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Duke of Argyll

Our Responsibilities for Turkey

Facts and Memories of Forty Years

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OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TURKEY

FACTS AND MEMORIES OF FORTY YEARS

Duke of Argyll
K.G. K.T.

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PREFACE

My illustrious friend Mr. Gladstone and myself are the only two survivors of the Cabinet which waged the Crimean War. Political conditions have imposed on him a comparative silence on the conduct of our Government under two successive Cabinets since the outbreak of Turkish brutality in Armenia in 1894–95. These political conditions do not affect me. I cannot be suspected of any hostility to Lord Salisbury's Government, since, for the last ten years, I have worked as hard as most men to bring about the great revulsion of public feeling which that Government represents. Neither, on the other hand, can I be suspected of being influenced by political feeling from an opposite direction, because I took up the same cause and urged the same view of our responsibilities on the occasion of the Cretan Insurrection in 1867, when that view was altogether dissevered from party politics.

Under these circumstances I have felt it to be an absolute duty to make this appeal to the reason and to the conscience of my countrymen, and to support it by a short review of all that we have said and done during the last forty years to uphold and fortify the most vicious and corrupt Government now existing in the world.

As these sheets have been passing through the press, detailed accounts have been published of the circumstances attending the latest of the great massacres of 1895—namely, that at Orfa. They leave no doubt—if any doubt had remained before—of the complicity of the Turkish authorities in that butchery. That the Powers of Christian Europe should tolerate such conduct on the part of a Government which lives upon their support, and over which they hold absolute Treaty rights to protect its subjects from

such brutality, is a scandal to them. The change of policy which I recommend is one which seems to me not only certainly right, but the only one which is consistent with common sense and the most imperative moral obligations.

ARGYLL

June 1896



British Feeling and Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire Prior to the Crimean War.

The wholesale and appalling butcheries perpetrated by the Turks on the Christian population of Armenia in 1894–95 have left on the public mind a sense not only of indignation, but of shame. The people of this country feel that the practical impotence of their Government—represented by both parties in the State—either to prevent or to punish those butcheries, is a disgrace to themselves. Somehow—they hardly know exactly how or why—they have a consciousness of some heavy responsibility in the matter. Sharing, as I do, in this feeling, I write now to give it, if possible, something of that precision and direction without which it will be useless. Let us cease from party recriminations. Let us think only of what both parties have alternately said and done, during the last half-century, in the name and with the authority of the nation.

I write as an historian, as a witness, and, to some extent at least, also as a penitent. There has been a certain, more or less persistent, policy pursued by Great Britain on the 'Eastern Question,' ever since the second quarter of the present century. It has not been the policy of one Cabinet much more than of another. It has been, strictly speaking, a national policy, supported by all parties, with the exception of a few individuals, and at times embraced with passion by the great body of the people. For forty-three years I have been personally conversant with that policy in all its springs