

DEBT OF BULGARIA TO ROBERT COLLEGE

American Institution on the Bosphorus Has Meant Much to Little Balkan State--Its Influence During War

A significant and important among the reasons why Bulgaria never followed the example of Turkey in breaking relations with the United States, thoughtful Americans place the existence of Robert College in Constantinople. The American institution has meant much, for more than half a century, to the Bulgarians and their country.

Robert College, founded in the midst of the civil war, incorporated as a part of the University of the State of New York, with a governing Board of Trustees here, was the first American Christian college in missionary lands. It has had a long, interesting, sometimes a very arduous, history as an educational institution in the Ottoman Empire—a history in which the words "first" and "only" belong to more than one establishment or happening.

This first American college of its kind was founded by Christopher Rheinlander Robert of New York as the result of an interest first aroused in 1857, and after efforts, often discouraging, which dragged on for six years. The college was opened in 1863 by Mr. Robert and Dr. Cyrus Hamlin in a rented house on the Bosphorus. In 1864 the Trustees of Robert College of Constantinople were incorporated under the laws of the State of New York and the institution received a formal status here by being made a part of the State University.

The first suggestion of an American educational institution in the Turkish capital was made to Mr. Robert, who visited Constantinople and became interested in Turkish educational problems during the Crimean War, by James and William Dwight, sons of H. G. O. Dwight, American missionary in Turkey, and the original plan was to establish the college by a general appeal to American philanthropy. But affairs in the United States were too troubled for such interest to be easily aroused. Mr. Robert's initial gift of \$10,000 as the nucleus of a great fund to be raised here for the endowment of an institution of higher education on the Bosphorus was not followed by sufficient subscriptions from a country just entering upon civil war, and when Dr. Hamlin's tour in the United States in 1860 proved not

successful enough to endow the college, Mr. Robert shouldered the undertaking himself. Until his death in 1878 he gave the money to carry on the institution, and when he died he bequeathed to it one-fifth of his estate. His gifts amounted to more than \$400,000.

The Turkish Government at first opposed the establishment of the college, and in 1869 Admiral Farragut, during a visit to Constantinople, took occasion to bring the matter to the attention of the Ottoman authorities. After that there was no more trouble, and Robert College received official recognition in an irade from the Sultan. It has had, of course, its ups and downs. But in his report covering the year in which we went into the war, President Gates pointed out that its freedom from any real molestation, Government interference, or "commandeering," at that time was under the circumstances unprecedented.

"The fact that Robert College still continues its work," he wrote, "is regarded in the City of Constantinople as little short of miraculous."

French, English, Russian, and Italian schools have been closed and their buildings taken for military purposes. The Protestant College at Beirut was closed for two weeks when Turkey broke relations with the United States, and the Faculty at Robert College naturally expected the like, at least, to happen there. But the institution was allowed to remain open uninterruptedly and received most courteous treatment from the Government. When one engineering machine was taken for use by the Turkish authorities it was fully paid for, and the assurance was given that nothing belonging to the college would be confiscated, although some machines or other articles might be borrowed or bought.

To go back to the history of the college, the story of Admiral Farragut's achievement in helping to conquer the opposition of the Porte is told by Dr. Washburn:

How not to do it is the perfection of Turkish diplomacy. The permission to build was never formally revoked, but six years of wearisome and often exasperating negotiations followed. For

Dr. Hamlin and Mr. Robert these years were alternations of hope and despair. Nothing that they could do here or in Washington seemed to be of avail and the prospect was never darker than in 1868.

The final settlement was brought about most unexpectedly by a providential combination of agencies, unconsciously working together, and was long a mystery to Dr. Hamlin. The ball was set in motion by George D. Morgan of New York, a gentleman who had never heard of the proposed college until he came to Constantinople as a traveler in the Winter of 1868. He saw Dr. Hamlin, investigated the case, and was so much interested that when he returned to America, a few months later he went to Washington on purpose to persuade Mr. Seward to take action in behalf of the college.

He first interested Senator Morgan and Mr. Everts in the case, and the three went together to Mr. Seward, who had special reasons at that time to wish to please them. He was persuaded, sent for Blacque Bey, the Turkish Minister, and pressed his demands in such a way that the Minister wrote to Constantinople that this question must be settled at once or there would be serious trouble. This letter reached Constantinople not long before the arrival of Admiral Farragut at the Dardanelles, who insisted upon coming up to Constantinople in his flagship. His appearance in these waters at this time had nothing to do with the revolution in Crete, but to the Turks it seemed suspicious. They allowed him to come up to Constantinople after some delay, and received him with great honors. To please his little son Dr. Hamlin took him to call on the Admiral, and by chance met there a gentleman who knew him well and introduced the subject of the college and its difficulties.

The Admiral was so stirred by the injustice involved that he promised to speak to the Grand Vizier about it unofficially, if he had a chance. He found his opportunity at a grand dinner given in his honor, as Dr. Hamlin afterward learned. No one at the college knew anything at that time of the action of Mr. Seward or the dispatch of Blacque Bey, but the Turkish Government put all these things together, and evidently believed that Admiral Farragut's real mission here was to settle the college question, with the possibility of his taking the ships to Crete in the background.

They settled it, granting even more than had been asked, giving the college an imperial charter as an American college under the protection of the United States with extra territorial rights, and with all the privileges granted to educational institutions in Turkey. Indeed, they were so friendly and cordial that Dr. Hamlin wrote to Mr. Robert that, in case more money were needed, he should apply to the Sultan, who would undoubtedly give it. But he never ap-

The present site of the college, on the heights of Rumeli Hissar, above the Bosphorus, was acquired in 1871, and a number of buildings have been put up to meet the various needs of the institution's complex life. A few years ago Cleveland H. Dodge, President of the Board of Trustees, gave a new building for the Y. M. C. A. and the social activities of the college, adjoining the gymnasium, which had been erected by his father and himself. Mrs. William Sloane has lately built the college infirmary.

Robert College receives pupils in its preparatory department at the age of 10, and graduates them with the degree of A. B. or S. B. upon the completion of the full college course. An engineering department has recently been added. More than 3,000 pupils have been educated at the college, and, as President Gates said lately in speaking of the demand for graduates of Robert College in many positions of responsibility in the Turkish Empire: "They use several languages, they are physically fit, and they know how to do things."

There are normally about 500 students at the college, the nationalities represented in largest numbers being Greeks, Bulgarians, and Armenians. There have been fewer Turkish pupils because of the opposition of the Turkish Government to education of young men in any but Government schools. For the first quarter century of the institution's existence, the majority of the students were Bulgarians, and though there are now many Greeks and Armenians in Robert College as well, Bulgarians attend in large numbers. In the year 1872, "the best of all our commencements," as Dr. Hamlin said at the time, six of the eight graduates were Bulgarians. Dr. Washburn wrote, in 1907:

"Of the Bulgarians the one to whom their country owes the most is Peter Dimitroff. He had paid his way through college by teaching Turkish and remained a teacher for several years after graduating. From the time of the Bulgarian massacres until the present day he has been one of the wisest, best, and most devoted servants of his country. Constantine Calchof is now a wealthy banker and has occupied many important positions in the Government of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria. Dimitry Economoff and Ivan D. Gueshoff have done good service in high official positions. Stephen A. Camburoff entered the army and died in 1882."

A year or two later five young men were graduated, all Bulgarians, and Dr. Washburn adds to the record: "One of these died a few years later. The other four have all distinguished themselves in the Government of Bulgaria." This is the statement that one meets again and again in going over Presi-

dent Washburn's record of graduates. These men went from Robert College to places of influence and achievement at home.

Obviously, however, the influence of Robert College on the life of Bulgaria and on American-Bulgarian relations has not been confined to academic education. The boys and young men at this American college have imbibed American ideas along with their instruction by American teachers and according to American methods. They have come to admire and respect America, to understand something of the ideals of American democracy. President Washburn, writing of the many years of his service, says:

"The most important characteristic of the college was that the professors and their families and all the teachers were inspired with the idea that we were making men who in turn were to be the leaders of their people to a higher life. Giving instructions in various branches of learning was not the end for which we were working, but only a means to a real end we had in view."

Naturally, the college life outside the classroom has had much to do with the influence of the institution upon its pupils' lives. English is the language of the college. The social, athletic, intellectual life of the "campus," is as varied, as pleasant, as stimulating, as in similar institutions here. There are plays—new plays and English classics—lectures, debates, receptions, concerts, ball games, and of course since the outbreak of the war in Europe there has been much Red Cross work. A typical item in the annual report for 1914-1915 states that the play of "David Garrick," given by the senior class with great success, was, at the request of Mrs. Morgenthau, repeated as a Red Cross benefit. Two of the lectures and discussions of that same college year were on "Emerson" and "The New Federal Reserve Banking System." There are frequent receptions, and the music department arranges interesting series of concerts and recitals through the year. Since the war, though the attendance has been somewhat smaller than usual and the Faculty itself has been temporarily depleted, the college life has gone on as usual, in the classroom and outside.

The present Board of Trustees, in addition to the President, Mr. Dodge, consists of the Rev. A. F. Schauffer, D. D., Vice President; the Rev. A. W. Halsey, D. D., Secretary; William D. Murray, Recording Secretary; Mrs. John S. Kennedy, William Sloane, the Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, D. D.; Stephen Baker, Robert W. de Forest, and Charles R. Crane. Dr. Panaretoff was a graduate of 1871 and taught Bulgarian language and literature in the college until his appointment as Bulgarian Minister to the United States.

Many Americans think that Robert College is a coeducational institution. It is not, but the American College for Girls at Scutari, founded in 1874 by the Women's Board of Missions in Boston, is a neighboring school, which does a like work among the young women of the countries roundabout.

There is an interesting little item among Dr. Washburn's reminiscences:

"A distinguished American who visited Washington when Mr. Bayard was Secretary of State was amazed to find that he had never heard of Robert College. I suppose that Mr. Bayard was equally astonished to learn that this Englishman thought that the founding of Robert College was the most important thing that America had done in Europe."