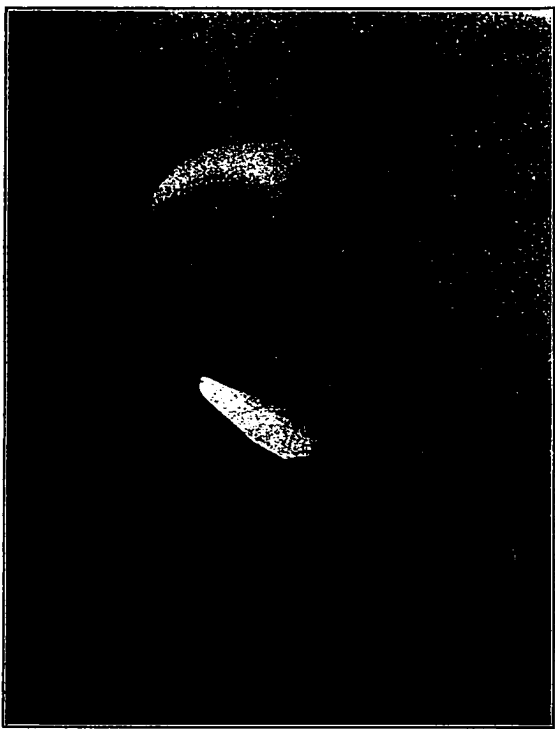


AMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.



CYRUS HAMLIN, LL.D.,
Founder of Robert College.

IN the first decade of the Ottoman Empire during the present century, Sultan Selim III. attempted to make needed reforms, but lost his life by an insurrection of the Janissaries. In the second decade, the young Sultan Mahmoud would have carried out the reforms of Selim III.,

but the successful revolt of Mehmet Ali of Egypt, and the turbulence of the Janissaries, embarrassed him. During the third decade, 1820 to 1830, events occurred which shook the old empire to its foundations. The destruction of the Janissaries; the Greek revolution; the destruction of the great Turkish fleet at Navarino; the rebuilding of a better fleet by the American naval architects, Eckford and Rhodes; the establishment of naval and military academies; the reform of the army under foreign officers—the great Moltke in his youth, for one; and a disastrous war with Russia, were among the stirring events of this decade. In the fourth decade, 1830 to 1840, occurred the introduction of the new, or Western, education into the sleepy old empire, then just beginning to wake up. In 1831, Messrs. Goodell, Dwight, and Schaufler were established as missionaries of the American Board at Constantinople. The first work was, of necessity, that of education. Some astonishing facts became apparent. The ancient, or classic languages, not the spoken, were used in all the schools, whether Moslem or Christian. There were very few books in the hands of either scholars or teacher. Instead, large cards were hung upon the walls, and the whole school was trained upon those cards. The bastinado was in use in every public school. The missionaries at once introduced the spoken languages. As soon as possible, attractive school-books were prepared, in different languages. School furniture was introduced—in place of sitting on the floor. For a few years, the new system spread, and carried all before it. The Turkish government looked upon it with favor. Dr. Dwight established a seminary, or normal school, one direct object of which was to prepare competent school-teachers for the reformed education. In 1837, there came a sudden change, more decidedly from the Armenian clergy. The foreign schools were deemed dangerous; and finally were denounced and anathematized. It is now known that Nicholas, the Czar of Russia, instigated this. The Catholics of Etchmiadzin, the highest dignitary of the Armenian Church, dwells on Russian soil, and is always subject to the

Czar. The seminary and the schools were closed. Some Armenian teachers, known to be decidedly evangelical, were sent into exile. The missionary work for a time lay low.

In 1840, I was successful in opening a seminary in Bebek, on the Bosphorus, where it continued, in spite of persecutions, for twenty years. In the fourth and fifth decades, there was a great diffusion of education by schools and high schools, in all the chief cities. The Crimean War (1853-56), contributed to greater freedom of action; and the press became a powerful agent in diffusing knowledge. Institutions in competition were established, to put down the missionary schools; but they had to copy a great deal from the institutions they antagonized; and they helped forward the work they wished to destroy. Near the close of this period, the chief secretary of the American Board, the Rev. Rufus Anderson, D.D., LL.D., chose to change the curriculum of the high schools and seminaries of the Board to a "vernacular" basis; excluding linguistic studies and science, and making them directly and solely for bible students and biblical preachers. After long and friendly discussion, I declined that service, and formed an understanding with Christopher R. Robert, of New York, to establish a college on the Bosphorus, which should carry out the American idea of education. The incidents which led to the founding of Robert College are in themselves interesting. About the year 1844-45, the persecution of the Protestant Armenians changed its character. Violence was mainly abandoned, boycotting substituted. Every man known as an *avederanagan* was deprived of his business or trade. Poverty and distress ensued. This was soon felt in the seminary; for the students had to provide their own clothing and other incidental expenses. Their parents could no longer do anything for them; and they began to be ragged. They tried mending up, as no school ever did before. In the course of two years, this state of things became ridiculous and impossible of continuance. I resolved to open a workshop and have

the boys clothe themselves by their own labor.* The scheme was wonderfully successful, and I introduced many industries to provide work for the persecuted who were then out of employment. They were starving — give them work instead of money. As a foreigner I was not under the laws of the guilds. I opened many industries; but the most successful was a flour mill and bakery. The bread was excellent and in good demand. Mr. Charles Ede, who provided the capital, was fully repaid. When the Crimean war broke out, the British hospital camp wanted this American bread. Lord Raglan declared that better bread was never made. Our works were enlarged to furnish eight and one-half tons per day. At the close of the war, Christopher R. Robert was traveling in the East and accidentally saw a boat close to the shore, filled with this beautiful bread. He was surprised and indignant to learn that a missionary was the responsible maker, and visited him to investigate. When he found it was all to furnish work for the persecuted, his feelings changed. Then and there began the acquaintance that resulted in Robert College. He often said that the college was founded on that boat load of bread, as it was the means of his acquaintance with me.

After many failures, a noble site was purchased, on the most conspicuous and historic spot on the Bosphorus, with the condition that the money should be paid out when the Grand Vizier should give permission for the building. This was given. I paid about eight thousand dollars for the site; and began, with a good force of workmen, to dig for the foundations. After a few days of joyful work, believing that all opposition and unfriendly plots had been countervailed, two dashing police officers in palace livery appeared and said, "This work must cease for the present." "For what reason?" "Certain formalities are to be gone through with." "What formalities?" "We do not know." "How long must I wait?" "Perhaps two or three weeks." In point of fact, it was seven years. I was alarmed at this sudden change; the more so, as I believed that the Grand

* See "My Life and Times," p. 281.

Vizier himself was friendly to the college scheme. The opposition originated with the Abbé Boré, a distinguished Jesuit, believed to be the chief guide and inspirer of all the Roman Catholic missions in the East. He was a man of fine presence, master of all the Oriental languages, and was believed to have the confidence and patronage of Louis Napoleon. He incited the old Moslem party against the American college; and Louis Napoleon instructed his ambassador to take counsel with the learned Jesuit. The Russian ambassador needed no invitation to join them in making such a representation to the Porte as secured the immediate revoking of the permit. And further, they exacted from the Grand Vizier a promise that the proposed college should never be built. Our secretary of legation, Mr. I. P. Brown, was unsurpassed in getting at bottom facts in the diplomacy of the Sublime Porte. As America had no political ambitions, nor any complications with Oriental questions, he had a great advantage over all diplomats of his class.

The situation was generally regarded as hopeless, for two reasons—the mighty strength of the enemy, and the fact that the American minister resident refused to take any action in the case. He was sent there to protect American commerce—not to build colleges! The college president without a college was advised to quietly fold his tent and silently disappear.

But he saw a chance to turn the flank of the great Jesuit commander and his mighty allies. The principle of *adet* (prescriptive right) is a very sacred one in Turkish administration. As often as I have asked for a definition, it has been given substantially thus: “If any one has been allowed to do a thing long enough to be known to his neighbors and the local officers, and no opposition has been made, after that the Sultan’s firman cannot touch him.”

I had been twenty years in that building in Bebek, with a seminary. I will now, said I, open Robert College there, without asking leave, or saying anything to the government about it. I did so. I repaired the building, having made an

arrangement with the Board that owned it, and having made, without the least concealment, every arrangement; and having sent out the program in seven languages — Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, French, English, Italian, and German — I opened the college with a few students in November, 1863. It was considered somewhat perilous because all the Powers were against it, and no voice that could make itself heard was lifted up for it.

The Abbé Boré was, of course, excited. When he found that the seminary, whose doors he hoped were closed forever, was re-opened as Robert College, he hastened to the Grand Vizier, and the interview was privately reported to Mr. Brown, substantially as follows. "Why, surely, Your Highness, that American, Hamlin, who wanted to establish a college at Roumeli Nissar, and sought your authority. . . ." "He sought leave to put up a building at Roumeli Nissar — which I interdicted. Is he erecting that building?" "No, Your Highness, but much worse than that. He has actually opened the college in Bebek!" "Very well, Your Reverence. He has had a college there for more than twenty years, and he will have it there for twenty more, if he commits no crime!" "But, Your Highness, that was an inferior institution, called a seminary. Now it is a college and may become a university and a propagandist institution, bad for you, and bad for us!" The Grand Vizier's patience was exhausted, and he replied with some emphasis, "School! Seminary! College! University! what care we what names the Ghours give to their institutions? They are all one to us. Does Your Reverence think we are going back on our sacred principle of *adet* to please Your Reverence? Be sure we are not!" And so the Abbé had to retire, a humbler and wiser man.

And so Robert College gained a standing place in the presence of its enemies. From this secure position, the battle for the right to build could be safely fought, and the college organized and developed. For this, the position was most favorable. Slowly the public came to estimate and like the new

institution. It gradually filled up from most of the nationalities there resident. Armenians, Greeks, and Bulgarians were chief in number; but we had from one to five of English, American, German, Italian, Jewish, Persian, Dutch, Swiss, Danish, and Turkish. It was an evangelical Christian college, like Amherst — wholly in the English language, for which, in addition, there was a fitting department. We anticipated some trouble from the conflict of races. We found very little. They were all one — in English. As a Christian college, it acknowledged the bible as the word of God, and religious instruction was to be given from that book, but no sectarianism was to enter into it. This principle worked admirably. During the seven years we were confined to quarters that would allow us to receive only seventy students, the curriculum of study and of discipline was thoroughly tried. It has not been materially changed during thirty-six years of experience; while it has now two hundred and fifty students. In its confined quarters, it became fully self-supporting, and, before I left, had a balance of six hundred dollars in the treasury. The Abbé Boré tried every means that an able and skilful Jesuit could invent to injure us. But it reacted against him, and he utterly failed of getting up an institution to counteract and overwhelm us. We had, every year, from twenty-five to thirty applications more than we could possibly receive. This was a triumphant answer to those who had denied the need of a college, and to those who predicted that it would be possible to have a faculty, but no native students!

The president had now another and more difficult duty — to compel the Turkish government to do what justice plainly demanded. The “great English ambassador” had been recalled at the beck of Louis Napoleon, who proposed to reconstruct Eastern affairs in harmony with Russia. When Sir Henry Bulwer came in his place, I laid the college question before him. He said it was in accord with English policy, and that he would watch for diplomatic opportunities to secure my evident right. I knew that his moral character

was not high in any scale — Turkish, Jewish, or Christian, and that he was the author of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, as to which he had boasted that Clayton himself did not understand what he signed.

After about six months, he sent me a note to say that the Grand Vizier had yielded on the college question, and in a few days he would send me the permit. Instead, in a few days, I received another note from Sir Henry, insolent in the extreme, saying that I had made an unwise move to purchase a site where I should have known that the Turks would never let me build; and the penalty of such indiscretion should fall upon my own head. I soon found what had occurred. Sir Henry Bulwer had received a heavy bribe from the Pasha of Egypt, to do some work for him at the Sublime Porte; but to do that successfully, Sir Henry must abandon three things, one of which was the American college question. I made no reply to such a contemptible letter; and I had the satisfaction of knowing that his unusual skill had failed him. The fact of the bribe became known to the government in London, and he was recalled in disgrace. He never held any office after that, but published some books in which he glorified himself.

It would be wearisome to narrate the five other episodes from which much was hoped for, and nothing gained. The Grand Vizier should be excused for once exclaiming, "Will this Mr. Hamlin never die, and let me alone in this college question?" It was considered that somebody might give me a cup of coffee — which often shortens a man's life in Turkey — and I was earnestly advised not to go into any coffee shop in Stamboul or on the Bosphorus.

In 1868, Admiral Farragut came to Constantinople — the man of whom it was said "he fought a great battle, lashed to his mast, where all could see him, and three thousand riflemen had fired at him and couldn't hit him!" and so on. Stamboul was all agog to see him.

We occasionally find that a boy has an unconscious part in a great event. My little son Alfred, by his irrepressible

desire to see the great admiral, compelled me to go with him to call upon the great man. We found Admiral Farragut alone. He asked at once whether I was a resident or a traveler. I began to tell him of my difficulty with the Turkish government about building a college. He interrupted me, saying he was sorry the Turkish government should be so unjust, but added, "I have no diplomatic mission here, whatever. I can do nothing for you." And to turn the subject, he said, "What lad is this? Is he your son?" Putting his hand on his shoulder, he asked, "Well, my son, what are you going to do in the world? What are you going to be?" "I don't know," replied the boy. "I wouldn't mind being Admiral of the American navy!" The old Admiral laughed, and patting him on the head, said, "There might be many things better than that! But, if you are going to be Admiral of the American navy—." Just then, to my chagrin, his words were cut off by the sudden entrance of Dr. Seropyan (an Armenian physician of distinction, educated in America, and known to the Admiral) with his hand extended. "Good morning, Admiral Farragut! I am glad to see you here with Mr. Hamlin. You have come just in the nick of time to get him leave to build his college"—and he began to pour out his admiration of the plan.

The Admiral stopped him by saying, "I have just told Mr. Hamlin that I have no diplomatic mission here, and I can do nothing for him." "Just for that reason," rejoined the doctor, "you can do everything. You are to dine, this evening, with the Grand Vizier; just ask him why that American college cannot be built? And, when you dine with the other great pashas of the Sultan's court, make the same inquiry of each." The jolly Admiral laughed at the idea, but said, "I'll do it; for anybody may ask the king a decent question!" Visitors came crowding in, and our interview was cut short. That he faithfully asked the question, we inferred from the fact that secretaries of the Sublime Porte were curious to know whether our government sent out our great Admiral "to settle that college question?" His sudden departure puzzled them.

But nothing came of it. Seven years had passed since I purchased the site, and many times our hopes had been raised only to be cast down. I saw nothing further to do until something new should turn up; and for about three months, gave myself wholly to the college extant.

I was still trying to "let patience have her perfect work," when, one afternoon, about an hour before sunset, the American minister's messenger boy, Antoine, came into my study with a letter. I knew it must be something of importance, or Mr. Morris would not have sent a messenger six miles with it.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Hamlin," he wrote, "on the termination of your long contest with the Turkish government. I have just received a note from His Highness, the Grand Vizier, saying, 'Tell Mr. Hamlin he may begin building his college when he pleases. Nobody will interfere with him; and in a few days, he shall have the Imperial Iradé.'"

This seemed all too great and good to be true. It must be a hoax. For the Imperial Iradé is the "Imperial Volition," coming directly from the inspired breast of the Caliph, the successor of the Prophet. I went directly to Mr. Morris's office.

"I don't wonder you think it a hoax," he said, "but it cannot be. There is the Grand Vizier's note." The whole note was in his unmistakable handwriting, signed by his name Aali, with the seal of the Grand Vizerati affixed. The world did not credit the report; but the Iradé was given, placing the college under the protection of the United States, thus making it an American institution. It immediately raised the American flag; and does so still on fête days. It is the first institution of the kind which the Turks have allowed in any prominent place on the Bosphorus. No one could explain the mystery of such great generosity—why the Ottoman government should give so much more than we had asked; and moreover, why the great opponents were all silent, or treated it as a trifle not worthy of notice.

The college was then built in the most substantial manner. The stone was taken from the same quarries that Mehmet II.

used in 1452-53. Time does not affect it. The iron came from Scotland and Belgium, the tubular bricks and cement from France. The Grand Vizier showed his friendliness by ordering that all the materials should pass free of the custom house, which was a great boon. When the building was externally finished, he sent for me to call upon him at his palace, to congratulate me on having erected a building which was "*the ornament of the Bosphorus.*"

Robert College was occupied May 18, 1871, but was not publicly opened until July 4, of that year, when our great ex-Secretary Seward passed that way, and performed the ceremony with great *éclat*. The college faculty thanked him warmly for his supposed mysterious and wonderful influence. Some said, "Louis Napoleon has had enough of Seward in Mexico, and was not disposed to quarrel with him on the Bosphorus." The college filled up immediately. A short time after Seward left, our mystery was explained.

A Turkish gentleman called to see the college. After a long and particular examination, he apologized, saying, "I think more highly of English education than of any other. I have some little grandsons whom I intend to send to this college." I invited him to the college tower, to look upon the Asiatic shore. I saw that he was one of the Sultan's cabinet, visiting the college incognito. He fell into raptures over the scenery. As he turned to go down, he said, "Oh, Mr. Hamlin, if it had not been for that insurrection, we would never have given you leave to build on this magnificent site!" When I assured him that I could not understand him, he added, "When the Cretan insurrection was at its worst, endangering our relations to Greece, and consequently to Russia, your great Admiral Farragut came here. The Greeks gathered around him, and expected that he would go and deliver the refugees on the coast, and carry them to Greece. We did not like this. But, still worse, they reported that he had promised to sell them one of those monitors. But we treated your great admiral with unexampled honor. The Grand Vizier made him a most magnificent

dinner. Seventy-two guests, the great men of our Empire and of the chief embassies, were at table. You know that into such a dinner no diplomatic question can be intruded, even to your neighbor! But, in the midst of this dinner, the Admiral said to the Grand Vizier, 'Your Highness, I would like to ask Your Highness a question?' 'Very well, Admiral.' 'I would like to ask Your Highness why that American college can't be built?' The whole table shuddered. Here was a diplomatic question thrown suddenly upon the table, contrary to all etiquette! But our Vizier is never thrown off his balance; and he answered, with his usual suavity, 'It is true, Admiral, there have been some difficulties about that question; but they are all smoothed over, and the college may be built.'"

"The Admiral said not a word; the table resumed its *sang froid*, and the dinner closed in the highest enthusiasm. Then, other great dinners were given to him; and at each one, the same question came, but no remarks. He was careful to declare that he had no diplomatic mission; and we saw that he had just one mission — this college! But, when he went away so suddenly, we breathed easier—until those letters on the Cretan insurrection were published in the New York papers. There, we said, is the finger of the great admiral, preparing the American people for selling those *monitors* to the Greeks! Better build a hundred colleges for the Americans, than to have one of those troublesome monitors come into the Mediterranean! War would follow with Greece, and then with our great enemy. So we made haste to prevent all this. We gave you the Imperial Iradé. We placed this college under the protection of the United States, as the greatest compliment to your government and people; and so we smoothed it all over!"

There have been many splendid results from this sacred authorization of the College. The foreign embassies could say nothing, and so kept silence. It made the opening of other American colleges easy. This was the first. There are now eight American colleges, two of them (at Scutari

and Marash) for girls. Through the terrible years of slaughter, the Armenian students in Robert College were unmolested. The college building at Harpoot, on the Euphrates, was destroyed, also the academy at Marash, by the Turkish officials ; and so the Sultan must and will pay the damages.

The influence of Robert College upon Bulgaria has been noticed by English and German travelers. Its graduates fill many high offices. Until recently, Ferdinand had three of them in his cabinet. In college, they were among the choicest. There are scores of noble, patriotic, educated men, in all departments of life, and of different nationalities, who have received their training in that college. The same is true of all the other American institutions.

But the great influence of these institutions is to be sought in their having become incitements and models to the other and far more numerous institutions among the Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Moslems. There are eight American colleges. All the other chief nationalities have their competing colleges. There are about forty American high schools. There are many times that number in competition. Until these American schools began, in the fourth decade (from '30 to '40), the Jesuits had done nothing for general or popular education. They soon saw a new power that they also must use, since they could not suppress it. Since then, the missionaries have opened a school in no village of the empire but it has been immediately followed by a Roman Catholic school. In a greater or less degree, other nationalities have done the same, even extending it to girls' schools.

But the greatest educational effect is seen in the Moslem schools. Abdul Hamid, on being convinced that the Christian races were far in advance of the Moslem, resolved to change all that. He has established common school education throughout Asia Minor, among the Moslems exclusively, as was never done before ; while he has closed hundreds of Christian schools, and burned tons of Christian school-books. Abdul Hamid II. will be known in history as the "Great Assassin " and the "Great Educator"—the assassin of Chris-

tians, the educator of Moslems. Only grant that Islam is true and Christianity false — and his course may be defended as wise and prudent ; otherwise, it is rashness and folly.

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