

**THE TURKISH PROBLEM;  
THINGS SEEN AND  
A FEW DEDUCTIONS**

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The Turkish problem; things seen and a few deductions by Count Léon Ostrorog

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THE  
**TURKISH PROBLEM**

THINGS SEEN AND A FEW DEDUCTIONS

BY

COUNT LÉON OSTROROG

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY WINIFRED STEPHENS

WITH A MAP

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS

1919

## INTRODUCTION

### TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

SOME British friends—experts in Eastern questions, who have lived many years in the East and learnt the languages and moods of the men of the East—have expressed the view that it would not be inexpedient to publish an English translation of this book, deeming it, in their kind indulgence, a truthful picture of the mosaic of nations and creeds constituting Turkey, that main factor in the Eastern Question, which more than ever towers above the political horizon.

With regard to English readers, the book, however, calls for a few preliminary words.

It was originally conceived as a purely French book, designed exclusively for the French general public. That unavoidably narrow French frame could include nothing but such instances of French work and French interests in Turkey as would easily appeal to the addressed readers. A French writer would indeed have exceeded the limits both

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of competency and of courtesy in assuming to express any views whatever regarding what may be called the English solutions of the Turkish Question. Consequently, regarding the British side of the Ottoman Problem, the only allusion to be found in this book is what is given as an example and an achieved model; the British work of wise and beneficent guardianship in Egypt.

However, what could hardly have found place in the book as originally planned, I am fain to summarise here, the more so as perhaps not every Englishman realises the extent and importance of British work and influence in Turkey. That British work and influence, if of more recent date than the French and, unlike the French, not resulting in a similar atmosphere of English culture and language, has been, especially after the Crimean War and in quite recent days, of great and growing moment. British trade in Turkey goes back to very remote years, and I need only to recall that long before the East India Company became one of the essential factors in the building up of what is now rightly called the British Empire, the "Worshipful Levant Company" was, in British commercial life, an element of great importance and repute. If it finally waned and vanished, it was only after an honourable and sometimes brilliant career, and the practical consequences of its existence are still

alive, and very much so, in the Turkey of to-day. Numerous English families, either of pure British stock or descendants of the French Protestants who sought England as a sanctuary after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, attracted by the possibilities offered by Turkish trade, migrated to, and settled in Turkey, and some of these families are still extant and flourishing; the Lafontaines, the Hayes, the Barkers, the Charnauds, the Whittalls, the Hansons have no other origin, and their names will assuredly be familiar even to those Englishmen who have lived in Turkey but a few months. At Constantinople, Moda and Behek are well known as English centres; the same may be said of the charming suburb of Burnabat, near Smyrna, which is even more exclusively English; the same again of Bujar, close to Smyrna again, but higher up, on the way to Ephesus, which the Turks have called Aya-Suluk. After the Crimean War, under the influence of the eminent man whom the Turks to this day call the Great Ambassador—*Buyuk-Eltchi*—Lord Stratford de Redcliffe—British capital collaborated actively in Turkey. The Ottoman Bank, that stronghold of Western finance in Turkey, is half English, and its head offices are in London. Englishmen again accomplished in Turkey a brilliant and honourable feat, the construction of the only railway that has ever



been built in Turkey without any burden to the State, without any "kilometric guarantee"; I mean the railway of Aïdin, which is the main railway of the great vilayet of Smyrna, Smyrna itself being the terminus. Indeed, even the Haïdar-Pasha-Angora and the Kassaba railways, now in French or German hands, were conceived by British capitalists.

Under the reign of Abdul Hamid, British statesmen and business men experiencing a very natural loathing for the crafty and sanguinary tyrant and the unclean methods of business initiated at Stamboul, British collaboration in Turkey underwent a period of voluntary eclipse. However, even at that date, what may be, I think, called not only the most important but the most successful enterprise in Turkey, the foundation and organisation of the Ottoman Public Debt, was achieved in conjunction with England. From its beginning in 1882 to the end, I mean up to the deplorable day when the blindness and conceit of Enver and his henchmen thrust Turkey into the arms of Germany, over the Ottoman Public Debt has alternately presided, year after year, an English and a French Chairman, and such names as Sir Edgar Vincent (now Lord D'Abernon), Sir Vincent Caillard, Sir Henry Babington Smith and Sir Adam Block will not fail to remain honourably conspicuous in the

economic history of the Turkey that was. After the Turkish revolution of 1908, British collaboration became particularly active. On the advice of the Foreign Office, a purely English bank, the National Bank of Turkey, was instituted at Constantinople and put under the direction of Sir Henry Babington Smith. Although the outbreak of the European War made its existence sadly brief, it had already made itself very popular in Turkey, and begun useful and important work. Two harbours were to be built by it in the Black Sea at points of great importance, Samsoun and Trebizonde, and important works on the coast of the Aegean were purposed, in order to develop the possibilities of cotton growing in Turkey. British work of even greater scope was begun and partially accomplished in Mesopotamia on the plans conceived by a great British engineer, Sir William Willcocks: the restoration of that network of irrigation canals which had made of Mesopotamia the most fertile land on earth, up to the day when the Tartar invasions of the thirteenth century destroyed everything, and left it a marshy, unhealthy, and barren waste. But as regards the basin of the Tigris and the Euphrates, previous English work had been accomplished which greatly redounds to the credit of Great Britain. To the English navy it is due that piracy has totally disappeared from the Persian

Gulf, and it is the merit of British industry to have organised regular and secure steamship intercourse between Basrah and Bagdad.

British collaboration, after 1908, was not limited to economics. Its naval and administrative guidance at once became of the very greatest moment. British naval advisers—Admiral Gamble, later Admiral Lympus—were appointed at the Turkish Admiralty, and given powers for the practical training and the effective command of the Turkish fleet. The Turkish navy was put entirely under the advisory control of those British Admirals and their purely British staff. Indeed, on the eve of the European War, the technical control of all the Turkish naval docks and yards, for thirty years, was given by the Turkish government to two British firms, so that it may be said that both from the military and the practically technical point of view the Turkish navy was handed in trust to Great Britain.

The same predominant position was acquired by Great Britain in those two fundamental Departments of State; the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice. After having been appointed Adviser to the Direction of Turkish Customs, Mr., now Sir Richard Crawford was called to the high and heavy task of Financial Adviser of the Ottoman Government, than whom I do not think I exaggerate in stating that no foreign adviser