

New London Greeks Pay Tax to Turkish Sultan

Failure to Send Tribute Regularly Means Confiscation of Property and Trouble for Their Relatives. Local Greeks Discuss Revolution.

The eyes of New London, as in common with the rest of the dwellers of the civilized world, are fixed upon Turkey, the land of harems and many taxes, where the uprising of the Young Turks against the much despised Sultan Abdul Hamid, has resulted in an upheaval in the government and the overthrow of the sultan; but there is a class of people in this city who view the kaleidoscopic happenings in the Orient with more than passing interest, a class that is vitally interested in every turn of the political wheel in that country, men to whom the uprising means dollars and cents and what is dearer to them the property and even lives of their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. This class of people is the Greeks of New London, not a class equal in numbers to the others of the foreign population, the Hebrews, Poles or Russians, but a class of respectable size and one commanding prominence because of so many of them being business men of account.

decidedly expensive and to borrow an expression of a Kentucky colonel: "damnable sir." But this state of affairs in which these Greeks, although living thousands of miles from Turkey, are subjects of the sultan is expensive for it means that residents of this city, a part of free America, must pay yearly tax to his despotic majesty the sultan of Turkey, to add to the millions of dollars that run in a flood to fill the coffers of the sultan.

Local Greeks Pay Taxes.

The Greek residents of this city and country pay taxes of amounts varying according to their conditions—that is a merchant pays more than a clerk or a laborer and the amount of the merchant's tax is regulated by the extent of his business.

"Why do these Greeks thousands of miles beyond the reach of the sultan continue to pay tribute to him?" you ask. It is not through any desire to get rid of their money, it is not through any love for the sultan, whom they hate with an intense hatred, but because they know and

fear the consequences if they fail to send their tribute to the sultan. The consequences may well be feared too. If a Greek in this country fails to pay his taxes, his property, if any he has in his former home, is confiscated, sold and the money applied against the tax; if he has no property he may have relatives and if so these relatives, innocent as children of any wrongdoing, must pay the penalty. If they have property it is sold at public auction; if they have neither property nor relatives the tax is not lost to the greedy sultan, but the amount of unpaid taxes is added to the levy and the people in the township or province are more heavily assessed to offset the loss. Thus the sultan loses not a penny of tribute. If a Greek returns to his former home for a visit, even if it is his first visit

in ten or a dozen years, and has not paid his taxes while in America, the fact is not forgotten; he is seized and obliged to pay all his back tax.

So the Greeks who were driven from the sultan's domain by continued persecution, to this country, submit to this unjust tax for they know they must or suffer the dire consequences.

The amount of the tax paid by the New London Greeks to their "beloved ruler" varies. On the average it is about \$7.50 annually. While this is not a large amount it falls hard upon many and it is particularly a burden when the sender realizes that it is a personal tax and that in return he is receiving absolutely nothing; it is barefaced robbery with the sultan hiding behind the powerful organization he has built about him to rob his subjects.

The Greek residents of this city discuss the present turn of affairs in the land of their birth with keen interest. In the loudest terms they denounce the deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid as a despot and a tyrant and in talking with The Day man they marked him with the crude but expressive name of "bad man." Out of the chaos and disorder that now reigns they fondly hope for better things, among them the remission of the personal tax they now pay; but most of them have a lurking misgiving that things in Turkey will never be much better while under a Turkish government. They have more confidence in the new sultan, Mohammed Recharad Effendi and the hope that his declaration that he is for progress and enlightenment is true. At present in Turkey education and in fact every advance and improvement of modern civilization has been prohibited by Abdul Hamid and the local Greeks hope that Mohammed Recharad Effendi will open the doors of Turkey to the enlightenment of her people.

Several of the local Greeks were interviewed by The Day representative. Some speak excellent English and could talk without an interpreter; others required an interpreter. Among the latter was one whose story was the most interesting of all because he has been in this country but three years and lived in Constantinople under Abdul Hamid under the same conditions practically as those that brought about the uprising. This man is Dimon Ballassi, who is engaged in the candy business in which, by the way, practically all of the Greeks of the city are employed, in Main street.

Ballassi Tells His Story.

Through Stavros F. Peterson of the firm of Patterson & Peterson, who kindly acted as interpreter, Ballassi told the following story: "I was born in Turkey, but went to Australia where I lived some time. From Australia I returned to Turkey and was employed in Constantinople which I left about three years ago to come to America. I like America much better. It is a free country. In Turkey everybody is taxed very heavily. The amount of the tax is fixed by the wealth and position of the man. For instance a laborer, earning about \$1 a day, would pay about \$3 a year personal tax. A merchant would pay about \$8 a year for his personal tax and all of his help would pay in proportion to their earnings.

"This personal tax is only the beginning of the tax. Everything is taxed. If a farmer raises onions he is taxed for the privilege. If he grows grapes he must first pay a tax for the permission to grow them; then if he makes wine of them he must pay a tax for that, and finally if he markets the wine he must pay a tax for the privilege of selling the wine. Thus through the unjust tax imposed by the sultan there is no profit left.

"The tax is collected by special collectors called mayors. In the Greek provinces they are Greeks and a Turk never comes except in cases of special assessment for war or some such purpose. Then he comes as a special officer to help collect the special levy. If a man has no money and can't pay the tax, or if he feels its injustice and refuses, his horses and cattle, his furniture or whatever property he has is taken away. If he doesn't pay one way he must another.

"To show how little liberty there is, if a man wants to go on a visit, like from New London to Norwich, he must get a special permit or he cannot go. They are called passports."

"Do you think these things will be better with the new sultan?" put in the reporter.

"I don't know. I hope all these things will be stopped. At present there are no telephones, no automobiles, no electric lights. The sultan will not educate his people nor let any improvements come into Turkey. They have only gas and sewers. There is electricity in two places only in Turkey and both are in Constantinople, Paris Palace, the chief hotel, and a large store there. The sultan is very wise. He knows if he educates the people it would break his power and he refuses to let anything that will educate the people come into his land. For instance, he won't let an automobile run through the streets. If anyone tries to do this he is arrested.

"Is there much cruelty?" Ballassi was asked.

"No, except in the provinces of Macedonia and Alban. All of the nationalities are protected by their consuls. The American consul there is not as good as the other consuls.

"Another tax is that for not giving

military service. The Greeks would not serve for the sultan for anything and so they have to pay a tax. It averages \$7.50 a year. A Greek would rather cut off his arm than serve in the sultan's army."

Balassi went on to say that a man has no personal liberty in Turkey. He thought America "the best country in the world," and never wanted to live again in tyrant bound Turkey. He expressed the fond hope that things will be better with the new sultan for beyond his personal tax, which he hopes will be remitted, Balassi has friends and relatives dear to him in the faraway land whose safety and comfort he dreams of.

Balassi is a diplomat and a natural politician, his local friends say, and when he masters the English language they expect to see him in the political ring. He appreciates the wonderful diplomacy and executive ability of the deposed sultan, Abdul Hamid. "He has thousands of men in his employ to carry out his orders to collect the taxes, keep order and to do the other things of his bidding. He pays them well, they get part of the money and they are for this reason loyal to him and this has prevented much trouble. He has police and secret spies by the thousand, all well paid men."

Balassi of course sympathizes with the Young Turks and admires their patriotism and courage in driving Abdul Hamid from the throne.

The majority of the other Greeks in this city left Turkey so long ago that they have but dim recollections of life there. They all pay the tax, however, and so have a first hand knowledge of the tyranny of the sultan. From friends and from relatives in Turkey they learn of the conditions there also.

John Traggis' Partner There.

John Traggis, one of the proprietors of the Boston Candy kitchen, left Turkey about 12 years ago, when a youth. He lived in Mitylene island, about 100 miles from Constantinople. His partner, Strat Stratos, is at present in Turkey. He has not written to Traggis since the uprising but Traggis expects a letter soon containing details of the revolt. Mr. Traggis pays the regular tax to the sultan and so can feel, even though thousands of miles away, the despotism.

Stavros Peterson Pays Tax.

Stavros Peterson of the firm of Patterson & Peterson, left Turkey about eight years ago. He lived in Ardek about 60 miles from Constantinople. His father still lives in Ardek and was formerly a mayor or collector of taxes. Peterson says that the tax collectors are not unpopular, as it is known that they have to collect the tax.

Mr. Peterson too pays annual tax and sends it to Turkey through his uncle, Socrates Patterson. He says that the sultan's officers have the greatest system imaginable and keep accurate track of the Greeks after they leave Turkey and come to this country. For instance after he became a member of the firm of Patterson & Peterson he was notified that as he had become a merchant he would have to pay the merchant's tax, and he does.

Mr. Peterson is intensely interested in the present uprising and hopes to see it result in a betterment of conditions especially in the remission of the foreign tax paid to Turkey by Greeks after leaving there for America and other places. Mr. Peterson says that Americans cannot appreciate the awful conditions under which people live in Turkey.

Socrates Patterson, the other member of the firm and the uncle of Mr. Peterson, left Turkey when about 20 years old. He too lived in Ardek. Mrs. Patterson was a native of Constantinople and Mr. Patterson visited there about two years ago.

John Patterson Has Visited Turkey.

John Patterson, a brother of Socrates, and manager of the candy store in the Schwaner building, has been in America since 1879, but although he has not lived in Turkey for some time he has visited there twice and on one of the visits had an experience which gave him an unpleasant acquaintance with the despotic rule of the sultan and his men. He had left the country and when the adair, which corresponds to the directory man in an American city, came around he was told that John Patterson was dead and so took the name off the list of taxables. Returning to the country on a visit Patterson was seized and told to pay the taxes that had accumulated in his absence. This he refused to do and he was thrown into prison.

Being an American citizen Patterson appealed to the American consul through a telegram. The consul came down immediately to Ardek and forced the authorities to turn Patterson over to him. Although he spent but 24 hours in jail it was not a pleasant experience, for even 24 hours in a Turkish prison is anything but bliss. Patterson was harassed by the officials and was advised to leave the country. He did, returning to this country.

Patterson in point of number of years' residence here leads all the local Greeks. He was for 12 years in the U. S. service as a man behind the guns. He was on the Brooklyn in the Spanish-American war and is proud of his service beneath the stars and stripes, saying "that he's as good a

citizen as any man in New London." He has none but condemnation for Abdul Hamid, whom he laconically termed "a very bad man." John is rather more of a pessimist than the others and even in the ascension of Mohammed Recharad Effendi he does not see much hope of better things. "The country is not good unless another power come in there," he declared with a woeful shake of the head. "They tax you for everything." "America," he said, with a wide sweep of the hand, "is the freest country in the world," and that is what all his fellow countrymen say as they rejoice at living in this freedom and prayerfully hope for better things for father, mother, brother and sister in the far off land of the Orient.

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