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American Territory in Turkey;

or, Admiral Farragut's Visit to
Constantinople, and the Extra-
territorialty of Robert College

An Address by
Ralph E. Prime, LL.D., D.C.L.
before the New York Society
of the Order of the Founders
and Patriots of America,
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American Territory in Turkey

Coincidences sometimes have mighty influence by way of inciting to human action. Utterly disconnected events, when grouped together, and operating upon human fears are marvelously effective. When the subjects of such fears are ignorant of the fact of no relation of one event to the other, and possessed with the belief of a relation which does not exist, and are not at liberty to inquire and be advised of the truth, then apparently related events go a long way and often all the way, to accomplish things never contemplated. Results transpire and yet the possibility of their happening as a consequence never enters into the minds of those connected with the potent factors. If the inducing causes were all planned to happen at the same time, imagination would scarce conceive of the possibility of what does actually happen.

Probably no soil is more fruitful of events really without reason, than the Oriental imagination. Suspicion and insincerity, double dealing and shifting seem to prevail in every dealing of the Oriental, whether it be with an Oriental or with an Occidental. The unspeakable Turk is a character past finding out.

In one of my trips across the Atlantic it was my privilege to be a fellow-passenger with Rev. Dr. George Washburn, who, for more than twenty years was the efficient President of Robert College. He probably above any other man, has done most in educating and preparing for usefulness the youths of those different races, so to call them, who dwell within the bounds of the Turkish Empire, particularly in Turkey-in-Europe, Asia Minor and Greece. During his long residence in Constantinople he could not fail to be an observer of the kaleidoscopic succession of things that transpired about him, and his memory could not fail to be stored with many most interesting incidents. One cannot spend the length of an ocean voyage within the limited bounds of the deck of a steamship, without continually swapping incidents of one's lifetime with

fellow voyagers. Dr. Washburn and I met many times each day on our voyage, and we spent many hours in company with each other. During these hours of fellowship, he filled the time full with most interesting recollections connected with his long stay in the old capital of the Eastern Empire, now for so many centuries in the possession of the Turks. One of these incidents I now relate. I relate it as I recall the story from memory, and if I do not get it accurately it is the fault of my memory, at a distance of many months after our voyage. My interest in the story has also led me from other sources to gather other facts in the historic incident, which I have endeavored to place in their proper places.

The needs of the different races of which I have spoken, had long impressed the American missionaries in the Orient, and these needs impressed by missionaries upon their American friends not only at home but upon those who visited the East, gave birth to the project of an institution for education of the young men of those races.

The Bebek Seminary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions from about or before the year 1840, had with official permission, been maintained at Constantinople. The Crimean War was ended early in the year 1856 and Mr. Christopher R. Robert, who had been a prosperous merchant in New York then visited Constantinople as a part of the usual tour of the Orient. During his stay in that interesting city he chanced to visit the Bebek Seminary. His visit and inspection created in him an interest in the subject of the education of the Oriental youth. It was not a fleeting interest, for it continued to interest him, until in 1859 he took definite steps towards realizing the project of a college at Constantinople. Rev. Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, who had been for twenty years an instructor in and in charge of the Bebek Seminary was chosen to forward the enterprise, and retired from that work to engage in the new enterprise, and became President of the prospective college. A piece of land for the new college was purchased just out of Constantinople on the European side of the Bosphorus on the high ground above the village called Karu Chesmeh, and Dr. Hamlin started for America to secure funds for the necessary buildings. It was in the sum-

mer of 1860. Our country was then in the throes of the excitement before the Presidential election which issued in the election of Mr. Lincoln, and was succeeded by the Civil War. Proposed contributions were postponed and with the outbreak of the Civil War all present success was impossible. The minds and hearts of the American people from whom aid and sympathy had been expected, were too full of trouble at home to be persuaded to invest in or contribute to even so worthy an object, so far away and so completely away from our country. Mr. Robert was to have been one of many to contribute \$10,000 each. He increased his contribution to \$30,000 and Dr. Hamlin returned to Constantinople to start the enterprise with that which was in hand. Sultan Abdul Medjid from whom favor was hoped, died, and Abdul Aziz succeeded him. A favorite of the new Sultan owned a country house near the prospective college grounds and made known, whether with or without authority is unimportant, that his imperial master would not permit any building whatever to be erected on these grounds. A discovered difficulty in obtaining a supply of water also made the site undesirable, and the project to build there was abandoned.

Then occurred an unexpected event. An officer of the Turkish government was the owner of a fine site which he had previously refused to sell, but now in need of money he was a willing seller. It was a remarkably beautiful hillside on the height of Rumile Hassar, on the banks of the European shore of the Bosphorus, not quite half way from Stamboul to the famed village of Therapia. It was the spot which tradition indicated as the locality where Darius the Persian crossed with his army. Whether this tradition be true or not, it is always pointed out as the place of the crossing of Mohammed II, when he attacked Constantinople from the west side, and it fell, and he obtained the first Turkish lodgment in Europe. But according to Turkish law or custom the building of such an institution would require the consent or firman of the Government. It happened, as we have said, that the owner of this land was an officer in the then administration of the Sultan, and in the department through which only such a firman was to be obtained, and it was made a condition of the purchase of

the land that such firman should accompany the transfer of the title, and this officer was in a position to benefit himself by the sale of the land and the obtaining of the firman. To avoid new difficulties the negotiations were conducted and the contract signed in great secrecy, the price equal to \$8,000 only to be paid when with the payment of the price there should be delivered the official permission to build the college buildings. In due time, but not before several months of characteristic Oriental delay, the purchase was consummated, and coincident with it was delivered the necessary document authorizing the erection of the college buildings.

But as usual the end of difficulties was not yet reached. Laborers were at work, getting out the stone upon the grounds, and excavations were being made for foundations, when a government officer appeared with a statement that work had better be suspended for a short time until certain preliminaries had been arranged. It was another case of Oriental indirectness. That short time lengthened into seven long years.

There was a French Jesuit priest, the Abbe Boré, who had long been in the Orient, where he had been something of about everything, a priest, a soldier, a diplomat, and good at either of these. He had a lynx eye on everything that was Protestant. He had long wanted a hold upon a piece of land for a Jesuit Institute on that beautiful Bosphorus, but that was one of his few failures. He was not long in finding out that the project was for the building of an American Protestant College and he set about at once to thwart this Protestant enterprise. The French embassy, in those days ever quick to protect all Catholic interests in the East was of course at the bidding of the Jesuit, and the Russian ambassador was quick to follow, and both were brought in to help defeat the new enterprise. The French had no such privilege and the Russian could plead the same. It is said that the Grand Vizier and perhaps the Sultan himself was waited upon by the Ambassadors of France and of Russia to protest against the college project for teaching Turkish subjects and others in the English language, and, pretending to mistake, if not really mistaking the language for the country, complained at once, to the Sultan that undue advantage had been given to England by a permission to erect a col-

lege, when no such privilege had been given to either France or Russia. Either they were willing not to understand the true situation or they would not understand that such a concession was made to Americans and not to England. The fact of the English language was made the bugbear. Our country's flag was practically an unknown quantity, and of small account in these Eastern countries. That our country was a great country of itself had not yet impressed anybody in the Orient. The English language seemed to them to mean not more or less than England itself. The Sultan to appease them sought about for a way to do it. He was not disposed to go back on the official permission to build—at least not outwardly. It authorized the building of the institution, and he and his advisers set to work. Failing success in several ways to hurry the matter to an end the only practical oriental way seemed to be the underhand way. First came the warning to suspend work for a short time. Then the Mohammedan residents were apprised in some way of their liberty to destroy the work from time to time as it progressed, or interfere with it, and that they would not be interfered with. Of course the Russian and French representatives were glad to incite just such acts. As ground had been broken and as the work progressed raids were made upon them by the Mohammedan residents in the neighborhood, and the work as done was destroyed. And there are statements, true or untrue, that it was done over again, that it was again destroyed and that this happened time and again until there seemed to be no possible progress to be made. The Sultan either refused to interfere or in fact did not interfere, and has the credit of having abetted the whole lawless acts of destruction. And so work ceased.

But American resourcefulness follows wherever Americans go. It was not so much against the college enterprise as such, that the Jesuit priest and the Russian and French ambassadors were scheming, as it was against a Protestant educational enterprise. The Bebek Missionary Seminary had been located at the village of Bebek not far from the site purchased for the college and on the same side of the Bosphorus. For some reason the building was closed and the Seminary work removed elsewhere to Marsovan. It was the

ambition of Dr. Hamlin to begin, and he proposed to Mr. Robert to rent the building from the American Board and to start the college work. Mr. Robert arranged in America for the occupancy of the building and furnished the money for the necessary repairs and for fitting it for its new uses, and Dr. Hamlin issued his notices for the opening. The wily Jesuit priest was alert and had Dr. Hamlin accused to the Turkish officials of opening the college without the Sultan's permission, and in spite of the practical interdict which he well thought he had secured. As little law and justice as there is in Turkish rule, there seem to be some things higher than the Sultan. What we call in our country "prescription" is called in Turkey "adet," which practically means that when a right has been publicly, openly, exercised for twenty years it cannot be prevented. In practice this prescriptive right is higher than the Sultan himself. Bebek Seminary had been used as a school for more than twenty years, the subsequent interval of cessation of its work for a few years, not being of moment, and the scheme of the priest came to naught, for the Turk could not refuse respect to what was wholly Turkish law, and the right of "adet" devoted that building to education, and the college was opened and its work went on, despite the storming of Abbe Boré, and the protests of the Ambassadors of France and of Russia.

The story of these seven years of waiting is full of interesting incidents, illustrative of the wiles and corruption of Eastern diplomacy, and of Turkish intrigue, but it is too long to tell here and not necessary to the purposes of this paper. It is, however, relevant to the story to state that through the visit to Constantinople of a close friend of Mr. Seward, our Secretary of State at the time, Dr. Hamlin was enabled to place the whole story of the college matter before the Great Secretary, and in consequence thereof Mr. Seward placed the matter in such light before Blacque Bey, the Ottoman Minister at Washington, that Blacque Bey wrote his superior, the Grand Vizier, informing him of the interview and advising him that the matter of the American College had better be adusted in some way satisfactory to the American end, or it

would become sooner or later, and probably not far off, a more difficult matter to adjust.

A strange coincidence transpired at this time. Admiral Farragut had won renown in the Civil War. His name, like that of Nelson, had gone into history, and notwithstanding that America had not shown her flag on many occasions in Oriental waters, the name of Farragut had become world-renowned. The Sultan and his ministers were not ignorant of that renown. Farragut had been made an Admiral in 1866 and had been assigned to the command of the European squadron. He ought to have had with him his own ship, the Hartford, the same on the decks of which he had won his great name. There would have been a singular fitness if the great sailor-commander and his renowned ship could have gone together, for it was a great time they had everywhere. It was in the early part of 1868 that he visited European waters. His squadron consisted of the new steam frigate, the Franklin, thirty-nine guns, the steam sloop of war Canandaqua, seven guns, and Ticonderoga, nine guns, and the little Frolic, a side-wheeler of five guns, which was a captured blockade runner converted into a naval vessel. His reception in France was a great recognition of his fame. The Empress Eugenie came all the way to Cherbourg to do him honor. He was also the lion in Cronstadt and St. Petersburg and visited Moscow and Central Russia. Sweden and Norway did him honor. He visited England and the soldiers and sailors of Great Britain honored him. In Portugal and Spain their crowned heads did honor to themselves in honoring him. He sailed into the Mediterranean and at Toulon and particularly at Nice, great events greeted him. At Spezia and at Florence, Italy and her king honored him. He visited Malta and returned again to England, where even greater honors were paid him, and the Queen and the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh showed him respect and honor. His whole progress was like a triumphal march, and all Europe heard and knew of it. Again he turned into the Mediterranean and sailed to the East, and in the course of his voyage brought up at Dardanelles, near the forts which guard the entrance to the strait of that name, and sent to Constantinople for permission to come up

in his ship to that city. Permission was refused. I have heard that it is said that a second message was sent by the warrior sailor that he intended to come up with his ship anyway, and that come he would, with or without permission, but he wanted the permission. That may, however, be an Oriental exaggeration or invention, but it is quite like other incidents the Turk is familiar with. At all events the mind of the Sultan was changed, and permission was given to come up in the little Frolic, and Farragut sailed up the Dardanelles, and through the Sea of Marmora, and cast anchor in the Bosphorus off the Golden Horn. His little ship was received with the customary salutes from the shore. But the Americans at Constantinople were insistent that the big flagship, the Franklin, should also come up to the city, and application was made again to the Sultan for permission. But it was opposed by the representatives of Russia and France and Germany, who argued that it was contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Paris that so large a vessel should pass the Dardanelles. But it was recalled that an exception had been made and a precedent already established by a like favor to a Russian war ship. The Alexander Nevsky, a large frigate, with the Grand Duke Alexis, the son of the Czar, had passed those waters, and for such passage permission had been granted. But the objectors argued that that was for a royal prince. This did not silence the Americans. The American Minister, Mr. Morris, was ready, and claimed that the Admiral was a Prince of the blood, and speaking for his countrymen, that their country was a republic, and that they had no titles there, nor any Grand Dukes or princes in name, but that every citizen was a sovereign and were all of royal blood, of whom there were on the decks of the Franklin no less than 700 such princes; that the Admiral, as the Turks well knew, in his recent progress through Europe, had been received and honored in every country as a Prince of the blood, and that the crowned heads of England, Russia, France and Italy had all so honored him. The difficulty vanished and the humor of the situation won, and the Franklin sailed up to Constantinople and also cast anchor in the Bosphorus off the Golden Horn, and she, too, was received with salutes from the shore. Events were happening in the East, to make his visit

to Constantinople a matter of great moment. An insurrection in Crete was in progress and much Greek and Cretan blood flowed on that island. The sought-for independence of Crete has always been a nightmare to the Turk, for it surely would mean also the loss of all the Turkish Islands in the Archipelago. Greece has always sympathized with Crete. The Greeks in Constantinople flocked around the Admiral and spread the report that he had promised to stop at Crete as he should sail by its shores. Whether to take off Cretans or Greeks, or to give comfort to the insurgents did not matter. The report was rife and perhaps had its influence in what took place.

Constantinople distinguished itself in the courtesies and fetes that were accorded to the world-renowned Admiral and his ships and the American officers. Among other things a great feast was spread by the Grand Vizier in his honor, to which all the great names then in Constantinople were invited. At the banquet the Grand Vizier sat at the head of the table; upon his right hand was seated the great Admiral, and upon his left the American Minister to the Sublime Porte and around the table were seated the other notables. There were the Ambassadors of France, of Russia, of Germany, of England and Turkish generals and pashas and ministers, and governors, and also the lesser lights. It was intended to be a great occasion and it was one. After the feast had been disposed of, the Grand Vizier rose in his place, and, turning to the American Admiral, and for the ears of all those present, he addressed to him a grandiloquent speech after the Oriental fashion. He expressed the great honor to the great Turk in the visit of the greatest Admiral to the Capital of the Ottoman Empire, and the pleasure it had given to the Sultan, the head of Islam, to welcome the great Admiral, who had been found so worthy as to be honored by all of Europe, and the delight which they had experienced in entertaining him. It is needless to say for the purposes of the story all that the Grand Vizier said. Enough, that he made much of the occasion, much of the Admiral, and overmuch by putting himself and his Turkish Master into the hole of obligation. It became Admiral Farragut to reply to this speech of welcome, which it

is said he did most happily, though in blunt sailor fashion. An interested countryman of the Admiral (and he was glad to meet his countrymen in foreign parts) had told him the story of Robert College, but he said he could do nothing, for his visit was not a diplomatic one in any sense. In view of this banquet it was, however, suggested that he might refer to it in some way in any speech he might there make and put the question why that American College cannot be built. To which it is said the Admiral replied, "Anybody may ask a king a civil question and I am ready to do that;" and he was urged not to make reply to anything that should follow, but whoever he should meet of the high Turkish officials to ask the same question. So prepared thus beforehand, after having said the fine things that were necessary in reply to the speech of the Grand Vizier, and having said enough in recognition of the country and the countrymen of the Turkish Sultan, he spoke of his own country and of her prowess in the war recently ended, and united again what her destiny was to be, and then he simply asked, point-blank, the straight question, Why can't that American College be built at Constantinople? I have never heard that he said more. Perhaps more would have spoiled the effect.

There was more than one surprise around that table on that occasion. No one present, not even the American Minister, was a party to the speech, or the potent question of the Admiral. He, as were all others present, was utterly ignorant of any intention of the Admiral to speak those words, and to ask that sharp question. But Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizier, knew that very recently the Ottoman Minister at Washington had communicated to him a message from the American Secretary of State, brim full of meaning, concerning that very matter. The knowledge of the Grand Vizier of the previous communication from the American Government, through the Turkish Minister, led him to couple with it the present visit of the great Admiral and his warship, and according to the custom of European governments to enforce their demands upon the Sultan by sending a warship, and he seemed to have understood that the same practice had now been adopted by the American government, and that the present visit of Admiral Farragut and his

big warship was a like demonstration. It is scarcely necessary to add that the other representatives of foreign governments who had been the bottom cause of the interference with the erection of the college, were also disturbed by what had just taken place, and clearly showed it on their faces as they sat about that table. The occasion and the remarks of Admiral Farragut called for a further speech from the Grand Vizier and he again arose, and after acknowledging the compliments paid to his Turkish master, found it impossible not also to allude to the American College incident, and then proceeded, as we would say, to put his master "into a hole" by an Oriental reply concerning the incident, excusing his master from complicity with the untoward incidents of the past seven years, concerning the American College, and then proceeded in that behalf to disclose what neither the Admiral nor the others around the table knew, the representation of the American Government in the same line so recently communicated to him by the Ottoman Minister at Washington, and he finished his remarks with a promise that the Turkish government would immediately take up the matter, which he claimed involved the honor of the Sultan, and would enforce respect to the firman, and see that so beneficent a project planned by the American people for the benefit of the Sultan's subjects should go forward. To the matter of the building of the American College the Admiral had nothing further to say, but his blunt question remained to trouble the Turk. I ought to say that there is another version of this incident, to the effect that the blunt question of the Admiral was not in his speech, but was before it, and was put to a high Turkish Pasha seated at his right at the table, and in so audible a tone, that many, including the Grand Vizier himself heard it, to his great embarrassment, since he could not immediately reply and in fact every one but the Admiral was embarrassed. It matters not for the effect produced, which version was the true one.

That banquet ended and subsequent festivities continued while the Admiral and his ship remained at Constantinople. The Admiral was feted and toasted. He met the great ones of the Ottoman Government and to each in turn, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the War Minister and to the Min-

ister of the Navy, he again asked the same blunt question, "Why can't that American College be built," until it seemed as though that was the one question to all, and to the explanations of each in turn he had never a word to say, but the question was repeated again and again.

In due time he sailed away. Not long after he had gone, the college authorities were informed by the American Minister that he had received a written communication from the Grand Vizier, that the Sultan had decided that Dr. Hamlin could begin the work on the college buildings as soon as he pleased, and that an *imperial irade* would follow. This was most welcome news, for there was a familiar saying in Constantinople, that Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizier, never broke a written promise and never kept a verbal one. And follow it did, bearing the veritable signature of the Sultan himself, which was almost an unheard of act. No *irade* had ever been asked. That it was granted and the matter disposed of in that way was a mystery. I have often thought that it was quite like the Turk, in order to do a thing he did not want to do, to over-do it. To have done it in any other way would have seemed perhaps like going back on his own subjects, and so it must be done according to the common phrase "so as to save the face of the 'Turk,'" by recognizing the past in no manner, and beginning again. And it was accomplished after this fashion. Within a comparatively short time there was delivered to the President of the College a magnificent document, granted by the Sultan and bearing his own imperial signature, in effect creating Robert College a corporation recognized by the Turkish government, and granting to the corporation and to the American government practical extra territoriality as to all the lands of the college. This was a favor larger than had ever been granted by the Sultan to any organization within his dominion, or to any foreign country. It was an utter defeat to the Jesuit priest and to the Russian and to the French ambassadors in their diplomacy, which they thought was against England. It amounted to more than Robert College had ever asked, and although England, as a sovereignty or as a people was not directly involved, Englishmen could

stand by and smile at the result of the defeat of what was planned to be a defeat to her.

The result of this incident is further very interesting. The beautiful buildings of the college, against his protest called Robert College, after the name of its munificent projector, were in due time erected on that historic ground, where they look down upon the beautiful Bosphorus, and most beautiful sheet of water in Europe, with its daily procession of ships of commerce, and of the food ships of the Black Sea, on their way to help feed Europe. Its corps of professors and teachers have ever since that time been unceasingly engaged in the education in the English language and into Western, and civilized ideas and progress, those races of the subjects of the Sultan, who are not in any sense Turks, and a goodly number of Turks also and some of them of high degree, one of them, a graduate of 1904 and a son of a Dervish, is about commencing a post-graduate course at Columbia University. And curiously enough in Robert College they have been using text books written only in English. But far beyond that, the extra territoriality clause of the last document or concession granted by the Sultan has ever since been respected. The flag of our country flies there as of right. And when any alleged crime is committed in Turkey, and the criminal, as he sometimes does, flees to and secretes himself upon the lands of Robert College, no Turkish soldier or policeman ever sets his foot upon those lands in pursuit of the fugitive, until first an application is made by the Grand Vizier to the American Minister for leave to enter the college grounds, and such application is in turn submitted to the President of Robert College, and if he consents, and only if he consents, the American Minister communicates permission to the Turkish authorities, who then and only with such permisison enter the property in pursuit of their victim.

Robert College, however, is only one of the many anomalies which exist in the Turkish Empire—full of independent governments or independent agencies, international and yet not international, which exercise sovereign powers within that Empire entirely independent of interference or even observance by Turkish authority.

Just to think of a parcel of land, say one hundred acres in extent, on the bank of the Bosphorus, within less than ten miles of Constantinople, in the midst of the Ottoman Empire, being practically and to every intent and purpose an independent country—yes, a patch of soil practically American, within the Turkish dominion, and practically independent of Turkish power.

Almost as often as I have told this story, I have been asked what induced the Sultan to grant such strange and unasked for privileges and rights and immunity as to the lands of Robert College. Anyone who hears or reads this paper is quite as competent as I was to guess the reason. Naturally I did some guessing. The Turkish government authorized by firman the erection of the college buildings. When that work was commenced and he was beset by interfering foreign representatives to recall that permission, the way was not clear to the Sultan. He did not want to offset to it any new concession, and the way out of it, seemed to lie only in the underhand way by inciting the Mohammedan population of that neighborhood to pull down the buildings as they were being built, or to incite the fear that they would do so. When it reached the point of an international complication and the necessity to call them off, the Sultan was up against the proposition of going back on himself and perhaps exposing the hand of his government in secretly authorizing the lawless interference. It certainly was a sharp course to pursue, calling off all future relation to the matter by creating the land in question a part of the realm of another nation, without his own jurisdiction, and hence clear of his responsibility for whatever transpired within its limits, and any act of vandalism or destruction by his own people, would be at their own risk and done where his authority did not reach, and for which he would not have to settle with the Mohammedan mob, who might commit such a trespass. This was a mere guess. Your guess is as valuable as mine. But mine is quite in a line I think with Oriental character and the facts I have stated. How strange seem the circumstances of the visit of Admiral Farragut, without plan or purpose, to have brought about such a situation.

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3. "GEORGE CLINTON," by Col. R. E. Prime, December 15, 1902.
4. "WASHINGTON, LINCOLN AND GRANT," by Gen James Grant Wilson, April 6, 1903.
5. "EARLY NEW YORK," by Hon. Robert B. Roosevelt, January 15, 1904.
6. "THOMAS HOOKER, THE FIRST AMERICAN DEMOCRAT," by Walter Seth Logan, February 19, 1904.
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