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An Englishwoman in Angora

Grace Ellison (d.1935) was a journalist with an enthusiasm for Turkish culture. She had previously published works on life in a liberal Turkish family, and on the experiences of two modern Turkish women in Europe, which have also been reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection. In this 1923 book, she recounts what she found on revisiting Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War and the war between Turkey and Greece which had arisen after the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. Passionately pro-Turk, Ellison was dismayed at the peace treaties' punitive effect on Turkey. This work describes a journey via Athens (filled with destitute refugees) and devastated Smyrna to Angora (Ankara), the small town which was the new capital of the Turkish Republic, where she had several meetings with Mustafa Kemal, the reforming president. This is a partisan but fascinating view of the birth of modern Turkey.

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Grace Ellison
Frontmatter
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An Englishwoman in Angora

GRACE ELLISON



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AN ENGLISHWOMAN IN ANGORA

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MISS GRACE ELLISON.

The first British woman to visit Angora since the beginning of the Nationalist Movement. She has always stood for Anglo-Turkish friendship.

[Frontispiece

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**AN ENGLISHWOMAN
IN ANGORA :: :: By
GRACE ELLISON :: :: ::**

*With 34 illustrations, reproduced from the Author's
own sketches and photographs, and with a cartoon by
L. Raven Hill*

**LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO.
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TO
MY DEAR MOTHER
AND TO MY LATE FATHER,
CAPT. JOHN ELLISON,
IN LOVING MEMORY OF HIS BEAUTIFUL LIFE :
HIS EVER COURAGEOUS DEFENCE OF JUSTICE,
HONOUR, AND TRUTH.

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FOREWORD

AN ENGLISHWOMAN IN ANGORA

AT the time of writing I am the only Englishwoman who has been in Angora since the Nationalist movement began.

Others, moved by curiosity, have sought permission to visit the country under its new *régime*, but Nationalist Turkey has bidden them wait—until she is sure that her guests will write, or speak, the *truth* about what they may see, and can be trusted to forget the prejudices with which they would almost certainly arrive.

For myself, I have three times been welcomed to Turkey with open arms *on account of* my nationality. On this occasion I was still welcome, but *in spite of* my nationality—an ugly truth that my mind almost refuses to accept.

To compare impressions from these visits one must first ask: “How could such a change of attitude come to pass?”

Formerly Great Britain was *the* country of all countries that “counted” in Turkey. To be a “gentleman”—(they used the English word)—was the Turks’ highest ambition. British stuffs were chosen in preference to French, *not* because they were finer or of greater value, but simply because they were *British*. Our ideals, our policy, and, I must add, our governesses, were almost regarded as sacred in Turkish eyes.

And now I am advised, for greater safety, to travel as an American! God forbid! I stand by the old flag.

I would smile, could the tears be hidden, when I

recall the police officer who so solemnly enquired if *I was sure* I was not an American.

“Perfectly sure,” I replied.

“How then,” said he, “has that impossibility—an Englishwoman in Angora—become possible?”

“Your Government,” I answered, “has made it possible. As you have no one else here from my country, I have given myself this mission. . . . An old friend of the Turks, a woman who loves her own country! Can she not do *something* for that peace between us, which is a supreme necessity to both? That is why I am here.”

.

I do not forget that Turks were our “enemies” in the war. But they came back, beaten to the dust—and penitent. Then was the moment for us to have made our own terms. In that mood Turkey would have accepted—anything, but the *one thing* we imposed on her—the Greeks at Smyrna! That policy of sheer folly has transformed the veneration of her people into fear and distrust, if not hate.

Unjustly and unreasonably as we have behaved towards our old ally, we were not, indeed, alone in this mischievous exalting of Greek aggressions. Dare we not now own our mistake? We are great enough, and strong enough, to be generous, to mend our ways!

To-day, surely, it is the duty of English patriots to pour oil on the troubled waters, to explain to Turkey what *can* be explained, and to paint our countrymen, at least, less “black” than they have been made to seem by our rivals’ pen!

Lausanne Palace Hotel,
 Lausanne,
January, 1923.

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