



Ottoman Power in Europe, Its Nature, Its Growth, and Its Decline

Edward Freeman

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From the preface:

"I SHOULD wish this little book to be taken as in some sort a companion to my lately reprinted History and Conquests of the Saracens. I there, while speaking of most of the other chief Mahometan nations, had no opportunity of speaking at all at length of the Ottoman Turks. That lack is here supplied, supplied that is in the same general way in which the whole subject of Mahometan history was treated in the earlier volume. Neither pretends to be at all a full account of any branch of the subject; in both I deal with Eastern and Mahometan affairs mainly in their reference to Western and Christian affairs. The Ottoman Turks have had, at least for some centuries past, a greater influence on Western and Christian affairs than any other Eastern and Mahometan people. Their history, from the point of view in which I look at it, is therefore the natural completion of my former subject.

But there is one wide difference between the two books, a difference wide at least in appearance, though I believe that the difference is in appearance only. In ordinary language, my former book would be said to be primarily historical; it would be called political, only secondarily and to a very small extent. My present book may be thought to be—in the eyes of those who draw a distinction between history and politics it will rightly be thought to be—political rather than historical. But between history and politics I can draw no distinction. History is the politics of the past; politics are the history of the present. The same rules of criticism apply to judging alike of distant and of recent facts. The same eternal laws of right and wrong are to be applied in forming our estimate of the actors in either case. The championship of right and the championship of wrong bear exactly the same character in any age. A Montfort and a Gladstone, a Flambard and a Beaconsfield, must stand or fall together. It shews the low view that some men take of politics that they can conceive the word only as meaning a struggle to support some and upset others among the momentary candidates for office. Men who have no higher notion of politics than this seem unable to understand that there are those who support or oppose this or that minister, because he follows or does not follow a certain line of policy, who do not follow or oppose a certain line of policy because it is or is not the policy of this or that minister. "

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