice that here, as usual, the conquerors violated their treaty with the Knights. They pillaged the town, sacked and destroyed the churches, and dragged the holy images through the mud of the streets. When a few years later a conspiracy was suspected at Rhodes, the Metropolitan Euthymios was summarily put to death, together with the leading citizens.

Nikandros Nonkios, a Corfiote, gives a harrowing account of the treatment of his native island when it was taken by Suleiman (1537). The Turks, after enslaving the inhabitants and transporting them to Epirus, shipped all valuables on board their galleys, and then burnt or otherwise destroyed everything that was useless to them, including animals and old people. Of the capture of Nauplia in 1538, Dorotheos of Monemvasia says:—"The Turks cut down animals, men, and women alike; then Kassim Pasha attempted the towers of Kastri, but could not take them; so he set them on fire, and the besieged had to jump out and become slaves to save their

lives. . . . In Nauplia alone eight thousand persons were starved to death."

The conquest of Cyprus (1570) forms one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of Turkish atrocities. The following notes are taken from a graphic description of the fall of Lencosia, written by the Archimandrite Kyprianos:—"At last the boom of cannon ceased, only to be succeeded by the cries and groans of the dying. Children were snatched from their mothers' arms, and horribly outraged before their eyes. They outraged the young in broad daylight, and at the least resistance the sword was used. Out of fifty-six thousand inhabitants, twenty thousand were killed outright. In the evening a bazaar was held; first the boys and girls were sold by auction, then followed the jewellery and the rest of the spoils." The same writer gives equally horrible details of the fall of Ammochousto, another town of Cyprus. It was here that the Governor, Markantonio Bragadios, was brought, wounded and in chains, before Mustapha Pasha, to do carrier's work, and forced to bow to the ground each time he passed the Pasha, after which he was stripped naked and set astride of a cow, and finally he was flayed alive, and his skin, stuffed with straw, was sent to Constantinople.

The Chronicles of Galaxidi give us full accounts of another great massacre at Parnassis in 1571. We read that "the Bey received the Galaxidiotes with feigned honour and joy, professing to pardon them; but in the evening they were all chained and cast into a dungeon, and afterwards slaughtered." In the same year, at Athos, at Salonica, and throughout the Archipelago, some thirty thousand Christians were either slaughtered on the spot or sent to Constantinople, where the old were murdered, the young cast into prison or taken to the Serai; and at the same time the Bishops of Patras and Salonica were burnt alive.

Coming to the wars of 1645-69, by which Crete was added to the Sultan's dominions, we are confronted with a series of cruelties of the usual kind. The number of Christian victims here rises to hundreds of thousands. On these we need not dwell, nor on the many minor atrocities which precede the massacre at the end of the eighteenth century which stained a great part of the Turkish Empire with Greek blood. This was a consequence of an attempt made by the Greeks to win freedom, encouraged by the appearance of Admiral Orloff's fleet and by promises made by Russia, but never redeemed.

After the battle of Tripolitza (1770), the town was set on fire by the Turks, and in less than two hours three thousand of its inhabitants were massacred and cast into the flames. Trikke was sacked, and Moschopolis utterly destroyed. At Larissa, the ruling Pasha availed himself of certain feuds among the leading Greeks; and having gathered them into an inclosure to settle their differences, ordered his men to open fire on them, and disposed of their affairs in this manner. Those who escaped from the inclosure were shot in the streets, and the church was demolished. In Lemnos, Smyrna, and other parts of the Levant similar scenes took place.

We might be told perhaps that in the dark days of the past cruelty was not confined to the Turks; but if we pass on to the present century, we find that though justice and mercy begin to be practised on all sides, government by sheer terror still holds its own in the East. The period in question saw a gradual awakening of the Greek race; and whereas in the past they had risen only when they expected help, their great fight for freedom which began in 1821 was a war of the people, carried on from their own resources, and with a determination which death alone could quell. As soon as the Porte realised the danger, their old methods were applied with more than usual rigour. Patriarch Gregory V. was hanged before the gate of his church, in company with many of his prelates; and their bodies were treated with the utmost indignity. A large number of the leading Greeks of the capital were beheaded, and the Janissaries spread terror throughout the suburbs. Similar measures were taken in Adrianople, where the ex-Patriarch Kyrillos was hanged. The same fate befel the Bishops of Salonica and Larissa; in which towns, as elsewhere, numbers of leading Greeks were either murdered or tortured. A year later, seeing that the rising still continued, a descent was made upon Chios, although this island was innocent of any share in the rising, as its people were prosperous and had a degree of independence. In this terrible catastrophe forty thousand Chiotas were massacred or made slaves. What with these, and such of the inhabitants as were driven from their homes, the population fell from one hundred thousand to thirty thousand. The ruin of Chios was to some extent avenged by the exploits of Kanaris; but in 1824 the wrath of the Turks fell upon his native island of Psara. When Hosref Pasha landed there with his Janissaries, the island contained some thirty-three thousand refugees, besides its own population. Of the latter only three thousand escaped death, while seventeen thousand of the refugees were massacred or sold into slavery.

In view of these facts, the Bulgarian and Armenian atrocities appear as part of a settled policy; and the rumour, so indignantly denied, that the present Sultan had decreed the extermination of the Armenian race, is made more than credible. For these instances, which might be multiplied with ease, show that the method of the Porte is to destroy any subject-race that gives trouble,—or at least so to cripple and terrorise it that the rulers may be safe from future offence. A system so vile and so infamous can neither be defended nor reformed; and it is time that Europe, or at least the free States of Europe, should make up their minds to end what cannot by any human means be mended.

ARGYRIS EFTALIOTIS.  
W. H. D. ROUSE.