

PICTURES  
FROM THE  
BALKANS

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JOHN  
FOSTER  
FRASER

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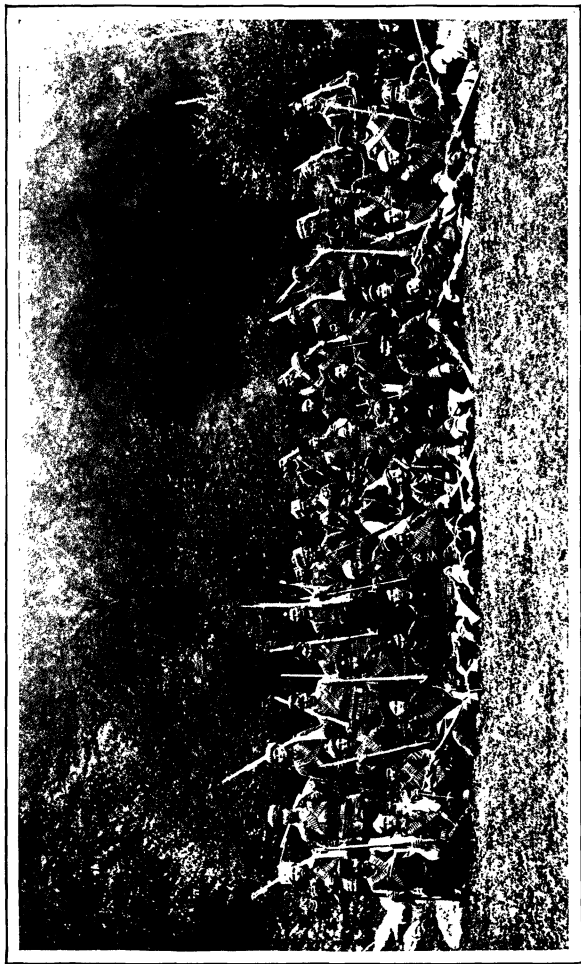












AN INSURGENT BAND OF BULGARIANS IN MACEDONIA.

# PICTURES FROM THE BALKANS

By JOHN FOSTER FRASER

With Four Full-page Plates

POPULAR EDITION

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

SIX brief years have passed since "PICTURES FROM THE BALKANS" was first published, yet in that short time much history has been made. Austria has extended her boundaries, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are now parts of her empire. Bulgaria has shaken herself free from the Turk, and her Prince is now a Tsar in his own kingdom. Turkey has known the stress of revolution, has seen one Sultan fall and another rise, and her grip on the Balkan peoples has been weakened by a desert war.

These political changes, however, have but little affected those general conditions which, in "PICTURES FROM THE BALKANS," Mr. Foster Fraser so ably described, and in issuing this popular edition the Publishers have not thought it necessary to make any alterations in the Author's graphic and far-seeing text.



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RIDING in Macedonia I passed the village of Orovsji. The inhabitants had just buried seven Bulgarians and four Turkish soldiers who had killed each other the previous day. Otherwise all was quiet.

Indeed, the Balkan peninsula was never so quiet. There were no wholesale massacres of peaceful Christians by ferocious Moslems, no fire and sword campaign by the troops of the Sultan, no batches of outrages on peasant women by devils wearing the fez. There were few incidents which newspaper correspondents at Constantinople heard of and telegraphed to London. And yet, if totals count, there were more murders in Macedonia in 1905 than during any of the years which have thrilled Christian Europe and caused worthy folk to exclaim, "Something must be done!"

The reason Macedonian methods have attracted

scant attention is because the barbarities have been scattered. A village of a dozen houses is burnt down—a common occurrence, not worthy the attention of Constantinople! A family is murdered—husband, wife, children, aged folk—shot, maybe, more likely with brains battered out, possibly with throats cut—an everyday affair!

The good Christian at home, when told, shudders, and being pious, offers a little prayer that the day may soon come when the accursed Turk will be swept out of Europe, and the sorely tried but patient Christian people of the Balkan peninsula be free to live peaceably and worship as the heart and conscience dictate. Very likely he sends a contribution to a Balkan committee to assist in the noble and patriotic work of feeding the destitute and driving the murderous Turks out of Europe.

What the worthy English Christian does not always realise, and what it is not the business of the propagandists to inform him, is that most of the murdering now going on in the Balkans is by Christians of Christians. The fact is the whole of the Balkans is infested with rival Christian “bands,” which terrorise villages and convert them from the Greek Church to the Bulgarian Church, or from the Bulgarian Church to the Greek Church, at the dagger’s point. The Turkish soldiers occasionally hunt these “bands,” and when they catch one there is some quick killing.

The situation in the Balkans has gradually entered a new phase. The Christians hate the Turk; but they hate each other more. “What are you?”



I asked an innkeeper in a village near Koritza, on the borderland of Macedonia and Albania. "Well, sir," he replied, "I find it best to be a Greek." There was a Greek "band" in the neighbouring hills.

The genuine problem before those who seek the welfare of the Balkan people is not so much to remedy the incompetence of the Turk as to find a means of checking the civil war which is beginning to rage between rival Christian Churches. The adherents of these Churches perpetrate atrocities on each other as vile and inhuman as the Turk ever perpetrated on either. The Turk meanwhile quietly chuckles. Why should he slay the Christians when they are so busily engaged in slaying one another?

The Balkans is a confused kettle of fish. The ordinary man knows there is a tangle of interests too complicated for him to understand. He does not try. In a rough way, however, he wonders why the Great Powers do not immediately come to some agreement to remove the Turk, as a ruler, out of Europe. That is what the Powers cannot do. Who shall have the Balkans when the Turk goes? The Russian has an eye on Constantinople. The Austrian has both eyes on Salonika. Russia freed Bulgaria from the Turk, meaning to use Bulgaria as a stepping-stone to the Bosphorus. Austria used Servia as a pawn to prepare the route to an Austrian port on the Ægean Sea. Both Russia and Austria were surprised and hurt that Bulgaria and Servia, instead of being grateful and subservient, began to preen themselves and dream dreams of a

Great Bulgaria, and an extension of Servia, with no interference from northern neighbours. About the same time the Greeks began to remember that Greece once extended far into the Balkan region. Then Roumania, on the other side of the Danube, startled everybody by the brilliant audacity of the claim that the Balkans was really Rouman territory.

See the welter ! The Great Powers cannot agree to clear out the Sultan. They know Russia and Austria want to annex the dispossessed region. Germany stands in the background ; she will have no part in bullying and badgering the Sultan to reform the Macedonian administration. The thankful Sultan accordingly gives Germans the most valuable concessions in the Turkish Empire. Germans grow more than ordinarily fat and wealthy. Also they can afford to smile. They know that though Austria and Russia may join France and Britain and Italy in demanding reform, reform is just the thing neither Russia nor Austria wants. It is the disturbed condition of the peninsula which gives the two countries hope that their services may be required to come in with armies to secure peace—and stay ! Germany thinks that over the little kingdom of Servia and the principality of Bulgaria Austria will reach Salonika and Russia Constantinople. Germany sees far. She hopes Austria will get to Salonika. Also she reckons that the Austrian Empire is doomed, that the German Empire must expand. She thinks she sees the not-distant day when Salonika will be a German port.

But Britain? The Christian populations in the Balkans appreciate that England has no territorial aspirations. They believe that were any of the nations to attempt annexation they would have to face British cannon. They know that Britain squeezes Turkey, sometimes very uncomfortably, to put its Macedonian house in order. They rely on Britain—if Turkey does not govern the country well, as she never will—first to secure European control of Macedonia, and ultimately to give the Macedonians independence. So the name of England is honoured. England is the one European Power which, unselfishly, and from purely humanitarian motives, will see justice is done the Macedonians.

But who are the Macedonians? You will find Bulgarians and Turks who call themselves Macedonians, you find Greek Macedonians, there are Servian Macedonians, and it is possible to find Roumanian Macedonians. You will not, however, find a single Christian Macedonian who is not a Servian, a Bulgarian, a Greek, or a Roumanian.

They all curse the Turk, and they love Macedonia. But it is Greek Macedonia, or Bulgarian Macedonia, and their eyes flame with passion, whilst their fingers seek the triggers of their guns, at the suggestion that any of the other races are Macedonian, or, indeed, anything but interlopers. In point of fact, Macedonia is little more than a name given to a tract of Turkish territory where, besides the Turks, live congeries of races, chiefly Bulgarian and Greek.

Converse with a Roumanian consul, say at

Monastir. "True, these people talk Bulgarian or Greek," he says; "but they are really Roumanian, though they don't know it. Therefore, when Macedonia is freed from the Turk, its natural and proper ruler is Roumania." Interview a Servian. "Before the coming of the Turks," says he, "the Servian Empire stretched south to the sea." Seek the views of a Bulgarian. "It is obvious," he tells you, "that practically all Macedonia is filled with Bulgarians. They speak Bulgarian, and are adherents of the Bulgarian Church. Many people who speak Greek and are Orthodox have been coerced; but they are Bulgarian. Macedonia is the rightful heritage of Bulgaria." "Nothing of the kind," retorts the Greek; "the Bulgarians are schismatics, and are not even entitled to the name of Christian. They compel villages by threats to renounce the Orthodox Church, and then they are reckoned Bulgarian. Bah on the butchers!"

It is this race animosity, nurtured by politicians and egged on by the priests in the name of Christianity, which is putting an obstacle in the way of the Powers doing much to remedy the condition of the country, and would do so even were they united and possessed of the best intentions in the world. The misrule of the Turk is bad enough. But to hand over Macedonia to the Christians of Macedonia to work out their own salvation would be to plunge the country into direst bloodshed. The rivals are afflicted with land hunger. That we can appreciate, especially as the claimants bring forward plausible reasons. The regrettable thing is

that the war of extermination waged by Christians upon Christians is unconsciously fostered by well-meaning but ignorant Christians in other parts of the world.

Among the Balkan races the Bulgarians are undoubtedly the sturdiest, most industrious, best fitted for self-government. What they have done with Bulgaria, since the Turks were driven out of their land, is deserving of respect and admiration. When the Bulgarian frontier was fixed it should have been drawn much further to the south and west than it is, and have included districts, undoubtedly Bulgarian, which were unfortunately left in the Turkish Empire. Bulgaria, especially since it realised its potentialities as a nation, has smarted under the limitation. A considerable section of the Bulgarians is working for a "Greater Bulgaria." But this laudable ambition has run wild, and is the cause of much of the existing unhappy strife.

Understanding that when Concerted Europe should be sick of endeavouring to badger or kick the Turk into improving his methods of government, autonomy would probably be given to Macedonia, the Bulgarians began to arrange so that, at the proper moment, Macedonia should fall like a ripe plum into the mouth of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Committees, safely ensconced in Sofia, organised the notorious "bands," not only to retaliate upon the Turk and guard Bulgarian villages from Turkish depredations, but also to further the Bulgarian propaganda in those parts of Macedonia which were not quite sure. Be

it remembered that when Bulgaria broke away from the Greek Orthodox Church, numerous villages in Macedonia did likewise, and appropriated to themselves the Greek churches. But there were and are many villages of Bulgarian-speaking peasants who did not secede from the Greek Church, but who—after the manner of the Balkans—are called Greeks, though they do not know a word of Greek. Further, there are Greek-speaking peasants who call themselves Bulgarians because—living probably in districts where the real Bulgarians predominate—they have succumbed to local religious influences.

The men composing the Bulgarian “bands” are courageous fellows. They undergo many hardships in the mountains. They risk their lives in the Bulgarian cause. But they are playing at revolution, and when they lose a point in the game and are caught by the Turks and slain, and their heads thrown into saddle-bags, so that Turkish soldiers may give proof they have earned reward for killing brigands, it is for their friends to regret their loss, but not to rail at the barbarity of the Turk.

Here were the methods invented and pursued by the Bulgarian “bands.” They visited the Bulgarian villages, levied contributions, and stored arms, so that on an appointed day there might be a rising against the Turk, and Bulgarian Macedonians be liberated from their oppressors for ever. Naturally they were greeted as heroes; food was willingly found for them. Most of the industrious peasants living under the eye of the Turk knew where the rifles were stored, and were sworn to join the re-

volution when the signal was given. But there were Bulgarian villages which—maybe not knowing better—were content with their lot, lived in amity with their Turkish neighbours, had no national aspirations, and, what is more important, dreaded any trafficking with the “bands,” which would lead to terrible reprisals by the Turks.

And the Turk is a bungler in administering punishment. His spies inform him when a village is the headquarters of a “band.” He sets out to capture the revolutionists. He rarely does so, however, for the “bandsmen” also have their spies, are warned of the coming of the troops, and are off to the fastnesses of the hills before the Turks appear. The soldiers do not follow. They proceed, on the usual Asiatic lines, to punish the village. They shoot, they burn houses, they commit rapine. So the innocent and the least guilty suffer while the revolutionists escape. If the “punishment” is severe, Constantinople in time hears of it, very likely in a grossly exaggerated form, and we read over our breakfast of a wanton and unprovoked attack by Turkish soldiers on a peaceful Bulgarian village, guilty of no other crime than that of being Christian!

Now it is occasionally forgotten that half the population of Macedonia is Moslem and Turk. The Turkish peasant is just as good and industrious a fellow as the Christian. He has to give the “blood-tax” in serving as a soldier, which the Christian has not, and the bloodsuckers of Turkish officials oppress him quite as much as they oppress the Christian. He has no foreign consul willing to

listen to his tale of woe, and no Orthodox or Exarchist bishop to carry a complaint to higher officials. On the whole he accepts his fate resignedly, taking it as part of the order of things that he should be ill-treated, just as his neighbour the Christian, after four centuries of Turkish authority, is sometimes disposed to take the exactions of the tax-gatherer as part of the scheme of life. And because it is characteristic of human nature for us to open our ears to tales of tragedy, and be heedless of quiet contentment, we are occasionally disposed to ignore the hundreds of Moslem and Christian villages in Macedonia, all subject to Turkish misrule, which, as between themselves, have no animosity whatever. Indeed, I have been in many a Macedonian village where Turk and Christian trade and deal and live side by side in perfect accord.

Take the case of a Bulgarian village which has no desire to be mixed up with the "patriotic" movement. Those who resist are generally one or two men of character. If they do not yield to the demands of the "band," and all the rest of the male inhabitants swear to join the revolution, it is not unlikely that some morning a couple of resisters, or maybe three, will be found dead. After that the village is submissive.

But the methods of the Bulgarian "bands" went further. They terrorised Bulgarian villages belonging to the Orthodox Church, and therefore deemed Greek, into renouncing the Greek Church and becoming Exarchist and Bulgarian. For in the Balkans race and speech count for nothing in



nationality. Nationality is decided by the Church to which you belong. It is much as though a London-born Roman Catholic were called and counted an Irishman, or a Presbyterian in New York, though his ancestors came from Germany, were called and counted a Scotsman. The plan of campaign on the part of the "bands" was to make Macedonia Bulgarian. In furtherance of this they took to "converting" villages that were not only Greek in religion but Greek in speech and race.

The Greek nation, with memory of Hellenic influence stretching far into the Balkans—with hundreds of Greek villages penetrating half through Macedonia, till they mingle with Bulgarian villages and then disappear—resented the methods of the Bulgarian "bands." If there was to be any division of Macedonia, Greece was entitled to the larger share. Accordingly, Greek "bands" appeared to check the propaganda of the Bulgarian "bands." What amounted to civil war began. Greek "bands" adopted the methods of the Bulgarian "bands." Greek-speaking villages which had adopted the Bulgarian Church were obliged to renounce their religion, and become Greeks proper, or have their houses burnt, or worse. The villagers, who would like to be left in peace, yielded, and instead of Bulgarians became Greeks. When the Greek "band" withdrew, down came the Bulgarian "band" to "re-convert" the village and make the inhabitant Bulgarians again. Thereupon the Greek "band" cut a few throats and

fired a few houses just to remind the peasants they must be Greeks or be killed. The Greeks invaded Bulgarian villages—Bulgarian in race, speech, and religion—and, with murder, compelled a conversion to the Orthodox Greek Church. The bishops and priests of the Greek Church not only countenanced but urged crime as a means of compelling Bulgarian Macedonians to proclaim themselves Greeks. What think you of a letter written by a Greek bishop advising a “band” to warn a village that if it is not converted all the Bulgarian houses will be burnt; and on the top of the notepaper the emblem of the Christian faith!

The Bulgarian “bands” are excused on the ground that they are necessary to protect Bulgarian villages from indignities at the hands of the Greeks, and the Greeks say that their “bands” are only to frighten off the Bulgarians from molesting Greek villages. Both races believe they are engaged in a high patriotic mission. They will not listen to reason. They regard the others as vermin deserving only extermination. So the burning of houses, the murder of partisans, is proceeding apace in a more flagrant manner than during the times of Turkish atrocities.

What impressed me two or three times a day as I wandered through that wild and bloodstained land was that the bitterness against the Turk was, even among the Bulgarians, not so ardent as it was two or three years ago. The explanation is that the Turks, except when “punishing” a village for harbouring “brigands,” have been comparatively

guiltless of violence. This is not because the leopard has changed his spots. It is because the Turk knows he is being watched by the European officers who have been introduced to assist in the reform of the Gendarmerie: the British at Drama, the French at Seres, the Russians at Salonika, the Italians at Monastir, the Austrians at Uskup. Individual officers are stationed in particular districts, and few are beyond three days' horse-journey from any point of outrage, where they can make personal inquiry. Therefore the Turk is behaving himself, and the country is comparatively quiet.

Yet the murders and the burnings as between Christians continue. They are not made much of to the outer world by the rivals, because they dread the alienation of Western European sympathy, and do not want to be interfered with in their reprisals. It is only in quiet conversation you get the brutal truth.

This was said to me by one of the Bulgarian leaders in Sofia: "We intend to make every village in Macedonia a centre of revolution. If there are any, Greeks or Bulgarians, who check us, they must be removed in the interests of Macedonian independence. The time for argument is gone. We shall run no risk from traitors. At the proper time the country will rise *en masse* against the Turk."

"But what chance," I asked, "will your peasants have against trained Turkish soldiers? You know what the Turkish soldier is when let loose. The country will welter in massacre."

“We know it, we know it!” was the quick exclamation in reply. “We want a big massacre! It is the price we shall have to pay. We shall provoke the Turk into such a massacre that Europe will—must—intervene. I do not expect anything from your Reform movements, or Boards of Financial Control. The Turk plays with you and defeats you every time. I know Europe is getting sick of the Macedonian muddle. But Europe has got to be stirred. The only thing to stir it to interfere and take Macedonia from Turkey will be a great massacre of Christians. That is the way by which Macedonia will get its liberation.”

Horrible words! Spoken by a revolutionary leader, a man whose name is well known in England and America to the more prominent sympathisers with the Macedonian movement.

Another phase of the situation. Servian “bands,” and, I believe, even Roumanian “bands,” have appeared in Macedonia, ostensibly to save Serb and Roumanian villages from “conversion” to Bulgar or Hellenic nationality. And while the Bulgarian “bands” are the more numerous—figures are difficult to obtain, but I think about 7,000 “bandsmen” were in the hills last summer—they have not been so active with their propaganda as the Greeks. They received orders from Sofia to “go gently!” If Western Europe and America knew how Christians were waging war on Christians the clock of Macedonian freedom would be put far back. Accordingly the Bulgarians have not been so energetic as the Greeks.

If one must balance criminality, the weight of horrors now rests with the Greeks. And I am within the mark in saying that the Turkish authorities wink at the doings of the Greek "bands." The Turk abets the weaker party and helps Greek propaganda, not because he loves the Greeks, but because he wants—and this is the blunt truth—to let the rival parties get more equal in numbers, to provoke reprisals, and let the mutual murdering by the Infidels proceed. I saw constant evidence of this. Whilst the Bulgarian "bands" are hunted by the Turkish soldiers, the Greek "bands" are now left alone.

Further, in all mixed Christian villages where there is strife, whether the Church is Greek Orthodox or Bulgarian Exarchist, the Turk aids the Greek. In many a village where the Church was originally Orthodox, but became Exarchist when the Bulgarians renounced the authority of the Greek Church, the Turk by his authority has handed church, schools, and revenues to the Greek minority. The consequence is that to-day you can hardly meet a Greek who will not tell you the Turk is doing the right thing by seeing that Christian property is restored to the legitimate owners. The Greek fails to perceive that the whole proceeding is part of a scheme to keep the Christians at enmity.

As things are, the misrule of the Turk is preferable to the condition of affairs that would be inevitable if the races in Macedonia were given their freedom. That the Turk is impossible as a ruler is a truism. That all the tinkering at reform will end in

nothing is recognised by everybody who has any direct acquaintance with the Balkans. The Turk, fine fellow as he is personally, cannot, in governing, conceive the right way to do a thing, and even when it is pointed out to him, he is content to do it in the wrong way.

But there can be no genuine and lasting amelioration in the Balkans till the Revolutionary Committees in Sofia and Athens understand that the desire of the outer world is not to aid Bulgarian or Greek aspirations, but to save Christians, of whatever Church, from injustice. If there is to be outrage in the Balkans, let it not be between the Christians themselves.

Many students of the Balkan problem are plunged in pessimism as to any solution being possible. I am not without hope, though I am quite certain that pricking the Sultan will not lead to anything beneficial. The idea that Macedonia may become peaceful under the Turk may be put on one side. The Macedonians themselves, being quite unfitted for self-government, must consent—and they will consent if Great Britain, whose impartiality is recognised by all the Balkan States, gives the lead—to efficient European control by the representatives of all the Powers. Bulgaria, Greece, Servia, and Roumania ought to be given to understand that they need expect no territorial acquisitions, that Macedonia is a state unto itself. “Bands” and propagandists, whoever they are, must be repressed in the sternest manner.

Then Macedonia will have an opportunity to

develop; and in that development and consequent prosperity I have some hope that in years to come the inhabitants will think less of their Turkish, Bulgarian, or Greek origin and a great deal more of the fact that they are all Macedonians. And then only can self-government be conceded to Macedonia. Behind that, however, I have hopes there may be a Confederation of the Balkan States, with the remainder of European Turkey as part of the Confederation. So long as there are half a dozen little nations open to attack by powerful neighbours, the Balkans will continue to be a region of unrest. A Confederation of the States for defensive purposes would, however, not only count for mutual prosperity, but would remove the cause of the bad dreams from which European statesmen often suffer.

## CHAPTER II.

### BELGRADE.

A Russian Town made Clean—Military Officers—The Mark of a Crime—Rival Dynasties, Obrenovitch and Karageorgovitch—King Milan—King Alexander and Queen Draga—Austria's Hand in the Plot—Breaking into the Palace—The Search for the King and Queen—A Woman's Shriek—Murder of the Queen's Brothers, of Ministers and Officials—Where the King and Queen were Buried—Indignation of the Powers—The Servian People not Responsible for the Crime—Plot and Counterplot—The Serbs a Nation of Peasants—The National Garb Dying Out.

WHEN you have got south of the Danube, crossed the sprawling Save, left Hungary and its swarthy Magyars behind, you feel, despite the testimony of your map, that you have stepped out of Europe into Asia.

Yet Belgrade, high-perched, and turning the eye of its citadel toward the twin and quarrelsome empire of Austria-Hungary—the wolf which constantly frightens little Servia that it is going to be gobbled up, only the other wolf, Russia, also hungry, is showing its teeth—is not at all Asiatic in appearance. It is bright and white, broad-streeted, and clean, wide-spreading. The people are Slav, fair, bony, not well-set; but occasionally you note a tinge in the skin, a cast of the eye, a thinness of the nostrils which tell of splashes of Tartar, Magyar, even Turkish blood.

Belgrade, however, is European—outwardly. It looks like a Russian town made clean. Had I been



borne from Paris to Belgrade by the agency of the magic carpet instead of by the service of the Orient Express, I should have concluded I was in a Russian city where the scavengers had been busy, and the citizens had profited by lectures on sanitation and the advantages of whitewash. Not that Belgrade is devoid of odour. In the lower town it breathes upon you—the soft, rather quaint smell which greets you in the East, maybe antiseptic, possibly decayed Turk, and certainly flavoured with defective drainage. Within easy memory Belgrade was a Turkish town. Slobberly Turkish soldiers and wheezy Turkish guns looked over the citadel and ramparts. But the Turk has gone, save a few decrepit old men who sit in the cellars of the lower town, puff their narghilis, slither to the little mosque, as shaky as themselves, kneel on the ragged carpets and worship Allah, slither back again to their narghilis, and philosophically resign themselves to kismet.

The Servians have rebuilt their capital. Evidence of the Turkish occupation is removed. Electric tramcars whiz along the streets; the electric light blinks at you as, in the dusk of a sultry day, you sit beneath the limes and sip Turkish coffee—the one legacy of the Turkish occupation the Servians accept. The smart German waiter at your hotel has learnt English at your favourite restaurant in London, and the price charged for a second-rate bedroom is the same as that at Ritz's or the Savoy. Belgrade is doing its best to acquire European habits.

There is never a moment in the streets when the

eye can escape a military officer. The officers are as handsome, as well-set, and carry themselves with as jaunty a bearing as any in Europe. They are neat and well groomed; their garb—peaked caps, close-fitting and spotless white tunics, and crimson trousers—is distinctive. I did hear Servians complain that their officers are fonder of the card table and the café than of military study. When I saw the officers of a cavalry regiment give a display before King Peter I was surprised such fine fellows on such excellent horses should ride so badly.

It is permitted to young officers all the world over to have a little swagger of demeanour. In Belgrade you notice that the extra swagger is with those who wear on the breast an enamelled Maltese cross with golden rays between. That is the first signal you get—notwithstanding the up-to-dateness of Belgrade in aspect and attire—that you are among a people who do things the rest of Europe could not do. The medal is the acknowledgment by King Peter to those soldiers who took part in the bloody assassination of King Alexander and his consort Draga on that dread night in June, 1903. The officers are proud of the barbarous deed. They have a lighter, brisker step than those who have no such medal. You are startled at the number of officers who wear it. Yet I never saw it worn anywhere outside Belgrade. The explanation is that King Peter keeps near him the regiments which betrayed Alexander and placed Peter on the throne of Servia—a very unstable throne. Other regiments, not implicated in the conspiracy, possibly resenting the

disgrace brought upon their country, have been carefully distributed throughout Servia. The danger of concerted retaliation is small.

That tragedy was one of the blood marks in a long, wretched royal vendetta, the end of which is not yet. The story of it all is like an historical novel, with more than the usual amount of plotting, counter-plotting, daring deeds, dark crimes, and the love of women. Servia has had much buffeting. At the time England was settling down under the Norman Conquest, the Serbs, tribes which in unknown times had wandered to the Balkan Peninsula from the Ural Mountains, coalesced, and the Servian empire arose. Afterwards came the Turk. The resistance was valiant, but the Serbs were crushed. The Ottoman pressed on, crossed the Danube, and advanced toward Vienna itself. Later came the pushing back of the Turk. He was forced below the Danube, and Servia was the buffer which bore many blows whilst the Moslem, fighting hard, backed Asia-wards. In time, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Serbs themselves rose against their Turkish masters. The great leader was Karageorge (Black George), a swineherd say some, a brigand say others, a brave man certainly. One of his aids, another brave man, was Obren. Karageorge, after long struggle against the Turks, lost heart and retired to Hungary. Obren continued the resistance and broke the power of Turkey. He became king. He was the founder of the Obrenovitch dynasty, of which the murdered Alexander was a son. Karageorge desired the crown. Obren refused. Then the vendetta

began. The Obrenovitch dynasty was overthrown. The Karageorgovitch dynasty began.

And for a century Serbia has been a hotbed of conspiracy between the rival houses. Murder has provided the step to the throne. Though Milan Obrenovitch, father of Alexander, was the darling of the soldiery, because he cut the last thread which bound Serbia in vassalage to Turkey, and made Serbia an independent kingdom, he only reached the throne by murder. He was a dominating personality, but he had the morals of a Tartar chief, and his treatment of his beautiful Queen Natalie—now living quietly in the Riviera mourning her murdered son—made him the disgrace of Europe. He lost favour with the Servian people. Probably fearing the assassin's bullet, he abdicated in favour of his son Alexander, a mere boy, and retired to his amours in Vienna and Paris.

Alexander had much of his father in him. That he was boorish and unintelligent is untrue. But when he reached the full power of kingship he showed a stubbornness that was the despair of those about him. He was quick in understanding, had almost genius for reaching the root of a matter. But advice and argument were things he never heeded. He displayed what was almost a madman's eccentricity in his thorough enjoyment of upsetting Government plans. He would acquiesce in a Ministerial proposal, and then begin plotting to upset it. He regarded the discomfiture of his Ministers with unfeigned delight. There were two Houses of Parliament—the Senate, and the House of Representa-

tives. When he found the Senate opposed to his will, he rose one morning, abolished it, reverted to a Constitution of ten years before, and appointed another and obedient Senate—all in about half an hour. That sort of conduct he considered clever. But it aroused bad thoughts in the country.

Then came Draga. She was the widow of a Belgrade official—a beautiful woman, with soft and captivating eyes, an excellent conversationalist; she had all the personal qualities which fascinate men. When she was thirty-two and Alexander was eighteen she became his mistress. The relationship was quite open. That Alexander had the deepest and most sincere affection for Draga is undoubted. Her influence over him was tremendous. She was the only person in the world who exercised power over the King's actions. And though, according to the moral standpoint, the relationship was bad, Draga's influence was good. Alexander was too headstrong to care whether he was personally popular. Draga did her best to restrain the King's immoderate conduct. Her power in the Court was great, though probably not so great as generally thought. Endeavours were made to estrange the King from Draga. Even the Oriental method of bringing young and sprightly actresses before him was adopted. It was no good. Alexander would look at no other woman than Draga. His friends in the European courts thought the *liaison* would stop on the King's marriage to a princess—a necessary proceeding, for Alexander was the last of the Obrenovitch line. It was possible to find him a bride among the German

princesses. Would he agree? Yes; and he left the details to be arranged by his father, the exiled Milan, and the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. A suitable German princess was found, all the purely personal arrangements were made, the time arrived for the announcement to be made to the world. Then, as usual, Alexander fooled everybody. He married Draga.

The Serbs, who did not concern themselves much so long as the woman was only the King's mistress, felt they had been slapped in the face. There were the customary stories, that Queen Draga was little other than a strumpet, that she had been the mistress of other men before she met King Alexander: stories most likely untrue, but not unnatural among a people who smarted under insult. She was hated. Nothing the King did unwisely but Queen Draga was always seen behind the action.

Draga was a woman as well as a queen. She had old scores to pay off in regard to other women who held their skirts on one side in former days. There was the snubbing of women against whom there was no scandal. Draga's two brothers were given high places in the army, and they, presuming too much on their relationship with the Queen, were unpopular with their brother officers. Draga was an ambitious woman. She desired that one of her own blood should ultimately succeed Alexander as king. The news spread that Draga was about to present Alexander with an heir. A great Paris specialist was brought to Belgrade and said it was so. Then rumour got to work. It reached the Austrian Court.

The Emperor Francis Joseph wanted definite information. Two great Viennese specialists were sent to Belgrade. They reported that not only was it not so, but it was a physical impossibility. The mystery has never been cleared up, but the belief in Belgrade is that Queen Draga was in collusion with her married sister, and hoped to introduce to the Serbs a baby nephew as the son of King Alexander. No wonder, with this story-book proceeding taking place in their midst, the people of Servia were beginning to seethe with indignation against Alexander and Draga. Servia had had enough of them. They must be got rid of. But the Serb people contemplated nothing more drastic than exile.

Meanwhile there was living on the banks of Lake Geneva, very modestly, Prince Peter Karageorgovitch, the claimant of the Servian throne for the rival dynasty. He was a widower with two sons and a daughter. His wife had been a daughter of Prince Nicholas of Montenegro. When she died Prince Nicholas stopped the payment of the income from her dowry. So Prince Peter Karageorgovitch lived quietly.

There was an anti-Obrenovitch party in Servia, working secretly for the overthrow of the ruling dynasty and the re-establishment of the Karageorgovitches. When you talk to men in Belgrade you hear that Austria found much of the money for subterranean propaganda, and then you are told in a whisper—for once you get below the surface in Belgrade you breathe conspiracy—that Austria's motive was not simply to provide Servia with a more

promising sovereign, but really to cause disruption in the state, bring about civil war, give Austria an excuse in the sacred name of peace to intervene, to pour her troops into Serbia—and to keep them there.

Then came the deed of June 10th, 1903. There had been a family supper party at the Palace. Midnight had gone, and the King and Queen had retired to bed. All was still. Then uproar. A couple of regiments hurried through the streets of Belgrade. Heavy guns rattled, and soldiers were supplied with ammunition. "The King is in danger," the soldiers were told—which indeed he was, though the troops did not know what part they were to play. The Palace, all in darkness, was surrounded. A signal was given. The traitor within the walls should have unbolted the doors. No response. It was given again. No response. Curses, but no time to be lost. Conspirator officers crashed the door. The traitor who was to have given entrance was in the lethargy of intoxication. His brains were blown out.

To the room of Alexander and Draga! All was turmoil. An aide-de-camp of the King appeared affrightedly. To the royal apartment! He refused. He was shot dead. The bedroom was reached; the lock was broken. The bed had been occupied, but the King and Queen were gone. They must be found. Minutes were valuable. The town would soon be roused; the police would be summoned; regiments a mile outside Belgrade would arrive. Then the conspirators would be shot down like dogs. They searched eagerly, ravenous for



blood; but in vain. They found another aide-de-camp. He knew nothing of the flight of the King and Queen. Revolver at his head, he was directed to lead the search. He led to a little room where was the electric light installation. With his foot he smashed the connection. There was black gloom. Matches were struck, and death was the payment for that kick.

Stricken with dismay at the miscarriage of their plans, the conspirators groped their way to the servants' quarters. They got candles. Hurry! or their lives would be forfeit for the wild endeavour of the night. The Palace was searched. Gone! Frenzy struck the conspirators. They fired their revolvers into every cranny.

And the town was aroused. The police dashed up. Rifle shots and ranged cannon drove them back. News of the revolution reached the troops beyond the town. Officers spurred up, were met and were killed. The troops before the Palace began to murmur, to waver. Let the other troops come up and there would be war in the streets. "In the name of Christ, hurry!" was the blasphemous cry of the conspirators outside. Enraged, maddened, distraught with terror at the miscarriage of their designs, the conspirators inside the Palace pursued their search. They fired at random, and into walls. A bullet pierced a thin lath partition. There was the shriek of a woman. "By God, we've found them!" It was a cupboard where Draga's gowns were kept. The door was broken open

There, in the flicker of candle light, stood the

King and Queen, pale to ashen hue. But one moment they looked on their hunters. Alexander stepped in front of Draga to protect her. It was only for an instant. They sank beneath the bullets. The animals, not content with the death of their quarry, slashed the dead with their sabres—horrible, awful mutilations.

“Hurry up, for Christ’s sake, hurry up!” was the cry. The troops beyond the gates were on the point of revolt. The window was raised. “It is all over,” was the reply. “Prove it; let us see!” Then, in the dark of the night, with no light but the uncertain flicker of the candles, two figures, ghastly and blood-smeared, were flung from the first storey window into the grounds below. The revolution was accomplished. In an ugly, half-naked heap lay the last of the House of Obrenovitch.

But the gory work of the night was not yet ended. The house where Draga’s two brothers lived was surrounded. When told of their fate, all they asked was a cigarette and a glass of water. They drank the water, and whilst smoking their cigarettes they were shot. Other detachments visited the houses of the Prime Minister, the Minister for War, and officials who might exercise authority against the revolutionaries. They were murdered, some before their wives and little children. Between thirty and forty lives were claimed in those awful two hours.

The work, however, was done. The Revolution was complete. There was now time for the officers

to drink wine and display their bloodstained swords to the women in houses of ill-fame.

The conspirators promenaded the streets of Belgrade to-day with wives and sisters on their arms; they make lowly obeisance before the altars of the Servian Church; they are merry and happy beneath the trees, where they sip their coffee and listen to the lustful music of the Tzigane bands. And they are proud of the white enamelled cross, with the golden rays, that they wear above their hearts.

I visited the place where the dead King Alexander, aged twenty-six, and the dead Queen Draga, aged forty, were unceremoniously tossed to burial with none so merciful to say a prayer for the peace of their souls. In the dawn, and conveyed in a common cart, they were buried behind the door of the little church of St. Mark in the old cemetery. A couple of rough wooden crosses lean against the wall. On one is painted "*Alexander Obrenovitch*," and on the other is "*Draga Obrenovitch*." That is all. Some day, maybe, they will be buried with the circumstance befitting their rank, and with charity towards the frailties of their humanity.

Europe was rightly indignant with Servia for this the latest crime to blacken its annals. All the foreign Ministers were withdrawn as a mark of disapproval. But when Prince Peter hastened to Belgrade to secure the kingship, and be crowned with an iron crown made from part of the first cannon his ancestor Karageorge directed against the Turks, the Russian and Austrian and the other

European Ministers came trooping back to bow the knee to King Peter. Only Great Britain held aloof. The Ministers told the Court they would not attend a New Year celebration if the conspirators were allowed to be present. The Court salaamed and were very sorry, but the officers who took part in the Revolution could not be excluded. So the Ministers left again. In a week or two the Russian Minister was back. Austria, fearing its rival might secure the diplomatic upper hand, sent her Minister also, post haste. Then came the German Minister and the rest. Still the British Government held aloof. The Serbs laughed. "You," they said to the Ministers, "come here to squeeze advantages from Servia. Only Britain has acted consistently."

In their hearts the Serbs admire England for refusing to recognise King Peter. But they regret it, and nobody feels more hurt than King Peter himself. He is a kindly man, but he feels an outcast among kings. Neither he nor the Crown Prince has caught the favour of the populace. The King lacks tact, and sometimes fails to do the things which touch the popular fancy. When he drives through the city, officials turn into shops or down by-streets rather than salute him. As for the crowd, there is no cheering, and seldom the raising of hats.

Do the Servian people approve of the drastic means by which Alexander and Draga were removed? I am positive they do not. It is true, they wanted to get rid of Alexander and Draga.

but their thoughts did not travel beyond exile. It was the Army, and only a section of the Army, which conspired to free Serbia by murder. Then why did not the Serbs rise, repudiate the conspirators and the new king? Because the Serbs, whilst having a warm love for their land, have a touch of the Asiatic, shrug-shoulder acceptance of facts. Alexander and Draga were dead. Another revolt would not bring them again to life. Besides, they were not deserving of tears. A king was wanted. Why not Peter Karageorgovitch, who was a Serb, and the descendant of their national hero? And what would civil war mean? Much bloodshed undoubtedly. Worse, for already Austrian troops were massing north of the Danube ready to invade Serbia to restore order. The Austrians would come to stay, and the days of Serbia as a nation would be gone. That was the real factor which guided the Serbs in their acquiescence in the new order of things. They felt and feel that their country stands disgraced in the eyes of the world. But that is not so bad as becoming an Austrian province.

Get below the surface of things in Belgrade and you hit conspiracy at every point. You hear of a movement to place the conspirators, the King included, on their trial, and let the lot be shot. You hear of a movement to bring an illegitimate son of King Milan to the throne. There are raisings of the eyebrows; that would be restoring the Obrenovitches, and the last was supposed to die with Alexander. You hear of the country repudiating all Obrenovitches and all Karageorgovitches

because they have made Servia a land of vendetta. You hear of a movement to offer the throne to a Montenegrin prince who would come with clean record and yet be of Serb blood. Sometimes envious eyes are cast across the frontier where Bulgaria has made such strides under a foreign prince. But the Serbs are a proud people; they would chafe under the idea of a foreigner being their king. So that possibility is only mentioned to be dismissed.

The Serbs are democratic. They have no nobility. Of rich men, such as we of the West understand by the expression, they have none. Country estates do not exist. I doubt if in all Servia, with its three millions of population, there are half a dozen private houses in which a dinner party could be given to twenty people. One of the characteristics of Belgrade is the smallness of the residences. They are neat, clean, have gardens, and tell the story of general, frugal comfort. The servant question has extended to Servia. A Serb, man or woman, thinks it degrading to be in service to someone else. So in the hotels servants usually are German, whilst in the private houses the womenfolk attend to the needs of their families. The consequence is that the Serb, though good-natured, is little given to entertaining. Occasionally a big supper is provided at the Palace, and everybody who is anybody—eight hundred out of a population of about seventy thousand—is invited. So unused is the Serb to this kind of entertainment that he scrambles for the cigarettes,

pockets dainties for friends at home, and has been known to leave with a bottle of wine under each axter. Usually he dines with his friends at the café, spends a merry, laughing hour, and goes to bed early. I have walked along the main street of Belgrade at ten o'clock at night and not encountered a soul.

The nature of a race is not altered with a change of clothes. And although Belgrade looks European, the Serb is still the peasant of a hundred years ago, with peasant tastes, peasant virtues; he is simple-mannered, kind, sentimental, and yet with a smouldering fire in his heart, the result of centuries of oppression and struggle and fight—a fire which, when it bursts into flame, shows that the Serb has much of the blind fury of the savage.

There is a little picture gallery in Belgrade, where are a few good pictures and many indifferent. But there are some on view which, from their subject, would be excluded from any Western gallery. They are very "bluggy" pictures. The place of honour is given to a big canvas representing a grey ledge of rock in the Albanian mountains where an Albanian has been decapitated, his head placed between his legs, whilst his wife and child stare distractedly at the gazeless eyes. There is a plenitude of "purple patch" in the picture. Another scene is that of a woman just ending the operation of cutting a man's throat. The eyes of the dead man are repulsive, the skin has the sallowness of death, the throat—well, the custodian put his finger on it and told me it was very

fine. The attractiveness of these pictures—if attractiveness is the proper word—is in the gore.

The old Serb garb is disappearing amongst those above the peasant class, save some middle-aged ladies who still retain the costume of their mothers—full but plain skirt, a zouave jacket fringed with gold or silver lace, a low-crowned, red Turkish fez, rather on the back of the head, while the hair plaited in one long coil is twisted round the fez, so that it cannot be seen from the front, and only the red disc of the top is seen from behind.

Men and women usually dress in the European style. At the fall of the sun all Belgrade comes out to promenade the streets, the ladies dressed as prettily and much in the same way as the ladies at an English watering place. The shops devoted to the sale of picture postcards are as many as in any French, German, or English town. There are plenty of picture postcards of King Peter, plenty of portraits of King Peter in the hotels. But nowhere in any part of Servia did I see a picture of Alexander. Even the coins bearing his effigy have been withdrawn from circulation. The authorities would wipe his memory from the public mind.

Here and there is a touch of Servian colour. In the market-place are gathered the peasants with their wares for sale—big flat cheeses of sheeps' milk, piles of grapes and peaches, mammoth melons, masses of brilliant tomatoes. The men, lithe and lank, sunbaked of cheek, wear skin caps, an upper garment of white—half-shirt, half-smock—trousers white and like a pair of shrunken pyjamas. Their



legs are swathed in rough home-spun stockings, generally with a red band; on their feet are crude sandals thonged across the instep and round the ankle. The peasant women are plain of feature and inclined to podginess; they wear short petticoats and have gaudy handkerchiefs tied over their heads. The Belgrade housewife does her own marketing, and there is much haggling. A man wanders through the crowd singing he has sweet drink to sell. Priests of the Servian Church, men with long black hair, black whiskers, and in long black gowns, receive salaams. A policeman, looking like a soldier, and with a horse pistol in his belt, marches along carrying a document. He is followed by an official who beats tap-tap-tap on a kettledrum. There is a halt, and the drum rolls. Everybody makes a rush and gathers round the policeman, who in a mumbling voice, not to be heard half a dozen paces away, reads a proclamation. Tap-tap-tap, and a move is made elsewhere.

Out on the dusty country road I heard the shrill call of the bugle. A detachment of young soldiers came swinging by, with a long stride and dip of the body, like Highlanders on the march. There was no smartness. Their dark blue forage caps and dark blue breeches were grimy with dust, their cotton smocks would have been benefited by a wash, their boots were down at heel. Stuck in most of their caps was a bunch of clover, or a couple of ears of wheat. The officer, on a capital horse, was neatness itself.

From a turn of the road came a clanging sound.

Here were forty prisoners, gruesome fellows, all chained, clanging their way, talking loud and laughing. An escort, with swords drawn, walked alongside. Further on, the highway was being repaired by convict labour. As the men, tawny *sans-culottes*, heaved the pick, they had the tune of their chains for music. At intervals soldiers rested on their rifles, ready to curb their charges should any be seized with a desire for quick exercise.

## CHAPTER III.

### A SITTING OF THE SERVIAN PARLIAMENT.

A Mean House of Parliament—A Debate—Short-lived Governments—Dealing with Irregular Elections—Democratic Appearance of the Members—A Congeries of Cliques—The Pay of Members and Ministers—The Leader of the Opposition—The Minister of Justice—An Interview with the Prime Minister.

ONE of these days the Servians will build for themselves a Parliament House in Belgrade that will be worthy of their nation. Till that time they are content to hold the Skoupshtina in a place which looks like a French country inn from the outside, and much like a barn inside.

The Servian, while conducting you to the Skoupshtina, bemoans that his Parliament meets in so wretched a style, asks fifty times during your visit if you are disappointed, and, as you are leaving, promises that the next time you honour the Servian nation with a visit there will assuredly be a new Parliament House.

Certainly the Skoupshtina is undistinguished. It is lath and plaster and whitewash. In front and at the side are lime trees, and beneath these the Servians sit in their varied garbs—the town men in clothes imitating those of Western Europe, but those from the provinces in brown homespun zouave jackets, beflowered shirts, tight-fitting brown homespun trousers, and rough rural-made sandals. Or they are in loose white garments, white trousers which look as though they have shrunk in the wash,

and white shirts falling to their knees, at first suggesting that their owners have forgotten to tuck them in their proper place. And everybody smokes cigarettes. Near the doorway lounge one or two policemen in blue uniforms, peaked cap, top boots, and with bulging revolver cases on the waist belt—amiable men, despite their warlike appearance.

I conversed through an open window with a dark, Muscovite-like gentleman, with cropped head and a black beard spreading like a fan from the chin. He had hay fever, for our talk, frigid at first, but speedily cordial, was interspersed with considerable sneezing.

I had a message from a dignitary that I be admitted to hear the debate. Could that honour be mine? The honour was all on the other side! I bowed and received a card. A tinkle of a bell, and I had two attendants: a tawny, wiry little man who pirouetted about me like a dancing-master, opened doors, salaamed, backed into the wall, salaamed again, and made me feel pasha-like and uncomfortable with his excess of politeness; and a big policeman, who evidently was not quite satisfied of the wisdom of admitting a foreigner—possibly an abhorred Austrian, if not that incarnation of wickedness a Bulgarian—to the deliberations of Servia's Parliament.

Phew! was my gasp at the top of a dingy and creaking flight of stairs. The air was thick, oily, and sickeningly sultry. I was in a crush of Servians who were straining their necks and their ears. An excitable gentleman down below was getting thin of voice whilst first addressing two upraised fingers

on his left hand, and then two upraised fingers on the right hand, repeatedly turning his head whilst swiftly he brought each pair within three inches of his nose and spoke to them for their virtue's sake. Phew again! I was pressed through a steaming mob and reached the Diplomatsists' Gallery—which I took as a compliment—crowded with round and weighty and panting individuals. Were these ambassadors? Oh, no! ambassadors never came! Well, yes, perhaps, some of them, at the opening of Parliament. Accordingly when Servian gentlemen were fat and hot, and their legs were inclined to weary, it was usual to allow them to fill the Diplomatsists' Gallery. They did fill it, in swelling measure. I got standing room in the only interstice.

The House was crowded with Servian representatives. It was a great debate: the fate of the Government rested upon it. The balance of parties was such that the Prime Minister had a majority of one—not large, but 'twould serve. Let the Government be defeated, and alas! they would be in a minority of five—a hopeless minority. But only perhaps for a week or so, when the new Government would be defeated and a fresh party would come into power. For the Servian Parliament is the creature of the public will, and as it is the Servian political temperament always to be disgusted with things that are, to be confident a change would be an advantage, and to be furious—when the change has taken place—at finding things very much the same, there is a kaleidoscope of crises.

The Servian Parliament is elected for four years;

it usually lasts about two years, and if in that time there have not been half a dozen or eight changes of Ministry, politics have been dull. There had been a general election of 160 members a week or two before my visit. Parliament, however, had sat for a week. The first problem was to deal with elections in which there had been irregularities. The first concerned a batch of six seats—one Government and five Opposition. The Government were magnanimous. Irregularities might occur in the best-conducted of elections. Why, of course! Let them be overlooked, and all six seats be allowed. As it was five to one, the Opposition regarded the result as quite sensible, because it limited the Government majority to one, instead of to five.

Now came up a second batch of irregular elections—six of them, and all Government seats. Of course, said the Government, these seats will be allowed the same as the last seats were. The Opposition never heard of such a proposition! Things were quite different! It was all very well for Ministers to desire that the breaking of the law in regard to the election of members should be overlooked, but the Opposition were the champions of honour, of justice, of recognising the law. Why should they acquiesce in electoral law-breaking so that this Ministry be kept in power? Honest elections were more important than any Ministry. That was the pedestal of Parliamentary virtue on which they were standing when I visited the Skoupshtina.

The Chamber was plain to cheapness. It was a large square room, with colour-washed walls. On a

raised dais covered with matting was a crimson canopy, and beneath was a huge red velvet and gold arm-chair—the throne. In front, before a long deal table covered with green baize, sat the President, on an ordinary seaside-lodging-house sort of cane-bottomed chair. He was an alert little man, with scant hair brushed back from the temples, and an enlarged imperial on his chin. Before him was a gong-bell, and when he desired order so that an orator might be heard, or when, in his discretion, the orator attempted to widen the range of discussion, he whacked the bell with vigour. On the right was another green baize table where sat the Ministers, and on the left, a third green table where sat the Departmental Secretaries. In front, in a pew, sat the Reporter—an official whose duty it is to explain what has been done in committee, to defend warmly what has been done, and to shrug his shoulders and make gestures of contemptuous resignation that any Serb cannot understand that what the Ministry proposes is entirely for the best. Then, in a tiered semicircle, with three gangways, sat the members.

What struck me first was the democratic appearance of the House. There was no man with countenance that might be described as aristocratic. It looked more like a gathering of labour leaders, farm labourers, a tiny sprinkling of shopkeepers, and one or two long-haired, long-gowned priests. The majority were in peasant garb, and looked for all the world like men taking it easy in their shirt-sleeves. Not inaptly this has been called the Peasants' Parliament.

The composition is of cliques rather than parties. As far as policy goes they are rather six of one and half a dozen of the other: keep down taxes, and hate the Austrians and Bulgarians. Personality is the real power. Rivals win followers, and the rival leaders support and overthrow each other as personal advantage and sentiment—for the Servian is nothing if not sentimental—dictate. When I was there the Young Radicals were the cocks of the walk—ardent reformers who had got ahead of the Old Radicals because of their glowing enthusiasm. There were fifteen Nationalists, who used to call themselves Liberals, but changed their name simply because Nationalist had a finer sound. There were small cliques calling themselves Patriots, Conservatives, Progressives—who, by curious paradox, are the very people who do not want progress—one representative of the Peasant party, the Joseph Arch of Servia—a party which once promised to achieve much in the rural districts, but didn't—and two Socialists, who only differ from other members in that they always put on their hats when the President reads the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament.

The Skoupshtina is a conglomerate of men getting in each other's way. Servia will not make much political advance until it has shaken itself down into two parties with distinct policies, and the change of Ministry be less often than three or four times a year. These peasant members receive fifteen francs a day whilst attending to their Parliamentary duties, and also free railway travelling.



Ministers receive remuneration at the rate of 12,000 francs a year, whilst the Prime Minister gets an extra 6,000 francs. Seven hundred and fifty pounds a year is not excessive pay for a Prime Minister. The Skoupshtina always meets at nine in the morning, sits on till about one, divides into committees for the afternoon, and sits again for an hour or two in the evening when necessary.

As the subject, when I was there, was whether the Government of a week should remain in office, speeches were lively. But gesture seemed almost as important as speech. There was one peasant member who knew the wily ways of the Government; he closed every other sentence by placing his forefinger tight against the side of his nose and then slowly winking over it, as much as to observe: "See, I know the game." Another behaved as though his hands offended him and he were endeavouring to shake them off, throw them away; he became decidedly annoyed because they would stick to his arms.

Interruptions occurred. They were tame in the way of interruptions compared with the wild hulla-baloo to which the British House of Commons occasionally yields itself. On the first "No, no!" the President gave a bang at his bell. When there were cries of "No, no!" from half a dozen quarters he stood up and aimed steady blows at the bell. When the shouts approached clamorous protest he seemed intent on breaking that bell. He appealed for fair hearing, got into personal altercation with a member, and won easily, because whenever the man

who had challenged him attempted to reply he drowned his utterance with the clang-clang, clang-clang of the Presidential bell.

There were two undemonstrative speeches, one by M. Nicholas Pashitch, the Leader of the Opposition, an elderly, long-bearded man, incisive, yet calm, and the Archpriest Gjuritch—a benevolent old man, with flowing white hair and a crimson girdle round his black frock—a man much honoured, because for years he languished in prison and in chains. He was supposed to be mixed up in some revolution during King Milan's lifetime. A Servian patriot who has been in prison—and there are many of them—is regarded much in the same light as an Irish patriot who has been flung into prison by an alien British Government.

There were great demands by the Opposition that the Minister of Justice, M. Petchitch, should defend the justice of allowing illegally-elected members to sit. M. Petchitch was a youngish man inclined to fulness of cheek, but sallow, and his hair was dusted with grey. He spoke slowly, with long pauses, working his hands all the while as though weaving an exquisite pattern, and he always clinched an argument by making a little pat at the first button of his waistcoat, pulling it off in imagination, and then giving a little toss of it towards his critics.

The heat of the Chamber was stifling. I expected to see the whole Assembly dribble away. My collar melted. Members walked to the table and drank inordinate quantities of water. One or two fell asleep, and some whiled away the time

by reading the local newspapers. I was about to retreat when a message arrived from the Prime Minister, M. Stoyanovitch. Would I honour him with a visit? I went to his room just behind the Chamber. He was a charming man, about middle age, dark, quietly dressed, but alert in manner. We exchanged compliments. What a miserable Skoupshtina for a gentleman from England to visit! I assured him I was captivated with the debate, and that I admired his amiability in being the head of a Government with a majority of only one. I was quite certain that if the Prime Minister of England could only visit Belgrade he would have such an infusion of courage that he would never bother his head if the majorities of his own Government sank to a couple of dozen. M. Stoyanovitch clasped his hands; a majority of twenty-four or thirty a small majority! He threw his eyes to the roof! What victory would strew his path for years if he had such a majority!

Enter the Minister of the Interior, M. Pavichevitch, a cheery, twinkle-eyed man with an excellent taste in cigarettes. There was general conversation. Servia was a little country with a big heart! It had a mighty past; surely it had a magnificent future. It teemed with prosperity. It had its internal troubles—assassination of Kings and Prime Ministers and such-like—but these were not mentioned. It hoped soon to have a big army, for Austria, a few miles away, was hungry for territory, and the Bulgarian neighbour?—a raise of the eyebrows, a shrug of the shoulders, and a meaning

smile! England had no territorial aspirations in the Balkans; England had ever proved the friend of small countries, and if Servia with the all-powerful aid of mighty England—and so on.

I went back to the Diplomats' Gallery. The atmosphere was that of a Russian bath. The rival cliques were shouting at one another; the Reporter was forcibly orating and nobody listening. The President was more determined than ever to smash that bell. The rivals exhausted their mutual recrimination—"You were not legally elected!" met with "Who are you to talk? most illegally elected!"—the Reporter sank back breathless, the President's hand got sore banging the bell, and he wrapped his handkerchief round his fist. In a pause he pantingly exclaimed: "The House is adjourned for ten minutes."

Blessed relief! Members tumbled out and made for the adjoining café, where native wine and beer and coffee were to be had. Afterwards I heard that the Government maintained its triumphant majority of one. The Prime Minister was safe in his office for a week. I hope for at least a fortnight, for M. Stoyanovitch did me several courtesies.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A MONASTIC RETREAT.

The Most Famous Monastery in Servia—The Archimandrite—A Glimpse of the First King of Servia—The Vicissitudes of a Silver Coffin—Sacredness of the King's Remains—A Devout Brigand—Dinner in the Monastery—The Church—Feast of St. Mary.

DAWN crept over the back of the Servian hills, throwing the palest of green lights into a velvety sky. There glistened a myriad stars which seemed to have come nearer to earth than they do in other lands. It was four o'clock in the morning, and the monastery bell was clang-clang-clanging, sending forth its summons to prayer.

I rose from the simple bed the monks had given me, left my cell, and went on to the broad arched balcony. The air was crisp and stinging with life. From the gloom came the blustering roar of the river hastening from the Turkish hills to the mighty Danube. The monastery cockerel raised his shrill voice heralding the morning. An unmonastic cockerel gave him challenge from a distance.

Across the grass, silent, like shadows, stole the black-cloaked monks. Taper lights, fitful and vagrant, appeared through the deep-recessed and dusky windows of the church. The clang of the bell ceased. Then sonorous but muffled came the intonation of the monks as, in the old Slavonic tongue of their fathers, they began the day with obeisance to God.

Somehow, as I stood there in the chill of the morning, bathing my soul in peace, I felt I had slipped back through centuries. The clamour of great cities, the screech of trains, the conflicts of commerce, the maddening, deadening scramble for wealth—all such things were but a blurred dream from which I had just awakened. I knew it was not many days since I whizzed through the stifling London streets on the top of a motor omnibus. But it was gracious, while watching the heavens blush with the new day, and listening to the prayers of the monks for us all, to let fancy rove wayward and picture that the simple life in a monastery—far from the track of rushing civilisation, not easy to reach, visited maybe by a single foreigner a year, where indeed the world stands still, the same to-day as four centuries ago—is really the life beautiful.

Without any priggish pretension to devoutness, the ordinary man, who kicks about the world, is worldly, and knows what modern life means, can go to Studenitza Monastery and feel a little cleaner of heart for his few days' retreat from the outer world.

This monastery is the most famous in Servia. It is intimately associated with the history of the Serbs as a people. It is a shrine. The first crowned King of Servia sleeps here; the latest crowned King, Peter, came here and kissed on the brow his predecessor of nigh six centuries ago.

From eight in the morning till hot afternoon I had ridden in a crawling, often halting, local train. A winding branch line pushed towards the hills. At

a little town there was coffee to be sipped with officials, and haggling with a horse owner for a carriage and horses. There followed an evening drive of forty miles towards the wilderness, the moon our only lantern. At midnight we rattled over the cobbles of the town of Kralievo, slept well at the inn, rose at five, were off at six, followed the swirling waters of the Ibar through the mountains, admired a big, square, ruined castle perched on the rock—which did brave service against the Turks in the centuries that are nothing but rankling memories—fed beneath the trees and slept beneath the trees, struck away up a ravine—surely the haunt of brigands, though so peaceful in the glow of fading afternoon—and, just as the Archimandrite had backed from the church door, bowed his head and made the sign of the cross, disturbed him by our arrival. We smiled and he bowed. We bowed. Then through my interpreter I said nice things and presented my note of introduction from the Prime Minister of Servia.

The Archimandrite was a tall, spare old man, with long but thin grey hair and grey beard; a stern old man, with a visage like that of John Knox, but an old man who had lived amid the sanctity of these hills for forty-six years, away from the world, knowing little of the world, having never been out of Servia. He had a beautiful smile. “I said to myself nearly fifty years ago when I came here that I must never regret. And I have never regretted. I am content. It is very quiet here—a very difficult place for a stranger from England

to reach. I am honoured. Let me see to your room."

What a restful room it was! Absolutely severe. But there was refreshment in the thick walls, in the shadows, in the look through the narrow windows to the hills beyond. A peasant, in the white and cleanly garb of his race, was in attendance. There was welcome: first a little glass of whisky made by the monks from plums, then several spoonfuls of preserved cherries, a long drink of icy water, and a tiny cup of Turkish coffee—and all the time the peasant stood like a waxwork holding the little tray before him. So began my rest at Studenitza Monastery.

High walls clasp the sanctuary. In the middle of the sloping sward stands the church, built of white marble from adjoining quarries. That was in the twelfth century, when the Serbs, who had wandered from beyond the Volga, made a nation of themselves with a bigger land than they own to-day.

Here Stephen, the first crowned King of Servia, was made ruler, and here rest his bones. The double coffin was opened for me to see the form of the sainted king—shrouded, and on his breast a golden cross, containing in its centre a morsel of wood which tradition says, and the faithful believe, is part of the true Cross. When the Archimandrite and I entered the church we were followed by several countrymen who had travelled two days over the hills to attend a festival on the morrow. They stood back humbly, for the shrouded King Stephen is not for peasants' eyes. But when I had cast a



curious gaze, the chief of the monastery invited the peasants to come forward. They bent their heads; they crossed themselves; they kissed the edge of the outer coffin; they kissed the cross; they kissed the covered forehead of the King; they crossed themselves again. Their rugged, sunbaked countenances were illumined with light, for a precious opportunity had been theirs.

I have mentioned two coffins. The first is of black wood, inlaid with exquisite gold and silver design; the outer is a massive silver casque, magnificently embossed, supported by silver angels, with a mighty silver cross resting on the crimson velvet lid; the interior is of blue satin, with three plaques in the lid representing incidents in the life of Stephen. But Stephen has not rested quietly. The vendetta between Servia's later rulers has been the cause of impious hustling—though surely he is a sufficiently far-off king for the rival Karageorgovitches and Obrenovitches to seek honour to themselves in honouring him.

When the last Karageorgovitch was on the throne, it was the mother of the present King Peter who hired the finest silversmiths of Vienna to make this gorgeous coffin. With reverence King Stephen was placed in it. But when murder brought the Obrenovitches to power, it would never do to have the most honoured of all Serb kings sleeping in a coffin presented by their enemies. So Stephen was removed, and lay, uncomplaining, in the old coffin which had served him for several hundreds of years. The silver coffin was hidden in a cellar. When

Alexander and Draga visited Studenitza they saw nothing of the silver coffin. They presented the monastery with amazing golden robes and a golden communion cup. But when Alexander and Draga went their hurried way, and King Peter stepped to the throne, the silver coffin was brought out, polished up, and Stephen once more laid in it—to the appreciation of King Peter when he visited the monastery, though he saw nothing of the woven golden robes nor of the golden communion cup, which were safely out of sight in the cellar.

The sacredness of Stephen's bones is part of the faith of the Servian Greek Church. No people have so sure a faith as the peasants of the mountain slopes. The poor, the ignorant, and the humble have an exquisite advantage: they have no religious doubts. It is left for those who are more civilised, who have garnered culture, who have trifled with higher criticism and dabbled in the depths of comparative theology, to smile at the reverence born of superstition. They can be condescending to those who have not yet learnt that it is all a mistake—though a beautiful mistake. But for such as these the simple faith of the peasants has its lessons. And the hallowed church—surely where for five hundred years men and women have poured forth their souls, have felt the anguish and found the hope, is hallowed—brings peace to the worldly man. The belief of others gives him a peep of something he lacks the quality to understand.

Now the faith in the sacredness of the King's bones is shared by the devout and by others. No-

thing is more firmly fixed in the peasant mind than that the possession of a piece of bone from King Stephen's skeleton is an absolute safeguard from death by bullet. And here I have a story to tell. For who is in more need of protection from bullets than the brigand, who must shift his abode often and show alacrity in keeping beyond the range of the rifles of the pursuing soldiery? The Archimandrite was one day honoured with a visit from the most notorious brigand in Servia. The priest's heart was glad; the robber had turned from his wickedness; he had repented. But he hadn't! That was very far from the mind of the brigand. His visit had a more practical purpose. He confessed that in following his avocation he was occasionally worried at what might be the consequence if a stray bullet came his way. Indeed, he had become nervous about bullets. He did not at all fancy death by a bullet. So he sought the kind assistance of the Archimandrite. Let him have a small portion of the saintly King's skeleton, no matter how tiny, and not only would he be infinitely obliged, but he would be able to follow his business without hesitation, and without fear of a leaden check. The reply he received was disappointing. The Archimandrite would not despoil the saintly king of a finger nail, even to oblige the most distinguished of brigands.

A few days later the Archimandrite was thrown into a fluster. Though the monastery gates are locked nightly, somebody had surmounted the wall, smashed the church window, gained entrance, and

wrenched open the coffin wherein lay the remains of King Stephen. The big toe had disappeared. It was well known who was the robber. Wonder prevailed whether carrying the saint's big toe as a charm was really efficacious in turning aside bullets. More than a year later the brigand was captured—alive. Knowing that his fate was sealed, he confessed. It was quite true he had rifled the coffin of the King's big toe. He carried it about with him, in a little bag strung round his neck. But after a time doubt troubled him. What if, after all, the big toe was no safeguard from a bullet? He decided to make an experiment. He fastened the charm to a lamb. Then he fired his gun. Just as he had dreaded! The lamb fell dead. So he did not think much of kings' big toes as charms. However—as he was about to be led out to be shot, *sans* toe—he returned the relic to the Archimandrite. The Archimandrite was joyed. He returned the big toe to be companion to the four little toes. And once more the skeleton of King Stephen is complete.

It is pleasant to idle the days in this monastic retreat, to lounge within the shadows of the trees, to gossip with black-haired, black-whiskered, black-gowned monks: genially happy, and with no greater ambition than to take their last sleep close to the walls of the old church, where moss-flaked slabs mark the stone cots in which monks of ages past have their eternal slumber.

There is a little inn beyond the monastery gates. Vine leaves straggle over crooked boughs, and in the warm breath of the lazy afternoon it is well

to sit within their fretted shade and drink the native wine, tart, strong, cool, enough for six of us, several glasses each, at a price of tenpence. The bell sounds vespers, and the monks go off to pray for us all. Night comes tardily, and the lights flicker eerily.

In the long, dim hall is set a simple dinner. The Archimandrite mutters a blessing. I sit on his right with my interpreter facing me, and in the gloom stand the peasant servants, in clean linen garb, with crude shoes removed. It is a time of fasting, and the patriarch eats humbly of porridge and small cucumbers, vinegar-soaked. For his guest is a better meal, but all the dishes are vinegar-soaked, a simple monkish device to check the warming of the blood. But there comes the wine. And what monastery is not proud of its wine? A great flagon of it, cool and delicious, is brought from the cellar: the real juice of the grape, grown and nurtured by the monks, gathered by monks, pressed by monks, and drunk to bring sunshine into the heart. The old Archimandrite is proud of the wine of his monastery; he stands, a tall, dignified figure, smiling as he fills my glass once, twice, thrice, many times. He watches with curious eyes my first taste, the parley with the wine upon the tongue, the appreciative smack of the lips. Later he drinks my health, standing, his spare, black figure bending over the table, his black eyes gleaming under his black, funnel-like hat, his grey hair tumbling about his shoulders. "My heart is very glad," says he. "It is a bright day, for the son of

the most enlightened of nations has travelled all this way to honour our humble monastery. I raise my glass to the distinguished *gospodin*. I wish him a pleasant journey and a quick return to Servia." I have not the knack of pretty cross-table speeches. "Say thanks," I mutter to my interpreter. Says the interpreter in free and elongated translation: "The heart of the *gospodin* is so touched with your kindness that his tongue cannot express all he feels."

The church, a medley of marble and whitewash, of precious relics and gewgaw decorations, has a chastened distinction. In its six hundred years it has had batterings. Time has done something in disfigurement, but the Turk has done more. The grey marble pavement is cracked and uneven. Marble pillars which graced the inner sanctuary have been wrenched away. A group of Apostles present only battered and unrecognisable features. The walls bear frescoes of saints painted in garish Byzantine style. But years have softened the colouring. In places the frescoes have gone, and cheap plaster fills the cracks. Turkish spears have smashed the painted faces of the saints, and a blodge of plaster has done the mending. There are pictures of sainted kings—famous in Servian history, but of whom the foreigner never heard, though he listens with the ears of a child to the story of their heroic deeds. The altar-screen is ornate with Scriptural scenes in the "Pilgrim's Progress" vein. About are heavy gold and silver ornaments. I see the robes worn on high festivals. A key opens a

cupboard full of sacred books in old Slavonic—all Russian gifts from the time of Peter the Great. The Turks burned the old Servian manuscript volumes.

There was celebrated the feast of Saint Mary. Peasants had come two, even three, days' journey. They were clean, stalwart, God-fearing people, picturesque in Balkan garb. Some came by horse; most had walked. The women with their gay kerchief head-coverings sat in huddled groups. The men, in groups also, sauntered the monastery grounds. A few stayed at the adjoining inn; a few slept on the balcony of the cells; most slept beneath the trees. Quite a hundred arrived the afternoon before the festival. At sun-dip they munched their black bread. With the coming of night they wrapped their cloaks about them and slept beneath the stars, the burnished silver moon their lantern. At four in the morning, when the bell clanged, they crowded the church.

I attended one of the services. The church reeked with incense. The voices of the monks, chanting in old Slavonic, were sonorous, musical, impressive. Only the voice of the Archimandrite had thinned with forty and more years of praying. The peasants stood with bowed heads and clasped hands. Their womenfolk stood modestly aside and in corners. The gilt doors of the Holy of Holies opened, and a monk, pale, with long raven hair, and wearing a robe of silver adornment, came swinging the censer. All the peasants knelt, and the intoning was loud and ardent. I daresay there

was much that was bizarre in the scene. I have thought so since.

But just then I had eyes and ears only for the picture of reverent, humble folk, in an unknown corner of the world, giving heart-thanks to the Giver of the good they knew.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE PEASANT NATION.

The Serb a Hater of Town Life—A State without Towns—The Servian Pig—Why British Trade is Dwindling—Peasant Proprietorship—A Country Ruled by Local Government—Taxation—Military Service—A Simple, Genuine Folk.

SERVIA is the real peasant state of the Balkans. The first proof is that the Serb, contrary to the tendency in other European countries, hates town life. The shop windows, the electric lights, the clatter of cabs have no attraction for him. When he comes into a town it is to sell or to buy something, and then get to his homestead as quickly as possible. The life of the hills, its wildness, even its eeriness, has laid hold of him.

He is emotional. So he loves well and hates well. He will do anything for you if he loves you; if he hates you he will kill you, and mutilate your body afterwards.

His tastes are simple. Civilisation, with its cheap excursion trains and music halls, has not reached him. His main amusement is to attend a Church festival, where not only is he conscious of doing good to his soul, but he is able to meet his friends, eat, drink, and be merry. On the eve of the Sabbath he puts on his best clothes, and the women put on their gaudiest of frocks. They meet on the sweep of green before the church. The local gypsies—tall, swarthy, handsome, most of them—provide shrill music, while the Serbs,

clasping each other by the hand, sing mournfully and gyrate sedately. It is a melancholy dance. But they are sure they are having a capital time.

Except Belgrade, there are no towns worth the name. The "towns" are really big villages, with very wide streets and single-storeyed, unpicturesque houses. Everybody "makes promenade" in the evening. In the dusk the few paraffin lamps in drunken lamp-posts make the local inn—rather meagre in the daylight—quaintly bright. There are dozens of tables and hundreds of chairs. Everybody gathers, whole families, the merriest throng in the world. There are no rich people; but wine is cheap, the coffee is good, the food is plain and inexpensive. From the ordinary point of view—that of the man who lives in London, for instance—they are people to be commiserated. But not a bit of it. They are light-hearted and contented. And, after all, light-heartedness and contentment are worth much.

Of course, Servia is an agricultural country. Its soil is good, and the yield is abundant. Some Serbs look to manufactures increasing the material wealth. But that is the road to losing money and securing heartache. The Serb is not deft in manufacture; factory life would be intolerable, because it would mean employer and employed, and the Serb has a quixotic repugnance to being anybody's servant. If he is wise he will keep to his husbandry and pig-rearing. He is a good farmer when his holding is small—as it generally is. I travelled long miles in the interior, and noticed how every

available yard was under close cultivation. No country has so frugal and industrious a peasantry—not even France.

The Servian pig is “the gentleman who pays the rent.” The growing of pigs and exporting them to Austria is the staple industry. Indeed, pig-breeding may be called the one trade of Servia. When a Serb is well-to-do, the money has come from pigs. There is, however, a speck on the prosperity. Austria is not only the big customer, but it is the big neighbour. Sometimes Austria is inclined to play the bully and make Servia do things that little Servia does not want to do. “Very well,” says Austria, “you have swine fever in such a village; swine fever is a terrible thing; we could not think of subjecting Austrian swine to the possibility of contagion from infected swine; therefore we prohibit any Servian pigs entering this country.” Ruin stares Servia in the face! It is no use protesting that the swine fever is so infinitesimal that it does not matter. Austria is adamant. Servia yields. It does what Austria wants it to do—gives Austrian wares a preference over those of Germany and France. And just at the time Servia gives in, Austria kindly decides that the swine fever in Servia is not very bad after all, and the prohibition is removed.

Servia cannot do anything commercially without the sanction of Austria. Austria has about half the imports into Servia, and takes practically all the exports. British trade is dwindling: firstly, because Continental competitors have the advantage

in transport; secondly, because British merchants will not give the long credit, Austrians and Germans will; thirdly, because the Briton insists on issuing his catalogues in English, and writing his business letters in English, which the Serb does not understand.

The fact that Servia has practically no poor is due to the industry of the people, and the system of peasant proprietorship. Every little homestead is a family commune, whilst in some of the mountain districts is the *Zadruga*, or communal village. The village is really one big family; everything is held in common. The oldest man is the guide, ruler, and despot. He decides whether a man and a woman shall marry or not. And here one drops across a difference between Serbs and more enlightened communities. To get daughters married is the desire of most parents in Western Europe; to delay their marriage is the endeavour of Serb fathers and mothers. The Serb woman is a first-rate worker in the fields. So whilst there is no objection to a son marrying, because he remains in the family and brings in a woman worker, the departure of a daughter means the loss of a worker. Every grown man can claim five acres of land from the Government. That usually goes into the family plot of land. Other land may be bought, and, possibly, may be lost to the moneylender. But those five acres are sacred. They cannot, nor can their yield, be claimed for debt. So, be a man ever so poor, he has still his five acres.

Now although Servia has a Parliament elected

by manhood suffrage—every man who pays about twelve shillings a year in indirect taxes having a vote—the main governing authority is local. The District Council, elected every year by the peasants, manages the local finance; it is also a combined County Court and Petty Sessions. The Government only concerns itself with large matters. Murderers are usually shot on the spot where they committed their crime.

The Serb is democratic. Nobody, except the King, has a title. Property is equally divided between the sons. Education is free, from the elementary school up to the University. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Practically everybody belongs to the Servian National Church; but though the priests are personally popular, the Serbs are not church-goers except at festival times. Then the pic-nic is as much an attraction as the opportunity to worship. The Serbs are a moral people. Also, as is natural in a mountain people, they are superstitious. They hang out a bunch of garlic to keep away the devil, and if a widow desires to get married again she hangs a doll in the cottage window to give male passers-by due notice of the fact.

The taxes of Servia are light; but light as they are, reduction is the popular cry of the politicians. Rather than pay rates the peasants of a district give two or three days' labour in the year for road-mending. The consequence is that the roads are uncertain. A Servian road is much like the young lady in the poem who wore a curl in the middle of her forehead, and who, "when she was good, was very,

very good, and when she was bad she was horrid." I have seen stretches of road in Servia as good as any to be found in an English home county. Also I have seen others.

Servia has conscription. Every man, from his twenty-first to his forty-fifth year, is liable for military service. Pay—as is all official pay in Servia—is very low. When I looked at the smart young lieutenants, I wondered how they could be so gorgeous on £72 a year. The peace strength of Servia is just over 20,000 men. In time of war well over 300,000 men could take the field. Each young fellow serves two years; afterwards he is in the reserve, liable to thirty days' service per annum till he is thirty years of age, eight days' service till he is forty, and afterwards only liable in emergency. The Serb bears what is often called "the burden of conscription" willingly, and as a matter of course. It is the natural thing; it exists in the surrounding countries. The Serb knows that any day he may be called upon to fight for his existence as a nation. All told, the Servian population is not yet three millions.

Personally I keep a warm corner in my heart for the Serbs. It was De la Jonquière who called them "a brave, poetic, careless, frivolous race." Frivolity is hardly a description to apply to the people as a whole, though it does apply to a few in the capital who ape the ways of Vienna on a miniature scale. Merry, heedless of mechanical progress—or he would find other means of threshing corn than letting horses run through it on a patch of beaten ground, or letting oxen trail a board in which flints are inset

as a means of pressing the wheat from the ear—independent, not mindful much of education, knowing his people have a noble though tragic history, but making no attempt to assimilate the old culture, jealous of Bulgaria, afraid of Austria, the Serb is really a relic of the mediæval age.

I have sat beneath the trees chatting with these simple, genuine folk. They loved to hear of London, of New York, of Paris, but with no envy: rather with the interest of a child in a fairy story. They wanted little or nothing from the outer world. Their coarse linen shirts, rough brown homespun jackets, and trousers, their crude shoes, their bead-studded belts, their sheepskin caps, had all been made on their own peasant plots. The women, when tending the cattle or going to market, always had a hunk of flax or tousel of wool which they spun between their fingers as they walked. In lieu of the evening newspaper, a blind old man told a story of how the Serbs fell at Kossovo beneath the onslaught of the Turks. When the moon rose, big and brilliant, there was the inn to go to, with wine at two-pence a flask.

Travelling is not expensive. About a sovereign a day is charged for a phaeton and pair. At the neat town of Kralievo I had supper, coffee, cognac, and mineral water, a decent bedroom, and breakfast, at a total charge of three *dinars*, about half a crown.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOFIA.

**A Miniature Brussels—A City in the Making—The Public Buildings—The Church of St. Sofia—The Bulgar's Qualities—A Kaleidoscopic History—Prince Ferdinand—His Unpopularity—Bulgarian Ambitions—The Prince a Factor for Peace—The Most Efficient Army in Europe—A Nation that Believes in Education.**

THERE is something of the western American city about Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. A quarter of a century ago it was a squalid Turkish town. The squalor has been swept away. The ramshackle, wheezy houses, bulging over narrow and ill-smelling passages, have disappeared as though swept by a fire. There are now big and broad thoroughfares, fine squares, impressive public buildings. The boulevards are shaded with trees, the cafés sprawl their little round tables and wire chairs into the roadway.

Sofia is a miniature Brussels. One of these days it may rival Buda-Pest, or rather Pest, the most modern, spick-and-span town in Europe. Twenty-five years ago there were eleven thousand people in Sofia. - Now there are over seventy thousand.

But Sofia is still in an unfinished state. The old town, as the Turks left it, has nigh gone. But the new town has not come in its completeness. There is not a single paved street; the roads are bumpy, vile with dust in summer, and villainous with filth in winter. The houses are built with poor bricks, but stuccoed and plastered and bevelled and colour-washed into representation of stone blocks. There



is the flimsiness of stage mansions about the residences. That, however, does not prevent them looking neat and clean and, with the acacia trees which grow rapidly to give a tone of softness, quite comfortable.

Unbuilt Sofia is pegged out after the American style. Imposing, walled residences stand up solitary. Before you get to them there is a patch of waste land, with rank vegetation growing among old pots and pans which have been pitched there; then you get to a house in the course of construction, the material littering three parts across the road; then a completed and pretty house; then more waste.

Sofia, in a businesslike way, is setting about to make a fine city of itself. It is well situated on a patch of plain, with picturesque mountain ranges as a background. No time has been lost in providing magnificent public buildings. The Royal Palace, where Prince Ferdinand occasionally stays, is fine. The National Assembly is a serviceable pile, and the interior is ornate. The technical schools are well equipped and up to date. The barracks are equal to any in England. The Military Club would hold its own with a Pall Mall establishment. The hotels are clean, comfortable, and cheap. There is a good theatre. Also there are gardens where, in the cool of the summer evening, the band plays, and folk sit round and sip beverages. The Bulgarians intend to have a capital worthy of their energetic little nation.

Remember, it is only since 1878, when the Turks, having smeared the country with their sloth for centuries, were driven south by Russian guns,

and Bulgaria got its liberty, that the Bulgarians have had an opportunity to show the stuff of which they are made. They have acquitted themselves well. The first thing they did was to wipe out the evidences of Turkish occupation. When the Turkish rulers had gone, the Turkish populace also began to disappear. The mosques were unfrequented; they were converted into prisons, markets, and even baths. Only one mosque is in use to-day. There is the Church of the Seven Saints, originally Greek Christian, changed to a mosque by the Turks, deserted when the Turks went, and now changed to a Christian Bulgarian Church. It has been restored, and looks like a new building. There are the remains of St. Sofia, the mother-church of the city, built in the twelfth century. It is a mighty, but cracked and tumbling mass of Byzantine architecture. The walls are eight feet thick; where decrepitude has caused them to gape, secret chambers filled with skeletons have been found. The plaster of four hundred years is falling as though intent on revealing the frescoes of Christian saints beneath. There still stands the Christian altar facing Jerusalem. The pulpit from which the Moslem priests proclaimed Allah is askew, so that it may face Mecca. Remnants of Christian and Moslem worship commingle in ruin. No formal service has been held for many years. The interior has the damp smell of a dungeon. But fervent Christians come and burn candles before the cheap oleographs of Christian saints which are pasted on the walls. An old man, grey-locked and cadaverous, knelt on the slimy floor

and prayed. He gashed his arm with a knife, and, using his fore-finger as brush, made, in blood, the sign of the Cross on the Mahomedan pulpit.

You must look beneath the surface for the qualities of the Bulgar. He is dour, even sullen. There is little refinement about him. He carries himself slovenly. He has brusqueness of manner, and the polite "thank you" rarely enters his speech. He hates the idea of subservience; to avoid any semblance of that his behaviour savours of rudeness. He is stolid and unimaginative. In commerce he is slow. But he is a good worker, zealous, plodding, and is one of the best agriculturists in the world. You cannot stir the Bulgar with sentimental orations. Yet the Bulgar is fond of his country in a cold, determined way. He does not move quickly, but he is always moving. That is why Bulgaria, since the Liberation, has made steady and definite progress.

The history of the country is a kaleidoscope. The Romans made a province of it. The Goths and the Huns overran it. Tribes invaded it and butchered one another. The dominant tribe was that of the Bulgari: Finns with an Asiatic strain, and from the Volga regions. They got mixed up with the Slavs—indeed, the Bulgar is more Slav than Bulgarian, though he does not know it. The Bulgarian language was pure Slavonic. Modern Bulgarian is Slavonic, but murdered by alien peoples. No doubt Vlach and Russian influence has been the cause. In writing, Bulgarian assimilates to Russian. Still, the Bulgarian language is no more of a hotch-potch than

is English. In the twelfth century the Bulgarian tribes consolidated and flung off the Byzantine rule. Then they fell under Servia. Next, both Bulgaria and Servia came under the Turks, and for nigh five hundred years remained stagnant. Russia, with an eye on the Bosphorus, came as the Liberator, and after the siege of Plevna and the defence of the Shipka Pass, forced Turkey to free Bulgaria. Then by the Treaty of Berlin, 1878, Bulgaria was constituted an "autonomous and tributary Principality" under the suzerainty of the Sultan.

Seven years later northern European Turkey, called Roumelia, but mainly inhabited by Bulgarians, united itself to its brother and became South Bulgaria. This growth of Bulgaria did not please Russia. It was all right lopping off a piece of Turkey and erecting the little Bulgarian nation, Russia's child, to be claimed as her own whenever it suited the Muscovite intention. But an enlarged Bulgaria, with possible ideas of standing alone, brought scowls to the brow of Czar Alexander III. All Russian officers, who had so kindly assisted the Bulgarian army, were withdrawn. It was imagined Bulgaria lacked the brains to defend itself. The Servians, egged on by Austria, made war on their neighbours. The Bulgars, under their foreign Prince Alexander, smashed the Serbs, and would have annexed Servia had not Austria, under threats, cried halt, and even made the Bulgarians yield territory. So the two countries have no love for each other. It rankles in the mind of Servia that it was defeated; it galls Bulgaria that

it lost territory. Russia was wroth with Bulgaria strutting as a nation instead of being dependent on Russia, which had done so much for it. Russia kidnapped Prince Alexander, held him prisoner, let him go when Europe cried "Shame!" but succeeded by intrigue in making Alexander's life miserable, broke his heart, and caused him to abdicate. The country was in turmoil. Then Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg was chosen by the *Sobranje*, or Parliament, and under his rule Bulgaria has gone ahead.

Ferdinand is astute. Yet his cleverness is not of the kind to be appreciated by Bulgarians. During the last twenty years he has had an excellent opportunity to get a grip of the hearts of the people. He has done nothing of the kind. Rightly or wrongly, they are convinced that he neither likes them nor their country. If they are wrong, he ministers to the mistake by preferring to live in other countries than in that of his adoption. His official allowance is about a million and a quarter of francs, money drawn from peasants. They think it ought to be spent in Bulgaria, and not in Vienna or Paris. He is not popular.

The Bulgars are a democratic people, with exaggerated notions of independence. The endeavour on the part of the Prince to create an aristocracy goes against the grain. He has round him a band of Ministers—a few above reproach, most under a strong suspicion—who utilise the national finances for their individual benefit. Political corruption is, in its way, as marked as in the United States. The party in power, the Prince's party, who are little

but tools in his hand, come to office again and again, because they have the means of bribing the constituencies. Educated Bulgarians are sick of the whole business, but any endeavour toward purity is swamped beneath the flood of corruption. The Constitution is nominally democratic, but really autocratic. The Prince has greater powers than those possessed by any constitutional monarch. He can and does actively interfere in politics. The Ministry has greater latitude than any other European Ministry. Prince and Ministry working together—and the Prince has only pliable Ministers—the *Sobranje*, with less than the powers of any other constitutional Legislature, does not really represent the people. The Government has machinery, not always creditable, which regulates the results of the polls.

The Bulgarians are ambitious. They are rightly proud of the way in which their country has gone ahead since the Turkish shackles were cast off. Possibly they exaggerate their powers; but that is natural. There is a feeling that Bulgaria should win back by the sword what Austria forced it to cede to Servia. There is a much stronger feeling for a Big Bulgaria, and eyes are cast toward Macedonia, where it is alleged most of the Christians are of the Bulgar race. There are also Macedonian Bulgarians in the Principality—for since the Liberation Bulgars in Macedonia have emigrated to the land where they could have more freedom: men of sprightlier intelligence than the pure Bulgarian—and these, not anxious to have Macedonia fall under the rule of Bulgaria, are working for an independent Mace-

donia, with, of course, the Macedonian Bulgarians as "top dog" over the Turks, Serbs, Roumanians, and Greeks. So in regard to Macedonia there are in Bulgaria itself two parties—the Big Bulgaria party, and the Autonomous Macedonia party. There is bitter feeling between them.

The cynic smiles. The Balkan problem is wheels within wheels. All the Christians hate the Turk. The rival Christians, Bulgar, Serb, Greek, hate each other. Then rival factions of Bulgars are at daggers drawn—and sometimes the dagger is used. The Sultan plays off one Christian nation against another. Prince Ferdinand plays off one Bulgarian party against the other.

Despite his shortcomings, Prince Ferdinand is a factor for peace—a greater factor than the rest of Europe gives him credit for. Were his influence removed there is little doubt Bulgaria would pick a quarrel with Turkey, and plunge the Balkans into war. The war spirit is dominant, though there is little of the splash and splutter which would be shown by a more volatile people. It is a spirit which has its roots in the belief that the Bulgars are at last coming into their heritage, and have a large place to fill on the scroll of destiny. They have watched the Far East. "If," was often said to me, "a little country like Japan can overthrow so great a Power as Russia, why should not Bulgaria overthrow Turkey? We are the Japanese of the Near East." The nation expects and wants to fight Turkey. The Turks know it. Later in my wanderings I had talks with Turkish officials. They admitted that

Turkey did not want to fight, but not because Turkey was afraid of defeat. Here was their logic: "We fought the Greeks and defeated them; then we lost Crete. We shall defeat the Bulgarians, but we shall lose Macedonia. Kismet!" Then a shrug of the shoulders.

Now Prince Ferdinand does not want war. He is a little afraid of a rival Bulgarian nation in Macedonia. He is more afraid of an endeavour toward a Big Bulgaria, for he is not as confident as are his people that the Turks will be defeated, and he knows that under a Turkish victory the Bulgarians, in their wrath, would make him their first victim.

There is, however, something fine and noble in the way the little Bulgarian nation is equipping itself to meet a great Power, be it Russia or Turkey. Now and then I heard a groan at the burden of the army, which consumes a third of the national revenue. It is borne, because there is no Bulgarian who does not realise that his country any day may be called upon to fight for its independence—for the suzerainty of Turkey is but a name. I visited, and was shown over, the great barracks beyond Sofia. I went out to the plains and saw the men at drill. For its size the Bulgarian army is the best equipped and most efficient in Europe. It means business. Every detail is attended to, every probability of warfare provided for. The officers are not so smart as those of Servia, but they are more practical. What worries the War Minister is that the officers run so much to fat. They are a most podgy lot of officers. If someone will devise means whereby the Bulgarian



officers need not wear such large waistcoats he will receive the profuse thanks of the army.

Conscription prevails. It embraces everybody. Even those who, for special reasons, escape full conscriptive service must do duty in the Reserve for three months in each of two years, and then must pass into the active Army Reserve for nine years. In peace time a recruit enters the Army when he is twenty years of age; in war time he starts his fighting at eighteen. Not till he is forty-five years of age does a Bulgarian escape from liability to serve. Even foreigners, after three years' residence, must serve, unless they have a special certificate of exemption. If Moslems pay £20 they can claim exemption; but as the Moslems remaining in Bulgaria are poor, very few escape. Bulgars afflicted with infirmities which prevent them entering the service must pay a special tax.

The Army lays its grip on Bulgaria. The peace strength is some 3,000 officers and 50,000 men, 6,000 horses and oxen, and 250 guns horsed out of 500. The war strength is about 6,000 officers, 300,000 men, 45,000 horses, and 2,500 oxen. The Army stands for Bulgarian independence. The young Bulgarian straightens himself, drops his slouch, and walks with a proud glint in his eye when his country calls upon him. Military service is popular.

Now the Bulgarians, though unemotional and somewhat brusque, have other qualities besides industry and devotion to their country. They are a moral and a truthful people. Further, though so young a nation, they realise, better than any other race

in the Balkans, the advantages of education. I was somewhat astonished at the number of men I met who spoke English but who had never seen England. The fact is that a considerable number of the public men were educated at Robert College, near Constantinople. English is the language of instruction. That College has had a marvellous effect on the Christians, not only of the Balkans, but of Asia Minor. Both Bulgaria and Armenia owe much to Robert College. In the uttermost corners of Turkey I have met men who spoke English. "Where did you learn it?" "At Robert College," was the invariable answer. In Bulgaria itself there are at Samakov two American missionary schools, where the pupils are Bulgarians, and all learn English. A good word for Samakov. The directors realise the danger of over-education. Only harm will come to Bulgaria if ill-prepared minds are stuffed with what are called "enlightened views." So earnest and particular attention is directed to technical instruction, which is the thing the Bulgarians, as an agricultural people, specially need. All the State schools are free. Excellent colleges are at Sofia and Philippopolis. Parents submit themselves to hardship so that their children may go to college. In the smaller towns travelling State-paid lecturers instruct the people in scientific husbandry. These lectures are always well attended.

"What a wild, barbarous land Bulgaria is!" is the popular but ignorant belief in Britain. It is just as safe as England. The Bulgarian likes to think he is imitating England.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A BIT OF OLD BULGARIA.

Out of the World—Tirnova in the Sunrise—A Primitive Inn—  
The Tariff—"Ver' Good English"—A Litigious Community  
—The Churches—Monastery of the Transfiguration.

TIRNOVA is the ancient capital of Bulgaria. Literally, Tirnova means "the thorn," and this quaintly perched city, to the north of the first Balkan range, is not only shaped like a thorn but has truly been a thorn in the side of Europe.

It is away from the tourist track. It has not been touched by the stucco civilisation which marks Sofia. It is old Bulgaria, picturesque, romantic, sleepy.

The plain of Plevna is to the north. The land becomes restless and knuckled before the Balkans push their black shoulders skywards. There is a gnarled rock-heave with the purling river Yantra making a pear-shaped sweep at its base. On the rock Tirnova rises.

If the rock on which Edinburgh Castle is built were ten times the size, and it were nigh circled by a river, and on the rock were built a ramshackle town, and hanging over the side of the rock were bits of the town that could not gain full foothold, it would give a fair idea of Tirnova.

I saw it first in a mixture of mist and gorgeous sunrise. It was as fantastic as a much-daubed stage-setting of a mediæval town. I was down in

the chasm, and wraiths of vapour trailed along the river banks. There was cold shadow, and tall pines showing how straight they could stand on precipitous ledges. Above, like a picture through the clouds, was the town, bulging over the rocks, propped-up, wheezy: a hotch-potch of white buildings with garish yellow shuttering and balconies, festooned with the dead green of the vine, and, above the ragged house-line, a sky that was blue—pure blue, with no qualification, no accentuation, just blue.

When I climbed into the town I felt as though I had trespassed upon a stage during a performance, when the scene is filled with swarthy peasants in kaleidoscopic raiment. My grey lounge suit was out of harmony with the splashes of rainbow hue among the traffickers in the market.

I had a cheery dumping of a driver, who made himself all the more of a dumping by entwining his waist with enough red baize to cover a stand for a royal procession. I was in a crooked, rickety carriage, which banged and jolted over the cobbles, and seemed to be playing quite a clever game of cup-and-ball with me. I never fell out once, but I got more shaking in a two-mile drive than most folk get in a railway accident. When my friend had deposited me in front of a gaunt and dark-bowelled inn he told me his fare was 1s. 3d. When I gave him 1s. 8d. he bowed to the ground.

A great and rich foreigner was visiting Tirnova! I found a seat on a shaky chair—everything in Tirnova is uneven: to keep everything else in

countenance, no doubt—and had half a pint of good wine for 3d.; a small glass of native brandy for my friend cost 1d. The landlord, a morose individual, led the way to a room, up stairs that were drunken, and through a door that absolutely refused to close. There was a bed which had four legs, but never stood on more than three at a time, and when I was in it was in a constant wobble, trying to show its cleverness in standing on only two but never succeeding. Water to wash—for I was grimy with an all-night journey. Certainly! A pint was brought. Not enough. In time I showed I was a mad Briton by having four pails of water brought in. That was all right; but two of the pails leaked, and the water escaped into a sort of restaurant below. The main ornament of my room was behind the bed—a sort of hearthrug in violent colours, depicting an Arab sheikh escaping with a plum-eyed damsel—who was sitting on the neck of the horse, whilst her arms were around the neck of her captor—and leaving far behind an Eastern town which apparently consisted of nothing but mosques. There was as much art in the mat as in the samplers our industrious grandmothers worked when they were young women. But there was more colour. There was a French door to the room—of course, it jammed—leading on to a balcony which was so flimsy that it ought to have tumbled down the rocks into the river. But it did not. That caused me much wonder.

Yes, I had got into an unfrequented part of the world. I had six eggs and plenty of fresh

butter; a plate of beans and another plate of sliced tomatoes; then half a litre of wine and a cup of Turkish coffee; and this—including a meal for my driver, two glasses of brandy for him, and feed for three horses—cost 1s. 7½d.

My conversation with the landlord, whose countenance suggested sour wine, was fragmentary and unsatisfactory. Delight, therefore, was consequent on the bouncing appearance of a fair and florid little man, who excitedly exclaimed, "Me speak English." "Capital," said I, "and where did you learn it?" "Me speak!" "Yes, I know, but where did you learn? In London?" "No—small boy—ver' small boy—two year—Australia; me Englishman; me speak eight languages. Me speak English good, eh?" "Then will you kindly tell the landlord that I should like my room swept." "Swept? Me no 'stand swept—me speak English, ver' good English, eh?"

He beamed and glowed and puffed and basked within the admiring gaze of the restaurant loungers as the one man in all Tirnova who could speak English. Later, through my interpreter, I brought him to positive tears by regretting that his knowledge of English was so limited. "What say? Me small boy—two year—Australia—me Englishman." Later he came to my room. He knew I was a great and powerful man! He also was an Englishman. He wanted to leave Bulgaria and go to London! But he had no money. Would I tell the British Government to send him £250? I mourned the callous-heartedness of the British Government,

and, whilst promising to do my best, should befitting opportunity occur, I besought him not to base too much expectation on the fatherly sentiment of the British Government towards a German born in Australia, who was removed when only two years old. I left him in renewed tears.

The streets of Tirnova are narrow, excruciatingly cobbled, foetid, but kept in a state of rank coolness by all the waste water being thrown into the way. The carts, hauled by slow and cumbersome black buffaloes, screech. Ponies, packed with wood, jostle along under whacking and much swearing. The vendors of melons—the cheap vegetable on sale in the gutters—wail and blaspheme when a cart-wheel crushes and squelches melon; a bony donkey, piled high with cocks and hens tied together with twine—rather uncomfortable for the poultry, one would think—is driven by a big, broad, brawny, red-petticoated woman, whose stick is plied on the nose of every buffalo or pony which does not swerve out of the way. Half the male population, even in mid-morning, are idling before the cafés, sipping gritty concoctions, puffing innumerable cigarettes, and playing dominoes.

Tirnova is litigious. Perhaps it is an inheritance; maybe it is something in the air. But in all Bulgaria there is not another town where the people are always having the law on one another. The courts are busy. I do not believe it is because the Tirnovians are either rapacious or dishonest. They are famous for their lawsuits, famous for their street of lawyers, and they take a sort of civic pride

in upholding the notoriety of their town. The lawyers have shops just like chandlers and dealers in cigarettes. In the window is a stack of musty and dusty volumes, but a good space is left so that the lawyer may be seen at his desk with important papers before him, a cigarette between his lips, and a cup of coffee at his elbow. If he have a client in hand a good view is provided for the passers-by of the pair in confab. If not, he is usually to be seen wheeled round, sitting close to the window, gazing abstractedly at the wall across the way, but certainly in evidence, and on the spot if any Tirnovian merchant wishes to maintain his reputation by an action in the courts. In the eyes of Tirnova a man who does not go constantly to law has something wrong in his composition.

Further, the people are very proud of their decrepit city. For two hundred years, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it was the capital of Bulgaria. Here lived the kings, and I barked my shins clambering the crumbled walls they built to resist the invaders. Here were plotted the revolutions which drove south the Byzantine power. Kings died of their wounds beyond the gates. In the dim year of 1257, when kings and kings' offspring were slain, there gathered here the first National Assembly, and Constantine Ticho was chosen king. Ever since then, though the fortunes of Bulgaria were broken, though the hill lands between Bulgaria and Servia were often stained with blood, though Tirnova in its corner seemed out of the way and Sofia waxed large, the fortress town never forgot



and never failed to insist that it is the lord of Bulgarian towns and deserving reverence. When the unhappy Prince Alexander, not many years ago, was forced to abdication by Russia, the three men who composed the Regency came from Tirnova. When Ferdinand was elected Prince he was not really in the saddle till he had come to Tirnova and been proclaimed. The Tirnova man likes to tell the stranger how for centuries his ancestors fought the Turks. As he sits before his café trifling with the dominoes he may look a lethargic gentleman; but when the talk touches something affecting Tirnova there is a quick spark in the eye which tells much.

Here, as elsewhere, the quiet relics of a noble past are the churches. Wandering down the ragged hillside I came to the Church of the Forty Martyrs, low-roofed, dim, vault-like, but sturdy. John Osen, the king, built it in 1330. The Turks made it into a mosque in 1389. Christian worship did not take place in it again until 1877. Only a bit of the old edifice remains. The granite pillars are of various periods. One came from a Roman temple; another is undoubtedly Greek. The Christians had helped themselves to the ruins left by former worshippers. I turned the pages of books of prayer in the tongue of ancient Slav: wafer-like, brown, crumbling in the hand.

I went down grooved stone steps to the Metropolitan Church, its glory faded, and with only one service a year now. The old dame, the custodian, had lost the key; she had no hesitation in sug-

gesting that the lock should be broken. . But, at the end of three-quarters of an hour, during which time I sat and smoked in the shade, the key was found. A dark interior, with indifferent frescoes of outrageous-visaged saints. The pillars were black marble—loot, no doubt, from a Grecian temple. In a cell, accidentally discovered by a crack in the wall, were found wonderful old manuscripts—a rich delving ground for the antiquary, I ween. The stalls for the monks, shades of memory, were cobwebbed. In the gloom could be discerned innumerable *ikons*; from a beam hung massive candelabra.

There was something eerie about this silent, gloomy, old place, with its pavements grooved by the feet of men and women long gone and long forgotten—forsaken now, save for its once-a-year ceremonial. But I wondered, as I prayed in that sanctuary of the dead, if there ever came the spirits of the little children given the kiss of greeting into the Holy Church, of tired old men who had hobbled there and given their thanks to God. For an hour I had the church to myself. I sat in the stall of a monk. From a slat, high in the roof, gushed a broad stream of sunshine and illumined the face of the Virgin. It was an hour of peace and thought.

The sun was high, the road was dusty, and the horses raced. I was off to visit the Monastery of the Transfiguration. The way twined and rose, and twined again.

We left the road and struck along in the cool of

high trees. The drowse was broken by the drip of water. A curve, and there was the Monastery. There were no old and hoary walls, no odour of sanctified centuries. It was bright and variegated. The sward was richest green, the sky was deepest blue. The walls were white, but blazoned with pictures in brilliant pigment. The tiles were warm to ruddiness, and vines trailed everywhere.

For an instant I forgot this was a Monastery. If damsels with short skirts and long hair had appeared, swinging garlands and singing and rhythmically kicking their heels, I should have accepted it all. But there was no peach-cheeked maiden. There was a kindly monk in long cassock who came forward and gave me a handshake.

"Come and rest," said he. We went into a balconied alcove, high perched, shadowed, but overlooking heavily wooded hills, whilst away on one side stretched a vast bleached plain. It was cool; there was a breeze; eagles glided slowly on the wind.

And then a saunter. The monks were proud of the vines which drooped by the casements of their dormitories; they were prouder of the wine they made. The church was small and white. There were frescoes of saints—of estimable morals, no doubt, but certainly of quaint anatomy. There was the refectory, a long, low-roofed room, where the monks ate their vegetables on marble-topped tables, all keeping silence save the appointed brother who read a pious discourse. My host, a kindly monk, had as decorations in his room photographs

of dead friends—the photographs taken after the friends were dead, laid out on a table before the house, and relatives standing round looking their best—rather after the “wedding group” style with us. Cheerful pictures!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OVER THE SHIPKA PASS.

Memorials of the Great Fight—Traces of Turkish Days—The Joy of Early Morning—Shipka Village—How the Russians behaved after their Victory—Glimpse of the Plain of Thrace.

It was in the Pass of Shipka, on the first Balkan range, that the most savage fighting took place between the Turks and the Russians in 1877.

The Pass is a narrow gully of a road over black rocks. The country is wild and woody. Here and there, though you must look for them, are weedy trenches from which the rivals poured fire into one another. On slopes are patches bumped with hillocks, as though giant moles had been at work—the graves of the soldiers. There is one cemetery; but the wall has been broken and never mended, the crosses are aslant or fallen, the graves are all covered with rank grass, not a flower is anywhere. Plentiful tears were shed when the officers were laid to rest; now they are forgotten.

Obelisks, stunted and white, points for the eye in the mountains, tell in Russian of the valour of the Russian troops, and commemorate the heroic stand of famous regiments. There are many of these monuments proclaiming the bravery of the Russian soldiery. But not one did I see to the memory of the brave Turks. None can say which are the Turkish burial places.

Not the whiz of a bullet, but the call of a bird,

is the sound you hear as you slip from the saddle after long hours of hard riding in blazing sunshine, and seek the shelter of a clump of trees.

For the better part of a day I rode through Bulgarian villages. The houses were low, and had roofs three sizes too big for them—they stretched far over, and provided rich shade. Festoons of vines put their arms across the little streets. I had only to rise in my stirrups to help myself, on the invitation of the peasantry, to bunches of grapes. Along the crooked paths were hundreds, thousands, of trees bearing their burden of plums—tart and cool, and cleaning to a dust-smeared mouth.

Remnants of Turkish days were there. The costume of the peasants was more Turkish than European. Tinted turbans were worn. The people, though Bulgars by race, were often Mahommedan in religion, a relic of long-ago compulsion. The Turks compelled the conquered people in these parts to embrace Moslemism. Succeeding generations became Moslem as a matter of course. Now the Turk has gone and the Bulgar is free; but hereabouts he clings to the Mahommedan faith, and hates his brother Bulgar who is a Christian.

So I got to Gabrova, a Turkish-like town, with more mosques than churches. It is an energetic place, doing much trade in leather and woollen manufactures.

The inn where I stayed was dirty, and the charge of three francs for the bedroom was probably excessive. There was difficulty about food, for a Church fast-day was on. However, I got a kindly

old Turk, who cared naught for Christian observances, to get me some fish—four wretched sprats; but these, with a chunk of bread and a pint of wine, served as supper for myself and attendant.

Five o'clock in the morning, and a hammering at my door. In ten minutes I was down in the inn yard, where were the four horses I had hired overnight. The best, a ramping stallion, I selected for myself, gave my attendant the next best, and left the guide to decide which of the other two he would ride, and which should be the pack-horse. No breakfast but a tiny cup of coffee which would fill about a couple of thimbles. Then into the saddle and off at daybreak. My saddle was Turkish. During that day I appreciated there must be something different about a Turk's anatomy from that of a Briton. The high pommel, the brass-plate ornamentation, the shovel-like stirrups are picturesque in a painting; but for use they are not to be commended. Plain pigskin is the best.

But the joy of early morning, even in a Turkish saddle and with no breakfast, brings song to the lips. We sang as we cantered. We tossed greetings to the peasants in the fields. We encountered bunches of them coming in to market—the men driving the goats, the married women wasting no time, but weaving wool 'twixt finger and thumb as they tramped along, the young women with red flowers in their hair as an advertisement that they were willing to be wooed and won.

We rode hard, for I wanted to get the worst of the climb over before the heavy heat. Four hours'

going and we were at the foot of the Pass. A wayside inn provided a mush of eggs and black bread for breakfast. So off again.

At first the way was broad and easy. Then it narrowed, became rugged, and the horses were in lather. At places we dismounted and walked. There were rude paths through the woods, made in times of battle so that the troops might be moved beyond sight of the Turks on the heights. I rode over a knoll where were the Russian headquarters. I climbed a precipice where, with mighty labour, cannon had been perched to sweep the Pass.

All silent now in the drowse of glowing forenoon. The eye wandered beyond the dark, cypress-cloaked ravines. The world was an impressive panorama of tumbled hills. Distance was lost in the haze of heat.

Twenty-eight years ago the echoes were roused with thunderous cannonade. Russians to the north, Turks to the south, met on this mountain road. Terrible struggles took place in the hollows of the hills. Positions were lost and won and then lost again. The Russians, fearless of death, pushed their advantage; and the Turks, heedless of life, held their ground. One battle lasted for seven days. Then a fortnight of breathing time. On came the Turks again; they captured Mount Nicholas, the commanding position in the Pass. But they were mastered by the Russians, and with terrific slaughter fled to the southern ravines. There they waited till winter. The last great fight was in mist and blinding snowstorm. The Turks were outnumbered.



They struggled in desperation. It was useless. All that were left of them, 32,000 men, unconditionally surrendered. The Russians poured down the southern slopes to Shipka village.

There stands a bedizened, gorgeous, Russian-Greek church to commemorate the victory. The massive cupola, surmounted by a cross, is of burnished gold. You can see the sun glitter on it from twenty miles away. But there is no record of the pillaging, the rapine and drunken orgies of the Russian troops when they laid hold of Shipka village.

An old man told me sad stories. "Ah!" said he, "the Turks did wrong things, but never anything so bad as the Russians." "But you are glad," said I, "that the Turk has been driven away, and that Bulgaria is now free?" "Not so very glad," he replied; "when the Turks were here taxes were light, and now they are heavy. Then we had a wider market for our goods; we had all Turkey. Now we are a separate country they try to keep out our goods. Bulgaria is a little country, and other countries tax our things. Perhaps it was best in the old days."

My guide was garrulous, and had tales to tell of the old days. It was common for Turkish brigands to despoil Christians of their trousers, and then, to save themselves from qualms of conscience, at the pistol mouth compel the breeklèss ones to declare "Allah giveth."

Standing on the summit of the range, with wooded lands behind me and bare ochreish sweeps

before, down even to Shipka village, I got my first glimpse of the Plain of Thrace—unrolled in verdant sweep till busked in a far-off glimmer of mist. It was high noontide. But the heat was tempered by a gentle breeze. I rested my lathered horse and looked over the silent, shimmering, basking land. Pity 'twas it had ever been desecrated by the horrors of bloody war.

Down the broken path we went, which crunched and burnt like hot cinders. The baked rocks threw out heat that struck the cheek like an oven blast. I was smothered in dust, and my mouth was like an old glue pot. On the level; a dig with the heel into the ribs of my horse, and in a couple of minutes we were in the village slaking our thirst with bunches of grapes.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ROSE GARDEN OF EUROPE.

Where the Best Attar of Roses Comes from—Kasanlik—A Rose Garden Eighty Miles Long—The Plantations—The Process of Distilling—Adulteration—Prices—Potency of Attar of Roses.

LADIES who are fond of the most precious of perfumes, attar of roses, will find, if they have the best attar, the name Kasanlik on the label.

But where be Kasanlik, whether in Germany or France or Italy, is a matter which not one lady out of a thousand bothers her fair head about. Kasanlik, however, is a little town on the Plain of Thrace, almost within shadow of the Balkans. The Plain of Thrace is like hundreds of others I saw in south-eastern Europe—absolutely flat, and the mountains surrounding rising almost precipitously. There is no undulation. All the valleys suggest the bottom of dried lakes cupped by hills. The remarkable thing is that this is the uniform topographical feature over a stretch of hundreds of miles.

Now a great slice of the Thracian plain is devoted to roses. In the district of which Kasanlik is the centre there are one hundred and seventy-three villages devoted to rose culture. Roses, roses, all the way, is the feature of the landscape. Where in other lands the peasants grow wheat and rye and feed cattle, here for long miles all the fields are rose gardens. It is the biggest rose garden in the world—eighty miles long.

The world seems dotted with roses; the air is

heavy with their perfume. It is not the richness of the soil that produces the abundance. The soil is rather indifferent, but there is a peculiar quality about it—like the soil of Champagne for grapes—which produces the rose most capable of yielding an exquisite essence.

The rearing of roses is a legacy from the Turks. They grew the roses, distilled the attar, supplied the harems of the pashas at Constantinople with the scent. The *dilettante* Ottoman has gone, and now there are big firms which speculate in roses as Americans speculate in wheat, and out-bid one another in purchasing the products of whole villages before the bushes have even put forth a bud—firms which are in keen commercial rivalry, and have their representatives in Paris, London, and New York.

The distilling of roses began in Persia: the word "atâr" (fragrance) is Persian. Until three hundred years ago only rose-water was obtained. It was about the beginning of the seventeenth century that the method of securing the real essence was discovered. From Persia the art spread to Arabia, from Arabia to the Barbary States, and from the Barbary States a wandering Turk brought a rose tree to Kasanlik. The *Rosa damascena*, grown in such quantities, is the same as the *Rosa damascena* grown in Tunis, though now in decreasing quantities. The *Rosa alba*, also grown, can be traced, in a sort of backward route, right through the Turkish Empire to Persia, where it is abundant.

Fifty years ago something between four and five

hundred pounds' weight of attar was produced at Kasanlik. In 1904 the exact amount was 8,147 pounds. It is by an accident that rose culture on so gigantic a scale has grown up in this out-of-the-way part of Roumelia. But everything is favourable. The mean temperature is that of France; the soil is sandy and porous, and the innumerable rivulets from the mountains provide constant irrigation.

There are plenty of other regions favourable to rose-growing. No region, however, is quite so suitable for roses needed for attar. The attar rose is sensitive to climatic conditions. Exactly identical methods with those followed in Bulgaria have been adopted at Brussa, in Asia Minor, but not with success.

The rose plantations of the Kasanlik region are not arranged in isolated plots or in narrow little hedgerows, as in the rose district of Grasse, in France, but in high parallel hedges, about a hundred yards long, taller than a man, and with a space of about six feet between them. The setting of a plantation is peculiar to the locality. Entire branches, leaves and all, from an old rose tree, are laid horizontally in ditches fourteen inches wide and the same depth. These boughs, each about a yard long, are placed side by side, four or five abreast, and form a long continuous line in the ditch. Part of the earth taken from the ditch is piled lightly on the branches, and above the furrow is placed a slight layer of stable manure.

The rose harvest begins with the flowering time, about the middle of May, and ends about the

middle of June. Conditions most favourable to the grower are for the temperature to be moderate and the rain frequent, so that the harvest is prolonged for a full month. Great inconvenience is caused if the harvest is quickly over. Gathering takes place every day during the blossoming period. Every flower that has begun to blow, and every half-opened bud, is plucked. A hectare ( $2\frac{2}{3}$  acres) produces generally about 6,600 lbs. of roses, that is almost three million roses. These three million yield at most  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. of attar. With regard to distilleries the question of water takes the lead, for unless water is at hand distillation is impossible.

The distilling apparatus is simple. Its essential part is a large copper alembic, about 4 feet 10 inches high, resting on a brick furnace. The alembic consists of a cistern with a peculiar mushroom-shaped head, and a cooling tube. The cost of the alembic is reckoned according to its weight; thus one weighing about 163 lbs. costs about £4 6s. The cost of the vat into which the cooling tube enters is from 2s. 6d. to 10s. The cooling tube enters at the top on one side, and passes out into a flask at the lower part of the other side. The operation of distilling rose-water lasts about one to one and a half hours, and is repeated again and again until all the petals picked that day have been used, because petals distilled after twenty-four hours' delay have lost so much of their scent that they only afford an unfavourable yield.

To extract the attar from the rose-water a second distillation is necessary. From 40 litres

of rose-water a flask containing 5 litres is distilled. Upon this the attar collects in the form of a yellow, oily layer about 2 to 4 millimetres thick. It is skimmed off by means of a little bowl in the shape of an inverted cone, with a small hole in the bottom to let the water, which is heavier than the attar, pass through.

The current form of adulteration is to mix attar of rose with attar of geranium, produced from the Indian geranium, or *Palma rosa*. Adulteration is not confined to Constantinople, whence, it may be said, not a single gramme of pure attar is exported. It is done in Bulgaria, sometimes by the grower himself. Since 1888 an attempt has been made to remedy this, and the importation of attar of geranium has been forbidden by the Government, so that it can only be obtained secretly. Much more often the attar is sent on to Constantinople, where it is adulterated in perfect freedom. Another, and the simplest method of adulteration, is to add some white roses to the red ones to be distilled, the product of the white being less fragrant but much richer in stearoptene. The attar of geranium is, in its turn, often adulterated with oil of turpentine. So it is within possibility that the little flask of attar of rose you purchase in a fashionable shop may have very little of the genuine perfume in it.

Simple and kindly-mannered are the peasants engaged in rose culture. But the life is not so idyllic as might be thought. There are no big rose farms. Indeed, the merchants find it more to their advantage to buy from the peasants who, on their

little patches, have grown roses, and by the most primitive means obtained the attar. This provides the merchant with security from loss. If a particular crop is damaged the peasant bears the loss. Besides, the two or three Kasanlik merchants have the monopoly in their hands; they have their own peasant customers, and have the power of fixing the price of the attar. The humble rose-grower can take it or leave it, but, if he keeps his attar, where else is he to find a market? Some fortunes have been made out of attar of rose; but no peasants have grown rich.

I had the pleasure of seeing over one or two of the Kasanlik stores. The merchants are amiable. But each took me aside and whispered in my ear: "Of course, we are quite friendly with our competitors, only I would like you to remember one thing: ours is the only genuine attar. All the other is adulterated. Of course, our rivals deny it, but we know." That little speech was made in each place. I would like to believe that all the attar sent from Kasanlik is pure. But when, searching for truth, I made independent inquiries, I was sorrowfully reduced to the conviction that none of it is absolutely pure.

No perfume is quite so strong as that of attar. Remember the yield is less than one twenty-fifth of one per cent. (0.04) of the roses used. For 1 lb. of attar more than 4,000 lbs. of roses are needed. The peasant gets about 18s. an ounce. For the same thing, as sold in Paris or London, the price is £8 an ounce.



So strong is the odour that nothing short of a hermetically sealed jar will restrain it. A glass stopper, however tight, will not keep it back. Indeed, so strong is genuine attar of rose that it is nauseating. To remedy this and make it genial to the nostrils may be put forward as a kindly explanation why it is so often adulterated and weakened. To be in a Kasanlik store was to be in a thick and sickening atmosphere. I put my nose over a copper jar in which was £8,000 worth of attar, and the smell was so powerful as to be disgusting and productive of headache.

The time to visit Kasanlik is about the birth of June. Then you can get astride your horse and ride for two days, forty miles a day, feast your eyes on a land of damask blooms, and breathe the scent of millions of roses. When the wind is gentle the roses of Kasanlik have their perfume carried fifty miles. Anyway, Bulgarians fifty miles off have assured me that the breeze from the Kasanlik region has been laden with the breath of a rose garden. The village girls are out early, piling their aprons with roses and filling the slow and creaking oxen carts. No Battle of Flowers at Nice ever had such a mass of roses as deck the rude carts of Kasanlik in June. And the brown-cheeked, black-eyed peasant maidens always deck their hair with the most gorgeous of the blooms.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CITY OF THE PLAIN.

A Sunday Evening at Philippopolis—Individuality of the City  
—A Passion for Education—Bulgarians not Speculative—  
Agriculture—Industry of the Peasants—Return of the Turks  
—Bulgar Characteristics—Fleeing from the Heat—Monastery  
of St. Petka—A Night in the Open.

THE Plain of Thrace is flat—curiously flat—and encompassed by high, black and jagged mountains. All over are dotted what look like exaggerated mole-hills—tumuli. The plain reeks vapourish in the summer, and through the quivering haze rises a giant molehill, not looking large in the far distance, but on nearer view showing several hills, almost like a crouching animal. It is a great knuckle of uneven granite rising out of the plain. On it Philip of Macedon reared a city. That is the Philippopolis of to-day.

It was on Sunday night that I arrived after sixteen hours of hard travel over dusty roads. The horses put down their heads and raced madly along the tortuous, cobbled streets. The driver halloed, swung his whip and cracked it; for however drowsy the pace may be away from a town, the Bulgarian driver always finishes his journey in a welter, imagining, innocent man, that people will think that is the way he has been travelling all day. Which nobody does even for a moment think.

I was weary and aching with long travelling, and had an irritable premonition of the kind of sleeping

accommodation that would be waiting me. Then a lighted street, a garish café, the ecstatic thrill of gipsy music! Hotel porters tumbled into view. There was salaaming. The proprietor appeared. Ah, yes, the telegram had arrived! Rooms were ready. This way! Capital rooms, clean, neat, simple, rather French. I glanced in a glass at my begrimed condition — countenance unrecognisable, hair grey with dust. A bath! Ah, a bath was ready! And then a little dinner. Capital! And a good bottle of wine, eh? No; a pint of the local wine. By all means! So a change, and then to the courtyard.

Picture the scene. A garden, lit with many lamps. Beneath the trees innumerable tables. At the tables sat "all Philippopolis," sipping coffee, drinking beer, toasting one another in litres of wine. At one end of the garden was a little stage. There was a Hungarian band which played rhapsodically, there was a skittish damsel in short skirts who sang songs, there was a big *basso profundo* who roared, then there was more gipsy band, and more of the young lady in short skirts.

It was Sunday night and Philippopolis was enjoying itself. I suppose anything like that would be considered wicked in England. But it did not strike me that the folk of Philippopolis were enjoying the cool evening in anything but the most innocent of ways.

As I sat enjoying the happiness around me, I thought that in my own land of England, far off, there were perhaps other ways of checking the evils

and the degradation of drunkenness besides the closing of public houses and the shrieking denunciation of those who make no pretence to be strictly teetotal. I mused that maybe in time my own countrymen would get more sense, when the stand-up bar would be abolished, when there would be no private bars, no shutters to hide from others your countenance when having refreshment, no general atmosphere of discredit about drinking. I thought perhaps we shall see places where a man can take his wife, yes, and even his children, of an evening; where they may have a little table, the husband have his glass of ale if he wants it and his pipe, the wife her cup of tea, and the children their cakes, and they may all listen to a band. It is our rigorous puritanic system which sends the workman—who has no wish in his heart to neglect wife and bairns—to seek relaxation in an over-crowded, ill-ventilated bar, where he meets mates and drinks more than he intends; finds, when it is too late, that drink is his curse, and becomes the subject of a temperance leaflet. A man would not drink so much if he had some inducement to spend his evenings with his wife and children. The gentleman we Britons call “the foreigner” is no more virtuous than ourselves, but he has not the drunkenness we have, simply because the customs of his country provide he shall drink in full view of the public, and nobody wag the head and think he is going to the devil. I thought this, as, in the ease of laziness after a hard day, I watched the Bulgarians enjoying themselves. But I was drowsy. I went off to my neat

little room, and fell asleep to the strains of gipsy dance music.

Philippopolis has individuality. It has certainly more character than Sofia, because whilst Sofia has been making itself over again in likeness to other European capitals, Philippopolis has remained itself, and is proud of the distinction. Its inhabitants have something of the superior air of folks in an English cathedral city for the neighbouring parvenu town of go-ahead manufacture. Its commerce is not large, but it congratulates itself on the excellence of its productions.

An interesting institution is the Alexander Gymnasium, which, founded in 1885, cost nearly £26,000, and is maintained at an annual expense of over £5,000. It gives instruction to youths from ten to twenty-two years of age, quite free of charge, except twenty francs per annum in the higher and ten francs per annum in the lower classes, the money going towards providing the poorest children with books and clothes. The Lycée is a similar institution for girls, where they are educated on a corresponding plan in all subjects, except, apparently, classics. The Bulgarians have a positive passion for education.

What impressed me forcibly in my wanderings through Bulgaria was the absence of people who are either very rich or very poor. I doubt if throughout the whole of the Principality more than half a dozen persons can be found with a capital of over £50,000.

On all hands I heard laments that the commercial expansion of Bulgaria was hindered by the

lack of capital. But if the Bulgars had it, I doubt whether they possess the qualities necessary for modern success in business. They are not a speculative race. There is an absence of lively competition. A merchant asks a price for a thing. It is too high, and he will not yield, though he knows it is probable you will get the same thing cheaper elsewhere. He does not yet grasp the advantages of small profits and quick returns. The consequence is that most of the big businesses are in the hands of foreigners. Twenty years ago England led the way in the Bulgarian market. Now England has fallen behind. France also has not been able to hold her own. Austria has been improving her trade relationship all the time. Though, of course, the ambitious Bulgars would like to jump to the front as a manufacturing country, the wise spirits do well in focusing the national energy upon the development of its agricultural resources.

Bulgaria has immense opportunities in agriculture. Its size, including Roumelia, is about that of Ireland and Wales. Everywhere the soil is fertile, though in places I saw tracts most difficult of cultivation, because of the mixture of stones with surface soil. It is a land rich in the smaller timbers; its vegetables and fruits, including vineyards, are excellent; not only are there wheat but also many tobacco fields. Of cattle there is plenty.

Concerning the industry of the peasants I have already written. The tenure under which they hold their land is partly a remnant of the system when the Turk held sway. In those old days

holders of land were obliged to pay a tithe of the gross produce of their farms to the tax-collectors of the Sultan. When this tithe was not paid, or the land remained uncultivated for three years, or the owner died without heirs, the Sultan became the possessor. Since the Liberation, the only material change is that the State occupies the place formerly held by the Sultan. Under the Turkish *régime*, payment was usually in kind. Of recent years the Bulgarian Government has endeavoured to secure payment in cash, but not very successfully. To part with a tenth of the produce does not seem hard to the peasant, but when he has converted the produce into hard cash, then, in truth, it wrings his very heart to open his purse.

All along the Turkish borderland there is a mixture of Christian and Mahommedan villages. Naturally, when the rule of the Sultan was broken, there was a great rush of Turks out of Bulgaria into Turkey, because they dreaded reprisals for the atrocities to which the Bulgars had been subjected. Now, however, that Bulgaria is more or less settled, there has, certainly of recent years, been a considerable reflux of Turks. Out of the three and a half million population of the Principality there are, I believe, something like three-quarters of a million of Mahommedans.

I made an excursion into the mountains south of Philippopolis—a region practically unknown to the rest of Europe—and there saw something of the Pomaks, or Bulgarian Mahommedans. Some authorities are of opinion they are a separate race.

Personally, I am inclined to the belief they are just Bulgarians whose ancestors changed their religion.

Going about the country, I got to admire the characteristics of the Bulgars. I do not say they are a lovable people. Indeed, their taciturnity, their sullenness, even their uncouthness—especially the Bulgars outside the towns—have produced a feeling in some travellers amounting almost to dislike. But though stolid they are solid, and they have a virtue which is really above all price in a land so near the East—they are truthful. They are all keen on the ownership of land, and every Bulgar is a politician.

At times the heat from the plains of Thrace makes the atmosphere of Philippopolis as hot and clammy as a Turkish bath. I remember one day, having panted and perspired in the palpitating heat, a Bulgarian friend—a journalist—and I decided to escape by hastening to a monastery in the hills, and there secure a night's sleep in coolness. We rode south, where lies Macedonia.

Part of the way was along the old main road to Constantinople. It was at least a foot deep in dust. Any buffalo-cart or horseman was only distinguished by a cloud of dust. Trying to overtake a cart or jog-trot equestrian was to push through a white, choking, blinding, tongue-coating cloud.

We were making for the little monastery of St. Petka. There had been one of the innumerable church festivals, and crowds of gaudily-clad peasants were returning home from their junketings. Here was no trifling with the garb of civilisation. The



shirts and waistcoats of the men were radiant with ornamentation. The women all wore "the fringe," long and greasy; their jackets were green, and their wide bulging petticoats were staring red; on their heads, round their necks, encircling their arms, were masses of silver decorations made of coins—a simple way of holding wealth, easy to disperse when money is wanted, and explaining why nearly all the Bulgarian and Turkish coins you get in the borderland are pierced. On patches of withered, dust-soaked grass, groups were enjoying themselves. A man sitting on the ground droned at the bagpipes. A big circle was formed, and in the furious heat the peasants were slowly and monotonously stamping round, going through the *hora* dance.

We got to a dirty village called Stanimika—inhabited by Greeks who make wine and silk, and idle their time in the vile cafés. I sipped cherry syrup whilst my friend went out to bargain for mules to take us to the monastery. There was much haggling. No riding saddles being procurable, we got pack saddles, borrowed greasy pillows and rugs from an inn-keeper, and set off. Stirrups were formed of rope. My mule was a huge and gaunt animal, and when I was perched on the top of the packing the sensation was like that of being stuck on the summit of a camel's hump.

In the glowing warmth of the fading day, we clambered the steep and rocky path. At places the going was slow; the mules had to pick their steps gingerly up the staircase of broken boulders.

The hoofs clattered with an echo as we cantered

into the courtyard of the monastery of St. Petka, a plain, bare-walled retreat built long ago by a brigand who had done well in business, and wanted to do something for the peace of his soul before he passed into the shadow to settle his account. Monks bubbling with greeting ran to give us welcome, all save the chief—a short, shaky, ghost-like old man, ninety years of age, who had lived here for forty years, and decided twenty years ago that descending and ascending the mountain path were too much for his age, and had never descended or ascended since.

I went upon a balcony perched like an eagle's eyrie on a jut of rock. The plain of Thrace lay dun, like a faded carpet, before me. Suddenly through the hot breath of the atmosphere came a long-drawn icy sigh which made the trees shiver. Through the opaque glow crawled a leaden bar, which broke and showed an amber sky streaked with blood. The world was clouded with grey, the spirits of tempest shrieked along the mountains, the trees groaned. Then came the rain, in slow heavy blobs at first, but hastening to a deluge. The world was obliterated. There was nothing but an awesome cavern cracked with lightning streaks, and shaken by the mighty turmoil of thunder. It was grand. Then it all ceased. A pale blue sky peeped through a cloud-rift. The birds, which had been terrified, carolled again. Evening came like a prayer.

I had gone to the monastery to get a night of cool sleep. But, high-perched though my chamber was, the night was sultry and listless, and sleep was

impossible. So I lit a lantern, gathered a rug and a pillow, picked my way over the sleeping peasants who were slumbering on the broad balcony, got beyond the monastery, climbed higher, till, on the hill, I came to soft foot-tread beneath a fir tree. There in the open, with the fragrance of night in my nostrils, I slept till at dawn the clang of the monastery bell woke me once more to the beauty of this kind old world.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE LAND OF THE TURK.

Adrianople—Mistaken for a Person of Distinction—The Real East—A Mixed Population—The Mosques—A Great Fire—A City of Terror—An Armenian's Adventure—Celebrating the Sultan's Accession—A Turkish Exhibition—Turkish Time—A Visit to the Vali.

IN the blackness of the night the train slowed and drew long breaths at Hermanli. We were still in Bulgaria, and the frontier guard was smart and alert.

On went the train through the dark. There was a fire on the bank. At attention stood sallow, ill-clad, ill-washed, down-at-heel, and fezzed soldiers. We were in Turkey.

With groans the train pulled up at Mustapha Pasha, ill-lit compared with Hermanli, and the guard slouched on either side of the carriages whilst a search was made for contraband—they crumpled my shirts, and were suspicious about my soap-box—and passports were inspected and returned. On again, in the land of the Sultan. At every half-mile, at every culvert and every bridge, blazed a fire, and there was a group of melancholy Turkish soldiers.

Not so long before this the Bulgarian revolutionaries had made an attempt to benefit their friends in Macedonia by blowing up a bridge on this line to Constantinople. Now the Turks were keeping watch.

I was expected at Adrianople. The train had

hardly slowed when I was saluted by a black-whiskered, red-fezzed man. "Sir," said he, "I am the dragoman to the Consulate of his Britannic Majesty." Behind him stood the Consulate *kavass*, a Circassian, tall and as fair as an Englishman, handsome in his blue uniform and gold-strapped sword, and with the British arms on his fez. There was a scrimmage and a babel among the Turks over passports, and a further inspection of baggage. The officials mistook me for a person of distinction. They saluted and salaamed. I offered my passport. They would not trouble to look at it; the coming of the *effendi* had been telegraphed from the frontier; also news came a fortnight before from the Turkish representative at Sofia that I was "a great English lord," and must be shown courtesy. Should I open my baggage? The officials would not think of it. I saluted; they salaamed. Soldiers would deliver it. A carriage and pair was waiting.

Adrianople is two miles from the station. The night was pitch. Not a soul was about but the men on guard. They peered at the carriage, but when they saw the *kavass* they shuffled to attention. Over the cobbles we rattled through that city as of the dead. No lights save dim flickers in the guard-houses.

While the morning was yet fragrant I was out in the narrow, crowded streets. Their meanness was saved by the dome of many a stately mosque, and the graceful and frail tapering of many a lofty minaret piercing the blue vault.

The scenes were very Turkish in their grime and sloth. The people were just a mob in deshhabille. All the men seemed half-dressed; all the women were shrouded as though to hide how negligent they had been before their mirrors. The air was cracked with angry shouts, hucksters in the way, mules which would not get out of the way. There was the shrill cry of the vendor of iced lemonade. The glare and the uproar were blinding and deafening.

A wheel to one side and we were in a caravansery. Memory of Haroun al Raschid!—here was the real East. A great yard walled with high buildings, brightly painted, and with arched balconies. The slim limbs of trees spread wide branches, so the pavement was fretted with a mosaic of lights and shadows. In the middle was a fountain of marble, cracked and smeared, but the splash of water in a sunray was coolness itself. On a little platform squatted dignified Turks, their beards henna-dyed, their cloaks falling loose and easy, their turbans snowy-white—save one which was green, indicating a *haji* who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. They all puffed slowly, sedately, meditatively, at their narghiles. Here was no vulgar hustle; here was only repose.

Next to the long, dimly-lit tunnels with shops on either side, called bazaars. It was all weird and garish and un-European. Then a look at the wares. That crockery was from Austria; all these iron articles were German; the cheap jewellery was from France; the flaming cottons were from Lancashire; the gramophones shrieking “Ya-ya-ye-a-

ah-ah-ah!" to attract, came from America. Nothing was Turkish save the dirt.

The population is a medley of Turk, Greek, Jew, and Armenian. But all the trading, the commerce, and the banking is in the hands of foreigners. The Turk is hopeless as a business man.

Yet an old-time veneration rests upon Adrianople. Its story goes back to the time of Antinous. It was rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian. In the fourth century Constantine defeated Licinius out on the plains, and half a century later Valens was defeated by the Goths. But the walls of the city were so strong that they did not capture it. A thousand years later it fell into the hands of the Turks, and it was their capital before Constantinople became the centre of Ottoman rule. Another five centuries, and the Russians, without opposition, marched into Adrianople and compelled the Turks to recognise the independence of Greece. It rose, it became mighty; it has fallen from its great estate.

Solemn is the mosque of the Sultan Selim, rearing its four stately minarets. Beautiful is the minaret of Bourmali Jami, spiral in white marble and red granite. Highest of all is the minaret of Utch Sherifely, with three balconies, where, at the fall of the sun, flushing Adrianople with radiance, stand the priests and cry, echoing, pathetically, over the tumult of the city: "There is only one God, and Mahomet is His Prophet. Come, all who are faithful, and pray!"

The Turks hate the Christians; the Christians hate each other; the Jew hates both.

I was in Adrianople during the great fire of September, 1905, when sixty thousand persons were rendered homeless. It broke out in the Armenian quarter. "The Turks have done this, or the Jews, who else?" shrieked the Armenians. Armenians all over Turkey believed it was the diabolical act of their enemies. They could not be persuaded to believe anything else. As a matter of fact, the origin of the fire was most ordinary—the upsetting of a lamp. Half a dozen Christian women were taken ill in a narrow street near the British Consulate. "Ah, sir," yelled an Armenian of whom I saw much, "there you have proof of how wicked those devils the Turks are. They poisoned the well." "Yes," I said, "but the well is used by Moslem women, and how is it none of them were poisoned?" The Armenian did not know; but he was not going to sacrifice the conviction that the Turks were the cause of the poisoning of Christians. Everything that happens in Adrianople is ascribed to the religious hatred of somebody else.

Adrianople is a city of terror. Christians, Armenians, whispered into my ear tales of revenge on the cruel Turks. But they did not take place. The Turks were in constant fear of outrages, bombs and the like, from Bulgarians or Armenians. At sundown every Christian must be within doors. Otherwise there is arrest and imprisonment. No light must be burning in a Christian house three hours after sundown, or the soldiers butt the door with their rifles, demand reasons, and under threats



levy blackmail; no Mahommedan can go through the streets after dark without a lantern; no Mahommedan must even be in the streets after ten o'clock without a special permit. The only sound at night is the heavy tread of the patrol.

When the city is wrapped in dark it is like a place in siege. One night I dined at the Austrian Consulate. The table was spread in the little courtyard; the surroundings of the old Turkish house, the drip of the fountain, the gleam of the moon, gave a touch of romance. The hours sped merrily. But when I was ready to go I found six Turkish soldiers waiting in the porch to be my escort back to the British Consulate. I felt like a prisoner.

One afternoon I accompanied an Armenian to his vineyard on the slopes beyond the city. There, in the cool of the day, we plucked and ate many grapes. The topic of conversation was the savagery of the Turks. I was told of how, a week or two before, several soldiers outraged a Greek woman working in the vineyard. "Didn't you interfere?" I asked. "Interfere! Ah, sir, you do not understand. I would have been beaten to death." "Then did you complain to the authorities?" "What was the good? I am an Armenian. I would have been told, 'You are a liar.' That is all." "Well, but suppose I caught soldiers committing an outrage and I pulled my revolver and shot them dead, what would happen to me?" "Nothing. You are from England. You have your Consul, your Ambassador at Constantinople.

The Turks would hush it all up. You would not even be arrested."

Night had just closed as we got back to the city. My Armenian acquaintance, who was wearing the fez, was stopped by a soldier at a small bridge. "Why do you come in the dark?" asked the soldier, raising his rifle. "I have been to my vineyard," was the reply. "You are a dog," said the soldier, "and I will shoot you." "I am with the *effendi*," said the Armenian, turning to me. My clothes and particularly my slouch felt hat proclaimed I was European. The soldier sulked and let us pass. "Would he have shot you?" I asked. "No; but I should have been compelled to pay him money, or he would have arrested me for being out after dark. He would have fired if I had tried to get away." "And why didn't he make you pay?" "He saw your hat. You are a European. The Turks are frightened. In your travels in Turkey never wear the fez; better than an escort will be your hat; always wear it." And I always did.

It was the crack of dawn, and far off was the roll of drums and the heavy, melancholy Turkish music leading troops at quick march. With rattle and rip and the sodden slip-slouch of innumerable feet, soldiers were being marched into Adrianople. This was the anniversary of the accession of Abdul Hamid to the throne of the Caliphate.

The troops massed before the Konak, the official residence of the Vali, the Viceroy. In the grey of the new day there was something weird in the as-



IN A MIXED VILLAGE: TURKS AND BULGARIANS.



A GOOD TRADE IN DAGGERS.



semblage, the dark blue uniforms, the swarthy faces, the red fezzes. The officers were gay with orders on their breasts. There was the fluttering of the blood-hued flag and crescent; here and there hung the green holy flag. The Vali stood on a balcony. For a moment there was a pause. Then the regimental bands played a stave, minor and sonorous, like the beginning of a noble anthem, and when the brass instruments ceased, the warrior concourse raised the shout, "*Patishahim tchok Yacha!*" ("Live long the Sultan!"). The effect was magnificent. The band skirled into cheerful banging.

The main streets were decorated—by order. Innumerable pennants fluttered. The red and the green crescent flags waved smartly. There were triumphal arches. The whole thing was rather tinsel—but these things always are.

Where was the cheering populace? There was no cheering. As for the populace, all windows and doors were closed, and those who wanted to see the Vali were forced up side streets and bullied by the soldiers. With the dragoman from the British Consulate as my kindly guide, and the *kavass* as my protector, I had free passage. Truly I was an individual of importance! Every soldier jumped to the salute as I passed. But such a demonstration, instead of giving me satisfaction, made me feel supremely ridiculous. I wanted to laugh. Only twice before had I ever felt the same sensation: when as a boy I walked on to a platform to receive a book prize for good conduct, and when I walked

up the aisle of a church to get married. Yet though there was prohibition against peeping, it was easy to catch a glimpse of women behind the casements, whilst on a broad mosque wall were huddled a hundred shrouded creatures, like awkward bundles with eyes.

The Vali was about to open an exhibition of Adrianople products. Turkey had got so far on the road to progress as to have an exhibition. And this was the first exhibition ever held in Turkey. It seemed a sort of miniature Earl's Court. The chief article on sale was cigarettes. The real Turkish damsels who sold them were quite as persistent as the imitation Turkish damsels at West Kensington. The girls were Christian Turks, and their faces were uncovered. Old and fat Turks hung round and leered. There was tobacco in all stages of preparation. There were some very bad pictures. There were passable local woollen goods, and much excellent embroidery. There were farming implements, but these were imported.

The place was a swelter of officials, and they were all very fat; all wore gold and silver lace in abundance, and had broad sashes and orders which jostled one another. The greetings were effusive. The salaam is deep; then there is a wave of the right hand to the ground, to the waistcoat, up to the forehead, indicating that feet, heart, head, boots, waistcoat, and fez are yours. When you enter a room everybody does this to you, and you proceed to do it separately to every individual. So in a gathering assembly there is no time for any-

thing but salaaming. I recognised my incompetence to go through the ceremonial towards thirty stout old Turkish gentlemen. I was coward enough to shelter myself behind my nationality. I bowed and shook hands with the one or two that were nearest. After a stately procession we all went into the garden, listened to the band, and ate indifferent ices.

I was settling down to a cosy siesta when rat-tat at the door of the Consulate. A Turkish general in gorgeous garb had arrived. We salaamed. He spoke English, for had he not been attaché at Washington years ago? He brought a message. His master, the Vali, Mahomet Arif Pasha, sent his compliments, and would I honour him with a visit in his garden at nine o'clock? Nine o'clock struck me as an extraordinary hour to meet a gentleman in a garden. But then I recollected that nine o'clock Turkish is about four o'clock European.

Oh, the Turkish time! The day begins with sunrise. That is twelve o'clock. But the sun does not rise at the same time every day in Turkey any more than in other places. So the Turk—who happily has much spare time—is constantly twiddling the lever of his cheap Austrian watch to keep it right. It may be the best time-keeper in the world, but the more accurate it is the less does it keep proper time in Turkey. Indeed, a watch that is somewhat vagrant in its moods is more likely to be correct. The consequence is that nobody is ever sure of the time. There or thereabouts is suffi-

ently good for the Turk. The very fact that the Turks are satisfied with a method of recording time which cannot be sure unless all watches are changed every day, shows how they have missed one of the essentials of what we call civilisation.

It was the most radiant crimson-cushioned carriage I could hire in Adrianople in which I rode out, with the Consulate dragoman and my interpreter, to visit the Vali. The garden of the Viceroy is beyond the city. All the country was withered and parched brown; the road was deep in dust; the air panted hot and oven-like. Past the guards. The trees were tall, weedy, and choked with dust. No lawns, but rough tangled ground and tufts of rank grass. (Let Englishmen offer an occasional prayer of thanks for our English lawns, the like of which are not elsewhere in this world.)

Within the shadow of a pretty kiosk, on the shelf of a plantation, and overlooking a tawny little river with parched plain beyond, sat the Vali, surrounded by his staff. He was the least radiant of the throng. A stout, full-faced, lethargic man. His eyes were drowsy, and he talked slowly. Only two small orders did he wear on his breast, whilst the coat fronts of the men about him were dazzling with them.

The first minute or two of conversation was stiff and formal. Then I got a peep of Turkish methods. The Vali knew about me; he knew when I had arrived, where I dined last night; that my interpreter had been sent from Constantinople by Sir



Nicholas O'Connor. I had been watched. The Vali was interested in England, and was anxious to know the difference between the House of Lords and the House of Commons. "Your Excellency should come to England," I said. "Ah," he replied, with a sigh, "I would give that which I wear on my head to visit Europe, but——" and he shrugged his shoulders.

Yes, like many another Turk, he would sacrifice his fez, the emblem of his nationality, to get away. High was his position, with an authority only less than that of the Sultan himself. But he was a gilded prisoner, sent by his imperial master to Adrianople, fifteen years before, there to rule, but surrounded by spies. Never, during all those fifteen years, had he been allowed to visit Constantinople, never even to get beyond the sight of Adrianople. He was a sad man.

We talked of many things. Now and then a general or a colonel was signalled to step forward and join in the conversation; but at the first opportunity they stepped back again. In the near wood a band was playing; and all the time refreshments were being provided: cigarettes and coffee, cigarettes and ice cream, cigarettes and caramels, cigarettes and grapes, and then more cigarettes.

At the end of an hour I mentioned what had been in my mind. I wished to travel in the interior. Did his Excellency think it safe? "By the might of the Sultan all the land is tranquil," said the Vali—"which means there are massacres somewhere," was whispered by my interpreter. I made a

courtesy speech on my delight at visiting Adrianople. "Who drinks of the waters of Adrianople visits it seven times," said the Vali. "Then I look forward with delight to my next six visits," I replied.

Bows; salaams; the band plays, and off I go back to Adrianople in a swelter of dust.

## CHAPTER XII.

WHERE THE "BEST BORDEAUX" COMES FROM.

Turkish Roads—A Halt—Kirk Kilisé—Shipping Wine to Bordeaux  
—Visiting the Governor—Etiquette—The Return Visit—  
Elaborate Make-believe—A Representative of Great Britain.

THE Vali of Adrianople gave me an escort of five horsemen for my journey to Kirk Kilisé. The head-man was a broad and burly Turk, with whiskers which would have made a Sikh envious. The horses were fine animals, with more than a touch of the Arab in them—a contrast to the weedy nags I was able to hire for myself and attendants.

Nothing if not courteous, my Turkish friend, the head-man, shocked at the indignity I must feel at bestriding so comical a steed, insisted I should "swop" with a soldier. All the horses had decorations of blue beads on their foreheads—to resist the evil eye.

"Ah! there is a good road all the way to Kirk Kilisé," I had been told. There was a road. It had been made for eternity, of boulders the size of my head, and half buried in the earth. It was one of the most violent, liver-jerking roads I ever came across. Indeed, it was so sturdy that nobody used it except to cross it. The tracks wriggled along first one side and then the other, over Mother Earth, and when worn to slush made a little detour.

We growl at the negligence of Eastern nations in not providing roads. The Turk does not like a set road. It is too hard for him. He prefers his ox-

cart should creak along a haphazard path of his own. I verily believe that if the Great North Road could be transferred from England to Turkey the Turks would never use it, but would break down the adjoining hedges and make a trail across the fields. It is no good arguing with the Turk about the made road being the best. He will salaam, say "The *effendi* always speaks wisdom!" and will not use it.

With the clatter of swords and click of muskets slung behind the soldiers' backs, and tassels dancing over the claret-tinted fezzes, we made a brave show as we scampered eastward over the plains.

There was a weedy Mahommedan burial ground. The grass was long and coarse and withered. The graves were forlorn. Tombs were in ruin. The ill-made slabs, with a gawky stone turban or fez to denote a man, and plain slab to tell of a woman, were crooked, higgledy-piggledy, broken and tumbled. The wind sent a constant spray of dust over the burial ground. It was forsaken. Here lay the once well-known of Adrianople. But no sentiment had followed them. Any vanity about being remembered was damped by looking upon these decrepit pillars of the forgotten.

The sky was murky, the wind soughed, the land was dreary. The Turkish villages were incoherent jumbles of mud huts—no hedges, no flowers, no grass even. The buffalo wallowed in slime. The winnowing of corn was on foot-beaten patches of hard earth. The peasants were scraggy, wan, and ill-fed. They made a needy living by dishevelled agriculture.

The rain came with icy drip ; the wind numbed ; wild birds screeched overhead.

We were clammy and hungry when we called halt after five hours in the saddle. The resting-place was Mahmoud Pasha Haskui. It was a *han*, a mud-walled yard with windowless, mud-floored chambers the size of a henroost, and with the odour and other characteristics of a henroost. A dozen fowls were in the chamber while I munched my bread and drank a pint of wine—really capital native wine, which cost 3d. In a burst of liberality I sent for the sore-eyed old reprobate who kept the *han*, and directed him to make coffee for the soldiers. That cost 2½d., and the soldiers saluted me for my generosity. Give a Turkish soldier a *medjedeh* (about 4s.) and he will think he ought to have been given two. Give him a cup of coffee, which costs a halfpenny, and there is nothing he will not do for you. The one is a gift, the other is hospitality. He does not reason the matter out, but the hospitality pleases his sense of dignity. Around the *han* hung woe-begone creatures in rags, out of which they never got, for fear they would never be able to find their way into them again.

Past noon the day bettered. The country improved. The wastes gave place to undulations covered with vineyards. We dashed past great tuns of wine drawn by drowsy oxen, and big men on ridiculously small donkeys.

We were in Kirk Kilisé, with its twisted, quaint, clean, and vine-festooned streets. The town lacked Turkish savour. Out of its twenty thousand popula-

tion a full half were Greek, and the other half about equally divided between Jews and Turks. The Turk is the least important. The Jew does the trading and the Greek the wine-making. Seldom do foreigners come—one or two a year, and then Frenchmen. The wine of Kirk Kilisé is good. But the Turk is a teetotaler—generally. So most of the wine is taken to the coast, purchased by French firms, shipped to Bordeaux, and then sold to the world as “best Bordeaux.” Bordeaux is known; Kirk Kilisé is not. But many old gentlemen smack their lips over Kirk Kilisé when they imagine they are smacking them over Bordeaux.

I exchanged visits with the Governor, Galib Pasha. It was all very formal and in strict etiquette. We smoked each other's cigarettes, and drank each other's coffee. I told him how delighted I was to visit Kirk Kilisé, and he told me how delighted he was that I was delighted. He was a thin, pale, nervous man, with the most restless eyes I ever saw. They jumped about with nigh tragic alertness, as though he were in momentary dread somebody was about to draw a revolver and shoot. I was introduced to some minor officials.

It was interesting to study the by-play of ceremonial. Everybody wore the fez, and everybody, as elsewhere, kow-towed to the ground, placing their boots, their belts, and their heads at the disposal of the Governor, and when he seemed to have no need of them, proceeding to place them at my disposal, until the arrival of other officials gave them the opportunity of elaborately and metaphorically ex-

changing boots, belts and brains with everybody else.

No man in Turkey has his coat unbuttoned in the presence of a superior or equal. That is vulgarity. It is offensive to cross your legs. I was told of this later by my dragoman, for I had left my jacket unbuttoned, and I had certainly crossed my legs. The Governor, having heard of the ways of Europeans, "saved my face" in the presence of his staff by also crossing his legs. To sit well back on your chair indicates familiarity. I noticed all the officials, save the Governor and myself, sat forward on the very edge of their chairs, kept their knees together, their toes turned in, their hands drooping, their eyes usually humble, and when paid a compliment they touched their belts, their breasts, and again their heads.

The stern formality of these official visits between the Governor and myself was oppressive. I felt all the time like bursting through decorum and exclaiming, "I'm jolly glad to see you; let us go for a stroll."

The Governor impressed me. He meant to impress me. We saw a lot of one another in the course of a day and a half, and he never ceased in his efforts. He assumed that I assumed—like all ignorant foreigners—that Turks were lazy, that they never did to-day what they could put off till to-morrow, and would not do it to-morrow if it could conveniently be shunted over to next week. He was determined to undeceive me. Only he overdid it. Kirk Kilisé might have been the centre of the

Ottoman Empire, and the Governor the Grand Vizier.

At first I thought he was merely busy. In his reception room at the Konak we had not been talking two minutes before a secretary appeared with a telegram. The Governor scowled, knit his brows, scribbled something. The secretary bowed and retired. Later a sudden inspiration. A soldier at a signal shuffled forward. A telegram form! He wrote a message. Now we could talk. Soon in came a bunch of documents. His eye danced through them, a mark here with a pencil, a scrawl there, something like a signature elsewhere. Thinking I was in the way I made fulsome adieux. I had been back for barely ten minutes in my little Greek hotel, and my little dragoman had scarcely finished swearing in Greek at the proprietor for its filth, and was perspiring in getting the fly-blown best room to look less dirty, when the Governor paid his return visit. Ah, delighted! Coffee and cigarettes. Soldiers stood at the doorway; others stood in the passage. The secretary again. Two telegrams this time. Pardon! Oh, certainly; affairs of state must be attended to. Officials, officers, and others appeared. They whispered. The Governor smiled; he knit his brows. He scribbled. We talked. Another inspiration. He wrote hurriedly on a tablet, called a soldier, and despatched him post haste. Documents, sheaves of them to sign. There never was so busy a man.

“ You are learning Turkish? ” he asked. “ Oh,



I have already learnt *Yavash*," I answered with a smile. He smiled also, and then he knit his brows. *Yavash* means "go slowly." *Yavash*, *Yavash* is the phrase most often heard in Turkey. Foreigners are disposed to apply it contemptuously to all things Turkish. The Governor was going to show me that *Yavash* did not apply to him. He received three telegrams and wrote six.

Would I give him the pleasure of my company to listen to the band? Charmed! We went to the public gardens, with four or five of the staff hovering round and a dozen soldiers within call. The gardens were a sandy patch with several limp and colourless bushes. But there were chairs and little tables and beverages to be obtained, and there was a band. I drank absinthe from a glass; the Governor drank absinthe also, but from a coffee cup. Turks are very rigorous in observance of teetotalism. Besides, were not the eyes of half Kirk Kilisé upon the Governor and his visitor? He raised his finger. A soldier jumped from behind a tree. A telegram form! The man was carrying them, ready for emergencies. Later a telegram arrived; then several telegrams. Officers appeared with documents; he skimmed them and initialled them. Surely no Governor in all Turkey was so worked as Galib Pasha! All the time his eyes were jerking and peeping and peering for that revolver that was never presented.

That evening a Turkish officer appeared at my inn. Salaams! The compliments of the Governor

and would the *effendi* accept so hurried an invitation and join him at the circus? A circus at Kirk Kilisé? Ah, yes, a travelling circus all the way from Germany. Of course I would go; but I was travelling light; the only clothes I had were suitable for horseback.

With slithering soldiers swinging lanterns we went through the black streets. The splutter of naphtha lamps; the extravagant canvas representations of men driving six horses and tinsel-frocked damsels skipping through hoops; the big marquee with lamp flare and the clapping of hands oozing through the cracks. It was all familiar.

Then came several moments when I was startled, but behaved with as much dignity as I could. Still, I felt I should like to roll on the ground in ecstasy of laughter. There was a circle of chocolate countenances capped with red fezzes. The band blared furiously "God Save the King." The Governor, who had a space railed off with red rope, was standing on a blue plush carpet, in the centre of which stood two stage property crimson and gold king's chairs. We went through our greetings with decorum. We bowed and bowed. When "God Save the King" was finished I was bowed into the crimson and gold chair on the right of the Governor.

I had gone through many experiences in my life; but just then I was the honoured representative of Great Britain—nay, I had a sort of idea I was Viceroy, representative of the King himself. But I felt a fraud. I wanted to stand up on that

crimson and gold chair and deliver a speech of explanation. I was merely a humble wanderer with an inquisitive mind! Afterwards my dragoman told me the audience was sure I was one of the personal staff of King Edward! That was terrible. Still I put on my most solemn air. If ever I am honoured with the acquaintance of his Majesty I shall tell him the most uncomfortable half hour I ever spent in my life was when I was the unwitting but honoured representative of Great Britain at a circus in Kirk Kilisé.

There were cigarettes to be puffed and coffee to be sipped. There was an elderly damsel in blue tights who jumped through hoops. There was a trapezist. There was a clown. And there were the long rows of fezzed men and a sprinkling of dark-eyed Greek women—a lethargic throng, who certainly took their pleasures sadly.

The Governor frowned; he knit his brows. Telegram form! He wrote. Behind—off the blue plush carpet, of course—stood officers. A raised finger, and one or other was by the Governor's chair. The secretary—a little worn wisp of a man—came, bowed, and presented more telegrams. Altogether a dozen must have arrived.

The people of Kirk Kilisé looked awe-struck at their Governor, sitting meditatively in his crimson and gold chair, his brows knit, his pencil tapping on his knee whilst he thought. They appeared much impressed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN THE BORDERLAND.

Insurrection and Reprisal—Taken for a British Secret Service Official—The Village of Dolan—The Head-man—Sileohlu—Bulgarians and Turks Living Together Amicably—Incessant Coffee-drinking.

ALL through the Adrianople vilayet insurrection is simmering, and occasionally bubbling over. The presence of the Russian Fleet in Turkish waters, sent to enforce punishment on the murderers of the Russian Consul at Monastir in 1903, was the opening for insurrection. Bulgarian bands broke out in the Kirk Kilisé district, and burnt five villages and massacred their inhabitants. In two days alone, five Turkish garrisons were defeated, the barracks destroyed, and the soldiers killed. The important village of Vassilikos was destroyed by dynamite.

Then came the Turkish reprisals on the Bulgarians—chiefly innocent folk. They were awful. Peasants ran to the forests. They were burnt out by Bashi-Bazouks; there was not a single old man or woman left among them. About 12,000 refugees were in the frontier villages in dreadful distress. The village of Pepenka in the *sanjak* of Kirk Kilisé was bombarded and pillaged. Some women who had hidden in a house to escape violation were burned alive in it. Seventy-five girls were carried off. The inhabitants who had taken refuge in the mountains were surrounded and forced to return

to the village, and there they were massacred by the Bashi-Bazouks, who are usually employed by the Turks when there is particularly nasty work to be done. In regard to this outbreak, Lord Lansdowne said that he "had no hesitation in declaring that the ruin and destruction brought about by the Turkish soldiery were immeasurably greater than any which had resulted from the action of the Bulgarian bands." That is true. But the Turks were "punishing" the Bulgarians.

The refugees from the vilayets of Adrianople and Monastir who were at Burghas, the Bulgarian port on the Black Sea, declared: "Although our greatest desire is to return to our own homes, we can only do so on the following conditions: (1) Our repatriation must take place by means of an International Commission; (2) the funds for the rebuilding of our villages, churches, and schools must be deposited at a European credit establishment at the disposal of the aforesaid Commission; the goods of which we have been despoiled must be returned to us; (3) a full amnesty must be granted to everybody; (4) most important of all, for the future our properties, our lives and our honour, must be secured to us by means not of palliative, but of radical reforms, with a Christian Governor-General appointed by the Great Powers, and by means of a permanent international control."

The number of refugees in and around Burghas was 13,000, of whom two-thirds were women; to these must be added at least 3,000 children under ten or twelve years of age. Colonel Massy, who was

sent by the British Government to Burghas to report on the state of the refugees, says: "They have but their clothes—scanty ones—in the world. Most were weeping—their husbands massacred, they said. Many are sick, and all look miserable. In some cases the husbands returned to the Kirk Kilisé district, being told there was not much to fear, as they wished to see if they could make something out of the wreck of their homes; but news came that they were murdered on their return. I asked them if they would return home. They smiled bitterly, and said that they had no homes, and if they returned to Turkey they would be murdered unless under European supervision. . . . The wretched women looked miserably pulled down, many with babies at the breast, and perhaps little but dry bread to live upon."

One village was despoiled of its finest grazing grounds, its forest and its fields, which were handed over to the Moslem inhabitants of a newly-formed village, the Bulgarian villagers being condemned to bear the exactions of six hundred soldiers who had not been paid for five months. These were the soldiers called upon to restore order and tranquillity in the district. A levy was made on the surrounding Bulgarian villages to provide funds to build barracks.

Ever since then the state of the Bulgarians in the vilayet of Adrianople has been extremely unsatisfactory. In many other villages Christians have been ejected from their homes, and troops installed in their place. These troops, being provided with

neither fuel nor fire, live by plunder, burning the woodwork of the houses, and consuming the cattle, grain and poultry of the Christians. Churches have been converted to secular uses or desecrated and destroyed, while countless cases of rape have occurred. The result is that the Christians, exasperated by fresh persecutions, are ripe for another revolt.

I wanted to go back to Adrianople from Kirk Kilisé by a half-moon route to the north, getting as near the Bulgarian frontier as I could.

Impossible! The Governor of Kirk Kilisé said it was impossible. All his staff swore he spoke the words of wisdom. But why did I want to go near the Bulgarian frontier? That was the question put to me politely and circuitously. Oh, because I did not desire to return by the way I had come, and I wanted to see as much of the country as I could! I saw "Liar!" spring into the eyes of the Turks. Only they were too polite to let the word touch their lips. I was a spy! That was evident. Under the guise of a harmless tourist I had been sent out by the British Government—which was too friendly to Bulgaria and not friendly enough to Turkey—to discover how the revolution was progressing!

The Turks bowed to the ground, assured me that everything they could do for me would be done; but—it was impossible. Besides, there were bands of Bulgarian brigands about. They were very wicked people were those Bulgarian brigands. I said I was willing to take my chance. Oh, and only the

previous week they had captured a Greek merchant, and were probably then engaged in gouging his eyes out or slicing his ears ! I was still willing to take my chance. The Turks shrugged their shoulders. The *effendi* should remember that there was no one in Kirk Kilisé who knew the way. I observed that Turkish soldiers had good Turkish tongues, and could ask the way. But there were no roads ! Never mind ; we would follow mountain tracks. But the horses could never clamber up the passes ! Then we should walk and lead the horses.

For a full day the Turkish officials were sweetly polite. They could not be so rude as to say point blank I should not go. My protestations that I was a mere sightseer they did not believe. They knew it was nonsense that I was willing to rough it and run risks of capture by brigands just for the fun of the thing. I could not make a Turk believe that if I argued till doomsday. I did not try. I simply said that I would go, and that the responsibility would rest with me.

The Turks—certain in their own minds I was a British secret service official—could not let me take the responsibility. If anything happened they would be held responsible, ransom would be demanded by the brigands, the British Government would lecture the Porte on the ill-treatment of a British subject, there would be the deuce.

Reluctantly the Governor—who was full of assurances of help—said he would add to the escort I already had from Adrianople. We stretched maps before us, and picked a route. I sent my dragoman



into the town to hire horses. He came back with a glint in his eyes and the news that there was not a single horse to be obtained.

Baffled one way, the Turkish authorities were intent on checking me another. The Governor was full of sympathy. What a pity!

"Oh, no," said I; "I'll walk."

Walk! He sat straight up and looked hard at me. Yes, walk! I told him I rather prided myself on my walking capacities, and though it would be slow it would be a very interesting way of seeing the country.

He succumbed. A representative of the British Government, who told lies in pretending to be an unofficial traveller, could never be allowed to walk while his escort was mounted. He sent for a man who owned horses, and in ten minutes a bargain was made. The man wept. What if he and his horses were captured by the brigands? He funked the Bulgarian revolutionaries.

We travelled over a ragged, grassless land, with dwarfed and knotted oaks everywhere. Dip and rise, dip and rise, the panorama changing and yet always the same.

It was as though some fiery blast had hit the world and burnt all sustenance out of it. We jogged across river beds with never a drop of water to be seen. There was no life save monster tortoises slowly heaving their way along. We got over one broad waterless river, the Koyundara.

We came across peasants wearing the fez, but black in colour. These were Turks of Bulgarian

origin, who spoke bastard Greek—a remnant of Byzantine rule. All the Bulgarians here speak Greek.

Some villages in this region are Bulgarian and Christian; others are Turk and Moslem. The Christian villages were less dirty than the Mahomedan villages.

On through the quivering heat till we were faint to sickness. Thus to the Turkish village of Dolan. The women were shrouded and in black. Even those working in the fields stood sideways as we passed, and held their cloaks to hide their faces, whilst watching us from the corner of their eyes.

We dropped wearily from our horses. The head-man of the village, in blue vest, brown pantaloons, Turkey-red cummerbund and dirty white turban, gave me greeting. Would I visit his poor dwelling? It was of unbaked bricks, the floor was of hard earth; there was nothing to squat upon but a rush mat. There was rice and coffee for lunch.

All the men folk of the village gathered round and sat on their haunches and blinked in the sun. There was no pushing at the doorway or gazing in at the window. They wanted to see the foreigner, but there was no vulgarity in their curiosity. When I went out they rose and courteously salaamed. The head-man made a little speech. I shook him by the hand, telling him, through my dragoman, that that was the English way of showing friendship. He was pleased. I offered him a cigarette. He was doubly pleased. I was about to offer cigarettes to the twenty men standing about. My dragoman

stopped me. Let the dignity be with the head-man that I personally had given him a cigarette; he, the dragoman, would hand the cigarettes to those of lesser degree.

On again, through the panting land. The country was bleached and arid. The heat was heavy and drowsy. We had a local soldier from Kirk Kilisé to show us the way to Dolan. There he turned, and at Dolan we were given another man to take us to Sileohlu. We trotted joggingly and in single file along the feeble track. All the land was desolation.

The afternoon was still young when we reached Sileohlu—a straggling place, half Turkish, half Bulgarian. I had a headache from long riding in the sun and having little to eat. So I called a halt, and lay in the shadow of a quince tree, whilst my dragoman went seeking for a place where the night could be passed.

The leading villagers arrived, some Turkish and some Bulgarian, Christian and Moslem. They were living together in friendly fashion, as I found all through the country they do, unless racial and religious strife is stirred up by Bulgarian political propagandists, which inevitably leads to bungling reprisals on the part of the Turkish authorities. The mayor and a deputation of the local district council were solicitous I should be the guest of the village. I thanked them, but insisted upon being allowed to pay. Then they insisted that at least I would allow them to do their best, so that I might take away pleasant memories.

Here I was, a stranger, suddenly dropping into a place I had never heard of twelve hours before, and the head-man was eager to put aside all personal affairs to be courteous to me. There was marked distinction between the Christians and Moslems, and I could not fail to notice a certain rivalry which should do the most.

The *effendi* had a headache! The afternoon would be spent in the cool of a wood. We walked to a leafy spot, dark with the shade of many trees. There was a marble tank, about the size of a suburban dining-room, where bubbled pleasant water. Mats were spread; cushions were brought. Melons were tossed into the tank, where they were chilled to iciness. Then we ate slabs of them. A fire was lit beneath the trees, the mayor himself was busy coffee-making; a mild individual, whom I christened the town clerk, sat near and twanged melancholy Turkish airs upon a guitar. Of coffee we drank cups innumerable, and of cigarettes smoked unceasingly.

My heart went out to these kind, simple-hearted rural folk in that unknown corner of Turkey. They never molested or pestered me. Knowing I had a headache they kept at a distance and spoke low. When I announced I was better they were unfeignedly glad. The fire was relit, the guitar twanged sprightly. We drank coffee, and more coffee, and again more coffee.

With this incessant coffee-drinking—twenty or thirty cups a day—how can it be otherwise than that the Turks are lethargic? Through centuries have they drunk inordinate quantities of coffee. Every

little Turk inherits a sluggish liver. When my advice is asked what shall be done to redeem the Turkish nation from its torpor I shall reply: "The first necessary thing is to prohibit the drinking of any more coffee. Get the livers of the Turks into a healthier state before you bother about their brains."

None of my friends had seen anything of the world beyond Adrianople. Some had not travelled as far as that. When I told them about London they sat like attentive children listening to a fairy tale. It had all to be interpreted by my dragoman, but there was no rude laughter at my unknown speech. I told them about the streets, about the motor omnibuses, the express trains, the twopenny tube, the telephone. A wonderful people were the Europeans. And very rich! Anything could be done with money. It was because England was so rich it had all these things! I endeavoured to show it was because of these and such-like things that England was rich. No, they would not have it that way. With riches anything could be done. If Turks were as rich they could do the same.

The largest room of the largest farmhouse in the village was prepared. It was just mud walls and mud floor. The only light was the flicker of a curious little oil lamp. In one corner was placed matting for my sleeping accommodation. A fire was built in the yard, and beneath the glow of a great moon a meal was cooked—a chicken, *pilau* (a sort of greasy rice), which was delicious, black bread, a bunch of grapes, more coffee, much more coffee, and a flask of white wine.

I sat like a Turk, and ate like a Turk. This was the real thing. Above my head hung long slim rifles and cartridge belts handy in case there was an attack by Bulgarian brigands.

Brigands! I had forgotten all about them. I never saw anything of them. Only I saw the goodness of the Bulgarians and Turks living in this little village. I laid my revolver by my pillow-side, smoked and mused. London! That was a place I must have read of somewhere. I looked at my watch. Eight o'clock! The village was at rest save for the occasional baying of a dog at the moon. I fell asleep and dreamt I was captured by brigands, who cut off my ears, and fed me on nothing but coffee and cigarettes.

The moon was still shining, though hanging low in the heavens, when I was quietly awakened. I shivered with the cold. I went out into the biting air. The soldiers, who had slept in the open, were yawning and slouching to attend to their horses. My good friend the mayor was superintending the making of coffee.

It was two hours before sunrise, when I had ordered I should be awakened, for we had a long ride to Adrianople.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HIS MAJESTY'S REPRESENTATIVE.

A British Consulate Described—Comfort the Triumph of English Civilisation—Home Thoughts—England Honoured in the Balkans.

IN the hazy distance he sees himself a full Consul, earning £800 a year, or even rising to the dignity of a Consul-General with £1,000. At present he is Acting Vice-Consul in his Britannic Majesty's Levant Consular Service, and his income is £400.

It is not likely you ever heard of the quaint, rickety, ramshackle Turkish town where it is his duty to represent British interests. As a matter of fact, there are no British interests, as the phrase is usually understood. No Britons live in the place. Whatever British trade there was has been bulged aside by energetic Austrians or accommodating Germans. Yet he writes to the Foreign Office voluminous reports, which occasionally find quotation in podgy Blue Books that nobody reads, or which are dumped into the vaults of Whitehall to mould and rot. Still, he is a cheerful young fellow. His greeting may be of the chill, official English kind, yet there is a sterling grip in his handshake. Later he tells you a visitor is a god-send.

The British Vice-Consulate in an out-of-the-way Turkish town is a poor reflex of the glory of the British Empire. The taxpayer at home is ever grumbling about increased expenditure, and the

gentlemen in Whitehall, who have to account for the farthings, have hearts adamant to consular appeals. A small contribution called "office allowance" is made towards the rent and the wages of the *kavass*, or messenger; but the chief burden falls on his Majesty's youthful representative. So when he has paid his rent, perhaps £40, perhaps £90 a year, furnished his house, provided himself with two horses, hired a cook and a personal servant, paid the wages of the *kavass*, fed himself and his household, made the innumerable presents associated with official life in the East, there is not much balance out of his salary.

The Consulate is a dingy, melancholy-looking building, possibly up a side street that is pungent with strange, unappetising odours, and the shrill cries of fantastic-garbed itinerant merchants. Over the door is a large, yellowish, lozenge-shaped, and cheap enamelled tin showing the royal arms—tawdry, and evidently supplied, under contract, by the hundred. If there be an adjoining slab of garden a flagstaff stands with the hoist-ropes impatiently slapping its side, and if the garden be absent then the flagstaff is attached to the small but inevitable balcony over the doorway. On the King's birthday and every Sunday, a crumpled Union Jack shakes its folds and takes an airing.

The entrance hall is bare. Heavy boots on the bare boards make that rowdy, hollow, echoing sound you hear when tramping an empty house. The walls, tinted with crude blue colour wash, are unadorned, save possibly for a pasted bill bluntly



informing you that British subjects abroad may register the birth of their children at the Consulate, for which service the Consul is entitled to charge a fee of two shillings. On one side you catch a glimpse, through a door ajar, of a dejected apartment with a bed in a corner (the private room of the *kavass*); on another is a drear "chancery"—the official part of the Consulate; a cheap table, with wheezy pens on a blotting pad it would be dangerous to use, an unpainted cupboard, an iron safe, where the papers are kept, a pile of dusty and dishevelled London, Paris, and Constantinople newspapers in a corner; a map of the Balkan Peninsula on one of the walls. Here sits the dragoman, the interpreter, a quick-witted, European-clad but fez-wearing Armenian, who learnt his English at Robert College, on the banks of the Bosphorus, and finds it profitable to give his services in return for the protection of living under the British flag.

But there is the Vice-Consul's own room. Consuls-General and full Consuls, especially if there is a wife, make the home in a foreign land like an English home. But the young Vice-Consul, with maybe only half a dozen years in the Levant Service, is a bachelor. His instructions from the Ambassador at Constantinople are of the "come-here, go-there" order. His stay may be for a couple of months, it may be for two years. Severe and frugal are his wants, with no accumulation of "truck" to cost much money carting about from one part of Turkey to another.

Some day, when the British taxpayer allows the Foreign Office to be generous, a Consulate will be provided by the home Government, and perhaps £100 will be spent in supplying a few necessities available for the resident Consul, whoever he may be: a carpet or two, half a dozen chairs, a couple of tables, some pots and pans, an iron bedstead, a wardrobe, a bath.

Till that time comes his Majesty's representative must fend for himself. He may have been hurriedly transferred from a distant post. He arrives with a couple of trunks. He stays at a Turkish inn till he has been through the bazaars and bought or hired some furniture, and written to the English stores at Constantinople for a frying-pan and a teapot. He tries to keep his expenses down. Why spend money on furnishing when in a month or two he may be hustled off elsewhere, necessitating the sale of his possessions at a sacrifice?—for he does not know who his successor is likely to be, or whether he would be inclined to buy his belongings.

Yet this little sanctum of the Vice-Consul has a pleasant savour. You find there what you will find nowhere else in the city, not even in the home of the Vali himself: comfort. Comfort is the triumph of English civilisation. The people of other nations think they have it, but they lack the faculty of understanding what it is. In the United States you get an imitation of English comfort, pleasant but still an imitation. Compare a refined American home with a refined English home. As far as money goes the American home is more luxurious than the

English home. Luxury, however, is not comfort. So there is about the English home, appreciated by Americans as quickly as anybody, that "indefinable something" which is summed up in the one word—comfort.

And the young Englishman, because it is in his nature rather than from set purpose, makes himself comfortable. Though he went from the public school to the 'Varsity, and straight from the 'Varsity into the Levant Consular Service, he has with him the sense of comfort. During the half-dozen years he has been in Turkey he has learnt about prayer rugs, embroideries, tapestries. After much haggling in the bazaars he has purchased precious pieces, which hang upon his walls in lieu of pictures. He develops a pretty taste in ancient arms, flint-lock pistols chased in silver, sabres of Damascus steel, the blade inlaid with gold, the handle studded with coral and turquoise, the scabbard of embossed silver. He teaches a Turkish carpenter to make a lounge; he throws a Persian rug over it, and there is a divan comfortable indeed. He gets a couple of long-bodied, well-padded English easy chairs from Constantinople—things which the Turk insists throw the human body into most undignified and ungentlemanly postures. He has his stack of pipes, and he must have his English 'baccy. Pieces of embroidery hide the bare deal table where stand his photographs, some in little silver frames—not Turkish, but of the kind sold by the thousand in a hundred shops in Regent Street or Oxford Street—but most are unmounted. You need not

ask which are the photographs of the mother or the old dad. The position of the pictures tells you. There are groups of young fellows in cricketing flannels, taken before the Vice-Consul exchanged the pleasures of English sport for the work of representing his country in a Levantine town. Since he is a straight-built, healthy Englishman, you notice the photographs of sweet and smiling English girls, sisters, the friends of sisters, girls who possibly looked kindly into the eyes of the young Englishman, who maybe think of him as living in gorgeous Eastern style, or maybe have let him slip from memory altogether. And the Vice-Consul, sitting alone in that comfortable room—with no bright restaurant to dine at when he “gets the hump,” no theatre nor music hall to fly to, no pal with whom to play billiards, no countryman to speak to—must let his thoughts wander to the old land, and if his thoughts make his heart a little sore and the things seen by his eyes a little blurred, he is none the less a strong man for that. Though when he finds himself at it he will probably swear, whistle, and load another pipe. He’ll have out his horse in the morning, go off for a gallop, and shake up his mopish liver.

There are compensations. No Englishman is ever so much an Englishman as when away from England. In London he will abuse it; but let any man endeavour to abuse it in his presence in Constantinople! The Vice-Consul knows the name of England stands high in the Balkans. The Turk remembers that when the Russians were at San

Stefano it was England that prevented them entering Constantinople. To-day, when all the nations, except Germany, are worrying Turkey, and Austria and Russia are greedy to gobble up the Balkans, the Turk knows that England, though meddlesome, has no territorial hunger. At home the Vice-Consul would pass along the street unnoticed. In Turkey he never goes out without officials saluting him and the soldiers on guard at the Konak presenting arms.

He calls upon the Vali, the Governor. When the visit is official and not merely courteous, he puts on his frock coat and silk hat—articles he brought out from England six or eight years ago, and which are apt to look old-fashioned to the man fresh from London. As, among the half-dozen Consuls—Russian, French, Austrian, Italian, Greek, Servian—he is the only one who can speak freely in Turkish, he is appreciated by the Vali. He sips syrupy coffee, and puffs cigarettes, and complains that Christians in some adjoining village are being harshly treated by the authorities. The Vali is very sorry to hear it, promises to attend to the matter and have the Christians better treated—which they rarely are. The British representative formally calls on all his consular *confrères*, and within twenty-four hours they all formally return the call. But there is little friendship between the Consuls. They spend most of their time watching each other, spying upon one another through their dragomans, and writing reports.

The Vice-Consul keeps his eyes and his ears open. Much depends on himself and the faculty to

weigh the value of the prejudiced stories against the Turk told him furtively by Armenians or Bulgarians or Greeks. If he keeps pace with the times he will have a typewriter, so that his report may be manifolded. Otherwise he laboriously writes four copies—one for the Foreign Office, one for the Ambassador, one for his Consul-General, and a file copy for himself.

He is really an ambassador in miniature. His work is diplomatic rather than consular. He has a hundred opportunities of showing what brains he owns. Often he is little more than a boy, and his thoughts might yet be in the cricket or football field. His countrymen scarcely know of his existence. Yet he is one of the army of educated but expatriated Englishmen who sit in lone houses in strange cities in far-off lands, and at fitting times remind the Asiatics of the majesty of Britain.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TURK AS RULER.

Virtues of the Turk—The Sultan's Point of View—The Two Turkeys  
—The Reform Party—Universality of Corruption—Abuses  
of Taxation—The Peasant—The Turk Incompetent to Rule.

“THE Turk is the only gentleman in the Balkans.”

This was a remark made frequently to me as I travelled. It was generally made by Englishmen. Then came the remark that the Turk was quite incompetent as a ruler, and the sooner it was recognised by Europe that he is incapable of being either tinkered or coerced into what others consider good government, the better it will be.

Most Western men and all Western women shudder at the Turk as a nasty, unclean creature. Sensuality is thought to be his chief quality. The untravelled European, indulging in an imaginary picture of a Turk, conceives him to be fat and greasy and lecherous, with no thoughts above the pleasures of the harem.

The Turk is no saint, but he is as moral as the average Englishman or American or Frenchman. It is exceptional for a Turk to have more than one wife. As for the ladies in the harem—a fact which stirs the ribaldry of the vulgar—the system is preferable to the promiscuity which disgraces Christian European cities. If comparisons must be drawn, I venture to say the average Mussulman is quite as moral as the average Christian.

I don't discuss the merits or demerits of the Mahommedan faith, but, writing personally and impartially, I have had proof of "real Christianity" in many a Moslem land: courtesy, kindness, hospitality. The Turk is a most strict adherent of the observances of his faith. Clean of body he generally is. He is no one-morning-a-week worshipper. He is never too busy to pray at the appointed hour. He never gets drunk.

Where we Christians of the West often make a mistake is that we persist in abusing the Turk because he does not view Turkey from our standpoint. We forget, or at least we ignore, that he is Eastern, that he has traits of mind entirely different from, and frequently incompatible with, our own. It may be we are entirely right and he is entirely wrong; but the Turk has his point of view, and it is from that point of view—rather than from wilful viciousness—that he acts. It is well to be fair and just, even to the Turk.

Measure him by European and Christian standards and he is wanting. But he is neither a European nor a Christian. He is a Turk, and above all things he is a Mahommedan.

That the rule of Turkey is out of shape with the sentiment of Europe is true. That the two will never mix is clear. That the methods of Turkish government in the Balkans must cease is inevitable.

The centre of Government, the Imperial Palace, is lacking in wholesome administration. It is not that the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, is not solicitous concerning the welfare of his empire. He is probably



the most hard-worked and perplexed man in Turkey. When I saw him at the Yildiz Kiosk he struck me as a man racked with cares and anxieties. The stories about debauchery can be dismissed as sensational fiction. That he does not readily yield to the demands of the Powers is not to be wondered at. He knows that there are rapacious Powers, and that the diplomatic advice given him will often, if adopted, be one step nearer the disruption of the Turkish Empire, to the aggrandisement of some of his hungry neighbours. You cannot convince a man of your good intentions when he knows you intend to despoil him.

Further, the Sultan has never had an opportunity to judge the political situation on its merits. As far as his talks with the foreign Ambassadors go it is a case of "pull devil, pull baker." Abdul Hamid has much shrewdness and vast suspicion. He has had no broad intellectual training. From his youth he has been surrounded by Circassian slaves and black eunuchs. The whole Government is riddled with the burrowings of cliques. The Sultan prefers to surround himself with strong ministers. A strong minister falls, not because the Sultan fears his strength, but because, so intricate and subterranean is Turkish intrigue, proof is soon provided by rivals that the Minister is plotting. It is a trait of the East to be convinced that the action of every man is dictated by motives of personal advantage. You cannot argue against it. It is inherent.

We use generalities in talking of Turkey—and

generalities are misleading. There are two Turkeys: the Turkey of the official classes and the Turkey of the people. We know little of Turkey as a nation, but draw conclusions concerning it from the corruption of the official circles. And whilst corruption is deep, rank, atrocious, we must remember it is the system of government which is at fault. Indeed, Turkish administration to-day has corruption as its mainspring. It is not secret, reprehensible, a thing which makes the Turk shudder. It is the ordinary and natural thing. If a man pays a high official £5,000 for a post worth £500, both understand that the money will be recouped by "squeezing" somebody else. It is open traffic, speculation, meaning there is to be cruel grinding, and that not one quarter of the taxes are ever expended on the purpose for which they are levied. All very wrong, of course; but it has been so long the way of doing things that it is exceedingly difficult for the Turk to imagine how it can be done otherwise.

I recall talking with a high Turkish dignitary on this very subject. He had travelled much and was acquainted with other countries.

Suddenly he asked: "Do you think it is Christianity which makes other countries less corrupt?"

"Well, perhaps," I observed hesitatingly.

"You have lived in America?" he questioned.

"I have."

"And do you think that much-abused Turkey is any more corrupt than municipal government in America?"

Reluctantly I was obliged to admit I did not.

“ Ah ! ” he said hurriedly, “ and America prides itself on being a Christian country. We are corrupt, and we admit it ; you Western people are more corrupt, but you don’t admit it. Mahommedans are more honest than Christians.”

There is a strong and growing reform party in Turkey. But all government is essentially conservative. Every man who wants change—however genuine are his convictions that the change would be beneficial—is in antagonism to the existing government. There is one of the great stumbling-blocks to improvement in European Turkey. All educated Turks, away from the official class—and many of that class also—realise that the present condition of affairs in the Balkans cannot continue indefinitely. They recognise that Turkey can only remain part of Europe by getting into line with the rest of Europe. Every step, however, in that direction is a step to revolution, and the sympathy of the rest of Europe is behind it. Accordingly, we have to recognise this primal fact: the Sultan and the Turkish Government—shortsighted, or even blind, if you will—are fighting for their existence in resisting the reforms which to us, standing aside, seem so reasonable.

Our sympathies rightly go out to the Christians living under Ottoman rule. But the oppression of the Christians is not all due to religious antipathy on the part of the Mahommedans. It is also due to politics. Mourad Bey, one of the most enlightened men, deeply anxious for the welfare of Turkey, said :

“ I affirm with all the energy of which I am capable that before the advent of the first consular agent, and, above all, of the first missionary among us, the Christians of the East were more tranquil, more free, and more happy than to-day.” The Sultan, ignorant and superstitious, sees in all the movements to improve the lot of the Christians deep designs to effect the smash-up of his Empire. And, within limits, he is quite right.

Whilst Europe is perfectly justified in placing many of the Balkan troubles at the doors of Abdul Hamid, we have to remember his upbringing, his environment, and the traditions of the Caliphate. It is easy to say “ Clear him out of Europe.” But he is in Europe; he is master of a considerable section of Europe; we have to deal with him as an autocrat. All civil and military, and nearly all religious, power is in his hands. The country is divided into vilayets or provinces, ruled by Valis who draw small salaries but become exceedingly rich. The law is confused and conflicting. There is the *sheri*, or sacred law of Mahommedanism, and the civil and commercial law, based on the Code Napoléon. Christian evidence is never accepted against that of a Moslem. Theoretically it is accepted, but in practice it is not. All appointments to offices are in the hands of superior officials, rising, step by step, to the Sultan himself. It is only because the summit is reached in the Sultan that he himself does not pay for his dignity. Everybody beneath pays in some way or other.

The gathering of taxes is pernicious. Collection

is farmed out to the highest bidder. For a lump sum down—he usually pays much more to the Vali than the Vali hands on to Constantinople—the collector is empowered to demand one-tenth of a man's crop and invariably gets much more because he assesses the crop at far above its value. If the farmer makes any bother about the valuation he is prohibited from gathering the crop at all, so that he has nothing but ruin before him. The consequence is that the peaceful, law-abiding, and hard-working Turkish peasant, slaving from dawn to sunset, barely gets sufficient from the sale of his crop to keep life in the bodies of himself and family. "If, *effendi*," a peasant said to me one day, "I finish the year's work with a profit of a *medjedeh* (about 4s.) I thank Allah!"

The tax-gatherer squeezes every piastre out of the peasant; his superior squeezes the tax-gatherer; the Vali squeezes the superior; the court clique at the Yildiz Kiosk squeezes the Vali. Further, the peasants have to deal with the *zaptiehs*, or policemen, poor creatures, irregularly paid and rarely fed, who can only keep themselves alive by exactions from the already wretched agriculturists. I use the word "wretched" from the European point of view. The Turkish peasant, like other Turks, is a fatalist. He accepts whatever comes. I usually found him quite happy and singing, though he is born to constant, grinding labour. Taxes, in districts where there have been public improvements, such as railways, are collected by the Department of Public Debt, representatives of the foreign

bondholders, competent men as a rule, certainly just, who avoid the bloodsucking which is elsewhere so general.

It is the Turkish peasant—as Turkey has practically no manufactures—who bears the financial burden of the Empire. The officials, like parasites, live on one another, from mighty dignitaries at Constantinople down to the meanest who squeezes the life out of the peasant. Yet the peasant, as I have said, is invariably happy, and only halts in his work so that he may kneel, place his forehead on the ground, and thank Allah for His goodness.

The point not to be lost sight of, however, is that the Turk is by nature incompetent to rule. For the five hundred years he has been master of the Christian population he has never shown a recognition that the position implies responsibility. His ideas have travelled no further than that by right of conquest the soil is his, and he is justified in living on the labour of the conquered. Despite his slouch there is something of the nobleman about the Turk. He never lacks dignity. In mixed towns of Turks, Bulgarians, and Greeks, the Turks are easily marked by their cachet of distinction.

The Turk has not and will not assimilate with Christians. The Christians are inferior; Allah has placed them in subjection; massacres are useful things to enable the Mahommedans to get possession of things the Christians have no right to. The Turk's moral sense is dulled by his fatalism: *kismet*, and by the degraded position of his women.

Everybody is suspicious of everybody else. A

tremor of fear runs through all the official classes. A rich man is afraid to proclaim his riches, for those in authority would soon trump up charges to despoil him. The policy of Turkey is to sit still and do nothing. When anything is done under compulsion it is done slowly. *Yavash, yavash!* is the guiding principle of Turkish administration, at the beginning, at the end, and all the time.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### UNDER THE EYE OF BRITAIN.

Drama, the Centre of the British Sphere of Influence—British Officers Wearing the Fez—An Expedition into the Hills—Spies—Enmity between Greeks and Bulgars—Philippi—Memories of Greeks and Romans—St. Paul's Visit—Kavala—Skittish Turkish Ladies—Where the Tobacco for Egyptian Cigarettes is Grown—A Moslem Monastery—Birthplace of Mahomet Ali.

WHERE Macedonia begins or where it ends is indefinite. But travelling from Constantinople to Salonika you halt at the little town of Drama. Drama you know to be in Macedonia because here are stationed the British officers engaged to assist in the reform of the gendarmerie and generally keep an eye on the differences between Turks and Christians.

Drama is the centre of the British sphere of influence—the least important sphere because it is the quietest part of disturbed Macedonia—just as Seres is the centre of the French sphere, Salonika of the Russian, Monastir of the Italian, and Uskup of the Austrian.

I found both Turks and Christians appreciated the British representatives. The Christians appreciated them because England stood for Christianity and they knew England was their friend. The Turks appreciated them because, as the officials told me, the British officers treated them as equals. In the Monastir region there was kindness toward the Italians. But I was told that at Seres the French



treated the Turks as inferior, at Salonika the Russians tried to bully them, whilst at Uskup the officials realised too well that Austria wanted territory much more than to bring peace to that unhappy region. Germany, as the avowed friend of the Sultan, has no hand in the pacification of the country.

I drove through the narrow, noisy, vine-sheltered streets of Drama, beyond the town, past the barracks, where, in view of disturbances, reserves, called out from the surrounding villages, were squatting on their haunches—quiet, decent fellows. So to a square whitewashed building alliteratively dubbed by its present occupants “Murzsteg Mansion.” Colonel Fairholme, the political representative, was at home on leave, but I received greeting from Major Gore-Alney and Captain Smyly. Though appointed by the British Foreign Office, they were in the pay of the Turkish Government. It gave one a little jump to meet British officers, in khaki uniforms and with South African medals on their breasts, wearing the crimson fez. An English soldier with a Turkish fez seems a curious combination.

Murzsteg Mansion is sparsely furnished: a table or two, a few chairs, some camp beds, indiarubber baths, a pile of reports, military accoutrements, a heap of old novels, here and there a photograph, and in the place of honour an autograph portrait of King Edward—a kindly unexpected remembrance from his Majesty to his soldiers far off in little-known Macedonia maintaining the reputation of Britain for justice.

A good work these British officers were doing in

the region round Drama. The Turkish gendarmerie were under their eye. They got offenders dismissed; they secured promotion for those who were worthy. With few attendants they went on trek away in the wild hill lands northward, toward Bulgaria, through bandit-infested districts, enduring hardships, with long riding and miserable accommodation, investigating disturbances between Turks and Bulgarians, or, more often, between rival Christians, exercising by their presence a good effect on the people, putting the authorities in awe, and carefully reporting to the Ambassador at Constantinople the trend of affairs.

For several days I stayed with Major Gore-Alney and Captain Smyly, and had opportunity of seeing their work. It is not work that is sufficiently startling to attract attention in the newspapers, nor to receive mention in Parliament. When people talk about the easy life of the British officer it is well to think of the men at Drama—and there are thousands of such men in other solitary parts of the earth—living alone, doing their duty, with no dinner parties, no drawing-room chat, no theatres, but finding simple relaxation, after hard riding in the scorching sun, by sitting in canvas chairs, smoking their pipes, and watching the moon sail into an almost velvety sky and hang over the plain where are the ruins of Philippi.

With Captain Smyly as cicerone I had the satisfaction of a little expedition into the adjoining hills where trouble had been. As escort we had three gendarmes, one a famous capturer of brigands. He

tracked one notorious character for weeks through the mountains, and never ceased till he had his head in the saddle-bag.

We rode across the red sandy plain, where the vegetation was shrivelled, toward hills bare, fierce, uninviting, except that in dips it was possible for the peasants just to scratch a living.

In the maize fields we saw Bulgar-Macedonian husbands, wives, and children working from dawn till dusk, and never knowing there was anything particularly wrong in the world till the Bulgarian *Komitajis* came along and compelled them to join the revolutionary movement.

All the villages are sworn to reek with insurrection on the signal being given. Hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood are arms. The Bulgars had no difficulty in bringing them into the country. They knew that the Turkish soldier turns in at sundown and, being frightened of the dark, is not disposed to be on the move again till daylight. Accordingly the "bands" always moved at night. Now, under the direction of the British officers, patrols are frequently made at night, and revolutionaries are caught red-handed. They get short shrift.

Here is a Bulgarian village; there is a Greek village; over yonder is a mixed village. In the mixed village the Greek priest had made himself more than usually disliked by the Bulgars. He and his two daughters were murdered—nobody knows by whom!

Spies are everywhere. The system of espionage is truly Oriental. News reached Constantinople

that the prisoners in Drama gaol were improperly treated. A distinguished *hodja*, or learned man, arrived at Drama, and, befitting his position, he was invited to stay with the Governor. He disappeared; a watch was missing; chase was given; he was caught and thrown into prison as a thief and an impostor. That was just where he wanted to go. He was a spy sent from Constantinople.

We passed a well. It had been erected by a good Bulgar, and there was an inscription mentioning the fact. The Greeks in the village smashed it, and when the Bulgar was dying they gathered round the house and howled derisively.

All through Macedonia I never heard a good word for the Greeks. The Turks chaffingly call them "the runners," because of the way they skedaddled before the Sultan's troops in the Turko-Greek War. Yet Greek talk is unusually bloodthirsty. One day, whilst Greeks were fraternising in Drama, someone shot a dog in the streets. The Greeks were terror-stricken, held one another, and then barricaded the door. They thought a Bulgarian "band" had come.

One village we visited was mixed Turk and Bulgarian. The twelve hundred inhabitants were starved creatures and were in considerable dismay when our horses clattered among them. There had been some political murders of Bulgars. Whilst Greeks were blamed it was fairly clear the crimes were the work of fellow Bulgars who were not satisfied with the enthusiasm for revolution, and possibly suspected that tales were being told to the Turks. Whilst Captain Smyly was making investigation the

head-men of the village, Turk and Bulgar, crowded round. We were both rather astonished at finding three or four Bulgar "teachers" who had selected this woebegone village for a holiday place. We knew well enough they were spies for the Bulgarian revolutionaries—and they knew that we knew.

Due south from Drama is the ancient town of Kavala, on the coast. To reach it is a swift four hours' ride. Going there one rides across the Drama plain and through miles of tobacco fields and past all that remains of the city of Philippi.

The only habitation at Philippi is a decrepit mud-floored coffee-house where horses can rest and the traveller light a cigarette. The slithering Turks in the dirty shed knew nothing about the faded glory of the city. The step was a piece of marble with a Roman inscription. Blocks of inscribed marble were scattered about. One side of the stable is part of a gigantic cube of marble, erected, as far as can be deciphered, in honour of the victorious Romans after the battle of Philippi, B.C. 42, when Augustus and Antony defeated the republican forces of Brutus and Cassius. Staples have been driven into the marble so that halters may be attached. I asked the Turks what the pillar meant. They blinked and said it was to the memory of a great Turkish general!

Not much remains of Philippi. The few ruins are the mute witnesses of a little world which lived and prospered on this spot for a period of nigh thirty centuries. The first inhabitants were probably Thracians who mined for gold in the neighbouring

mountains. They built a town to protect themselves from invading tribes who wanted the gold. Eleven centuries before the Christian Era the town was called Datus, or Datum. That town prospered until the fourth century B.C. So great was the fame of the gold mines that the desire of the ancient Athenians was to annex the place. This was often attempted, and finally, in 360 B.C., the Thasians, stirred up by the Athenian Callistrates, seized Datus, and gave it the new name of Krenides. But this appellation and the stay of the Thasians only lasted two years. The original inhabitants made constant attacks to regain their possessions, and forced the Thasians to seek the aid of Philip of Macedon, who had long coveted Datus. He took advantage of this opportunity to capture it. Philip enlarged the town, adorned it with wonderful buildings, and renamed it Philippi after himself. The gold mines were developed by him to such an extent that they yielded him a revenue of a thousand talents.

For an hour I wandered among the ruins. I found the remains of Philip's theatre on a slope of the Acropolis. A few goats were munching the tough grass where, long before Christ came, the people shouted at the sports.

On the plain, noble and solitary, stands a remnant of the Roman domination, maybe the ruins of a temple. But there are no worshippers now. Only a peasant came up and offered me coins he had found in the fields.

Ten years before I had visited Tarsus, in Asia Minor, the birthplace of the Apostle Paul. Later,

on the island of Malta, I went to the spot where Paul was wrecked. Now at Philippi I found the ruins of a temple which was the place where the Romans imprisoned Paul. St. Paul visited Philippi three times. I sat on a tumbled piece of masonry and read in the Acts the account of those visits.

Now Philippi as a city is dead. The men who have built a cabin out of its ruins know nothing about it. They huddle and puff at cigarettes and make coffee for the traveller.

I rode toward Kavala. This was the great Via Egnatia running from Dyrrachium to Byzantium. Along this road came Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch under Trajan, on his way to martyrdom in the amphitheatre at Rome.

Clashing were my thoughts as I jogged along. I overtook a dust-smothered, ramshackle old four-wheeler. In it were two Turkish ladies, cloaked and heavily veiled, so that only their lustrous eyes could be seen. They were young and good-looking. And here was a Giaour, not elderly, and on horse-back! A Giaour is used to looking upon the faces of women! They pulled aside their veils and with laughter let me see their countenances. It was a challenge: Were Christian ladies as pretty as Moslem ladies?

I laughed as I raised my hat and gave my horse the spur and scampered past. Wicked young Turkish ladies! They would never dare the impropriety of showing their features to a Turk. But a Giaour did not matter. And the fat old blear-eyed Turk on the coach-box saw nothing of the adventure

of his charges. Yes, through the long train of centuries many maidens have laughed on that Philippi road and are now gone into the great limbo of the unknown.

A zigzag rise, the summit of a range, and then quaint Kavala, on a tongue of rock sticking impudently into the rich blue of the Ægean Sea, the island of Thasos not far away, and then in the distance, like a little cloud rising to the heavens, Mount Athos the holy.

The way down the coast-side to the town is crooked. The road is mended with marble; the dust is marble; heaps of marble are on the banks for repairs. The sun touches the marble and makes it glisten like myriads of diamonds.

Kavala, resting on the sea, double walled, held to the mainland, it seems, by a willowy aqueduct, is occupied by Turks. But Kavala has grown, and behind the neck of the peninsula spreads fan-wise a Greek town. The Greek quarter is not distinguished.

To reach the Turkish quarter one goes through a not over-wide stone gateway. Kavala is all climbing rocky stairs and coming down rocky stairs. No vehicle is possible. It is all bends and corners and shady passages and mosques and minarets and peeps of the blue sea and basking sunshine. The colour is Neapolitan. Frowsy and creak-jointed Turks, who ought to be reading the Koran, wrap splash-tinted sashes round their waists, have turbans of white or green, and baggy breeks that are vermillion. The atmosphere is hot and



slothful. It is just the place for a Turk. It makes even an Infidel feel like a Turk.

My hotel was a poor thing to look at. But it was a good place to stay at. It is kept by a stout German dame, called Kathé. Every European who visits Kavala knows Kathé. She is a mother to them all. She cooks—and is the best cook in Macedonia. She knows how you like your food and sees it is served clean.

I was having an omelette when I looked across the room. English voices! Captain Hamilton, a son of Lord Claud Hamilton, dressed as a Turkish officer, engaged in the reform of the gendarmerie, a Belgian officer with an eye on the police, and Mr. Teofani, of cigarette fame.

Cigarettes! The only cigarettes you are supposed to smoke in Turkey are Régie, the Government monopoly. But nobody in Kavala ever smokes Régie cigarettes. Every cigarette in Kavala is contraband and is good. The best tobacco in the world is grown on the plains at the back of Kavala. Egypt, though it sends us cigarettes, does not grow an ounce of tobacco. It imports the best from Kavala. In 1905 about one thousand tons were exported from this little port, and the value was about one million pounds sterling. The Government takes a clear ten per cent. royalty. Only the dust and scrapings go to the making of Régie cigarettes.

A tremendous business is done in smuggling. The humour of the situation is that most of the Kavala officials are steeped to the eyes in smuggling.

Ostensibly they do their best to check it, but manage to secure a considerable profit by failing.

Captain Hamilton is hard on smugglers and officials. There is death for one and dismissal for the other. All round the hills are gendarmerie posts to watch for smugglers. An official got Captain Hamilton to change a post from a place where he was assured no smugglers ever came. He did so. But he caused a watch to be set. A great bale of tobacco seized was addressed to the very official who had got the soldiers removed. The former came from Smyrna eight years ago. His salary was £13 a month. He has now retired, having saved £40,000 out of his salary.

Kavala has many poor. I went to the *imaret* or poor-house, where the needy, the halt, and the blind crawl three mornings a week to receive rice and soup. They cringe in the alleys for hours whilst the odour of food comes wafting to them from the kitchens. They eat gluttonously whilst a priest reads from the Koran, though nobody pays any attention. Eight thousand pounds' weight of rice comes every month from Egypt, a legacy from Mahomet Ali Pasha, who was born at Kavala in 1769. Mahomet Ali was a Napoleon in his way. He would have annihilated the Greeks as a nation at the beginning of the last century had not the European Powers stopped him. He looked to Egypt and the Nile basin as a region where he could become emperor. His invasion of Syria startled Sultan Mahmoud. Russia was willing to help in crushing him, but England and France

appeared on the scene and compelled terms to be arranged. Mahomet Ali became governor of Syria. He plotted; the Sultan tried to smash him, and was smashed himself. Mahomet Ali frightened Europe. So the Powers intervened again. He resigned all claims to Syria, but Turkey was compelled to yield to him and his heirs the pashalik of Egypt. Having given Turkey so much trouble, he now has a *hodja* to read daily prayer for the peace of his soul, whilst the poor of his native town eat the rice he willed to them.

Sprawling on a rocky eminence is the *medrasa*, or monastery, where are three hundred men preparing to be Moslem priests. They come poor at the age of fourteen or fifteen, and after a stay of thirty years are allowed to marry. The courtyard is shady with orange trees. The balconies are broad and cool. The thick-walled cells are simple and with little slats of windows looking out upon the bluest of seas.

I was an Infidel, "a dog of a Christian." I had stood for a casual moment at the monastery gate when a white-turbaned priest hastened forward. Would I enter and rest? I was pleased, and he seemed delighted. Other priests came. They showed me their cells; they gave me a cushion by one of their slat windows. They brought sweetmeats and coffee and cigarettes. I could only speak to them through my interpreter. They wanted to talk politics. There is no freedom of the Press in Turkey, and all that is learnt comes through official channels. They knew a revolution was breeding. They knew how great England was. They knew

England was friendly to Turkey. They knew it was England who kept Russia out of Constantinople; but now, why did not England compel Bulgaria to stop her menacing attitude? England was so rich! Why did not England give money to Turkey to buy arms to fight the Bulgarians? Why were the Bulgarians to be allowed to have Macedonia—the Turks recognise Macedonia is ultimately to be lost—when it is Turkish territory? And Russia was behind it all! Did I not think it was Allah who helped the Japanese to defeat the Russians so that Russia might be stayed in its designs on Turkey?

Maybe—possibly—one could not say! But, I added, as the Turks had obtained this land by the sword, might they not lose it by the sword; and was it not possible Allah was angry with Turkey and intended to help the Bulgarians? They shrugged their shoulders.

The city of Kavala is now the training-ground of Mahommedan priests. No Christian church is within its gates. Yet—such are the vagaries of time—when Paul and Silas came and converted the inhabitants to Christianity it was given the name of Christopolis. In the early Middle Ages Christopolis was important as a halting-place on the main road from Constantinople to Rome. It is the eastern key to Macedonia. The name Kavala was probably found for it by the Genoans, who made it a commercial centre. The fine position of the town attracted their attention in the thirteenth century, and they made an alliance with the people

against the Venetians. The Italians called the place Cavallo, from its likeness to a horseshoe. Kavala fell into the hands of the Turks in the fourteenth century. They immediately destroyed it, but Suliman the Magnificent afterwards rebuilt it and got Jews from Hungary to settle there. It was the growth of tobacco which attracted the Greeks who live in the outer town.

All over are evidences of the affection of Mahomet Ali for his birthplace. He rebuilt the fine aqueduct so that the whole of the town, inside the walls, has abundant water, whilst those outside the walls, Christians, are put to enormous expense in obtaining water which has been diverted from their part. Moreover, by his will he left a large sum to be used to lighten the taxes of those who live within the walls. Those outside, as a consequence, pay heavier taxes. This does not increase the friendly feeling between Moslems and Christians.

The export of tobacco is the staple industry. In the warehouses hundreds of girls were engaged sorting the leaves and packing. The season comes quickly. Labour is at a premium. But at other times of the year there is slackness and distress. Just before I was there Kavala had been indulging in the civilised luxury of a strike. The tobacco workers wanted more pay. It was refused, and they declined to go to the factories. Having nothing else to do, they proceeded to riot and smash factory windows. The strike was speedily settled by the authorities throwing the ringleaders into prison and keeping them there.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CONDITION OF MACEDONIA.

The Different Parties—Decrease of the Moslem Population—Nationality not a Matter of Race—A Hotbed of Intrigue—The Macedonian Committees—Austria and Russia as Watch-dogs—Greece the Tool of the Sultan—Where the Future of the Balkans is Likely to be Decided.

It has been pointed out that there is no distinct race that can be called Macedonian. Roughly the population is about 2,000,000. A third of these are Turks. Of the remaining two-thirds Sofia will tell you the tremendous majority are Bulgars; Athens assures you the preponderance is with the Greeks, whilst both Belgrade and Bukharest have a claim for Servians and Roumanians.

Servians and Roumanians do not count, and one is not far wrong in saying Bulgars and Greeks are about equally divided. In the thousands of villages which dot the country, some Bulgar, some Greek, some Turkish, some mixed, the different races and people of different religions live amicably until politics are brought along to stir ambitions and jealousies, Bulgars and Greeks against each other and the Turks against both.

The industrious qualities of the Bulgar and Greek and the natural indolence of the Turk have an effect on the population. By some people the decrease of the Moslem population is ascribed to the gross immorality of the modern Turk. Personally, I think

he is yielding to the pressure of a superior race, particularly the Bulgarian. I heard allegations made, especially at Monastir, that the Turks kidnap Christian children and bring them up as Mahomedans. There is a well-known case where a soldier sold a couple of children in the market-place for four shillings. They were bought by a Bulgarian Christian who knew them to be the little ones of an acquaintance who had been massacred. There was an uproar by correspondents. Christian consuls were indignant; newspaper writers brought tears to the eyes of Christians at home with the pathetic stories they had to tell. Anyway, the authorities gave instructions that no more Christian children were to be brought to Monastir, but were to be sold in the villages "where there are no prying consuls or correspondents."

Very roughly I have given equal division to Greeks and Bulgarians of the Christians in Macedonia. By doing so I lay myself open to severe, and, I do not deny, legitimate criticism. For there is nothing more difficult than to say any particular Macedonian village is Bulgarian or Greek. There are Bulgarians who speak Greek, Greeks who speak Bulgarian. There are Bulgarians who speak Bulgarian but belong to the Greek Orthodox Church and are counted Greek in nationality, and there are Greeks speaking Greek who belong to the Exarchist Church and thus are Bulgarian in nationality. Even with this confusion it might after a time be possible to say, "This village is Greek and that village Bulgarian." But people who call themselves Greek

this week will swear they are Bulgarians next week.

Nationality in Macedonia is a matter of fear, politics, and religion. Race has comparatively little to do with it. Language does not help you much, because most Macedonians are bilingual, and they change their tongue when they change their party. Again, you meet peasants with Hellenic or Bulgarian sentiments who can speak nothing but Turkish.

So, while for convenience sake we say the Christian bitterness is between Bulgarians and Greeks—meaning the Bulgar and Hellenic races who receive support from Sofia and Athens—we must make the endeavour to remember, in examining the Macedonian mess, that the country is not so much divided into rival peoples as into hostile parties. When, therefore, I speak of equal division between Bulgars and Greeks I have race in my mind and not the numbers of those who are totalled up as supporters of one propaganda or another.

This being so, no country should be easier to govern than Macedonia. The rivalry for predominance ought to have made the task of balancing claims and yielding to neither quite simple. But the Turk breaks down in administration.

The only thing that happened was that by oppression everybody was made discontented, Macedonian Turks as well as Macedonian Christians. The downtrodden Turks had nobody to appeal to. The Christians had ears tuned to listen to the revolutionary talk of the *Komitaji*, Bulgarian and Greek, who, under the plea of safeguarding their Christian



brethren, are really animated by desire to make Macedonia a part of Greece or an extension of Bulgaria or an independent country, with Greek or Bulgar as top dog, whichever happens to secure the position.

Were the Christians in Macedonia—Hellenes or Slavs—to combine against the Sultan they could clear his rule out of the country in six months. The reason they do not is that they have a greater hatred toward each other than they have in common against the Turk.

Macedonia is a hotbed of intrigue. The cry of protest which comes to us against Ottoman maladministration and the appeal for an extension of our Christian sympathy to Christians in the Balkans is too often an exploitation of discontent for political advantage. Many of the massacres of poor Christian peasants in Macedonia by the Turks have been the consequence of assassinations by Bulgarian *Komitajis*, who stirred up reprisals in the hope that they would be vile and that Europe would intervene. Nothing more cold-blooded is recorded in history than the manner in which sections of Bulgarians—however much they may have stayed their hands during the last two years—pressed the revolutionary cause on the attention of the world. Massacres of Bulgarian Christians were provoked, so that by making others the victims of Moslem ferocity the *Komitajis* might move toward the realisation of their political ambitions.

Sir A. Biliotti, formerly British Consul-General at Salonika, thus summarises a copy of "Regula-

tions" found in the frock of one of the captured Bulgarian "bandsmen." Members of the various *Komitajis* were

to accuse the troops of offences they did not commit; to exaggerate such offences as they may have committed; to colour their other actions so as to make them appear as offences; to persuade the villagers to go *en masse* and lay complaints first before the Consuls, afterwards before the Vali; to murder all "harmful or useless Christians" and to put the blame on the most likely Turk, *bekji*, *seimen* or other; to admit to membership of a band only such as have previously committed a murder by order of the band, whereby the latter is relieved of all suspicion and the former is compromised; to levy contributions regular and irregular from each village; to choose in each village "terrorists" who shall keep the population in subjection, act under the order of the band, and relieve the latter of the duty of murdering such as may require it; to maintain the utmost secrecy concerning the possession of arms and information.

M. Schopoff, Bulgarian Agent at Salonika, stated to Sir A. Biliotti that there was a vast number of young Bulgarians who, on finishing their two or three years' schooling, thought it beneath them to return to their homes and work in the fields as their fathers did, and that it was from among these that the Committees recruited for the bands. He estimated the number of these loafers in Macedonia at 20,000.

I have no right to say that many members of the Macedonian Committees are not actuated by worthy motives. But it is clear from a careful consideration of the Macedonian problem that in actual work the Committees forget they are Christians and are little more than relentless proselytising politicians.

In the beginning the Committees had high aims. Turkey had shamelessly neglected her obligations under the Treaty of Berlin. There was petty persecution; Bulgarian Christians crossed from Macedonia into Bulgaria proper and told their tales of woe. Then followed raids by armed bands of Bulgarians into Turkey. In time associations were formed in Bulgaria and secret committees in Macedonia to aid the Bulgarian cause. In time came a congress and the formation of the "High Committee," having for its object the securing of political autonomy for Macedonia, and pledged, in order to secure it, to take any action "which may be dictated by circumstances."

The consequence was that peaceful Bulgarians in Macedonia were forced into the revolutionary movement, compelled to secrete arms, made to contribute to the maintenance of the "bands," and were put to death if they reported to the Turks, or were massacred by the Turks because they were revolutionaries. However oppressive the Turks had been, however zealous were good Bulgarians to save their fellow-countrymen and co-religionists in Macedonia from oppression, the revolutionary movement, as it is in Macedonia to-day, is the outcome of terror and murder. There are exceptions, of course, but the Bulgarian Macedonians help the "bands," not because they regard them as brothers, but because they are afraid of assassination if they do not help them.

Witness, then, the peculiar situation. The Porte treats Christians in Macedonia exceedingly badly.

The Bulgarian Christians adopt assassination as a remedy. The Turkish Government retaliates and massacres those who are innocent of revolution or who have been forced into the movement. Christian Europe is horror-stricken at the barbarity of the Turk. Sympathy is given to the Bulgarian movement. The Bulgars think Macedonia is for them. The Greeks start a movement of their own. Greek "bands" meet Bulgar "bands" and cut one another up. The Turk is lectured on having a wretched Government to allow such things to take place. The Turk, to check rebellion, sends out troops and slaughters a "band" and burns the villages which have harboured it. Then the Turk is abused for massacring Christians. Was there ever anything more tragically comical?

When the whole country was in a welter and massacres were rife, in 1902, Europe shook itself, decided something must be done, and appointed Austria and Russia—the two countries who do not want peace in the Balkans, but hope to benefit in territory during a general Balkan conflagration—as watch-dogs.

All Europe barks at the Sultan except Germany, who is passive. The one country now on friendly terms with Turkey is her late enemy, Greece. The Greeks have for twenty years claimed that if Macedonia goes to a Christian Power, all the country south of Uskup must go to Greece with the whole of the vilayet of Adrianople. The Turco-Greek War, however, rather damped down Hellenic ambitions. Still, no opportunity is lost of showing that Mace-

donia is a Greek land. To prove numerical superiority over the hated Bulgarians, all Macedonians who do not belong to the "schismatic" Bulgarian Church are counted as belonging to the Orthodox Greek Church. That the Bulgarians should have broken away from the Greek Church was perfectly natural, because the Patriarchate, instead of being above race, tried to Hellenise the Balkan peninsula. It was the revolt of nationality rather than a difference in creed which led the Bulgarians to make the severance. There is little difference in the service except language, and the influence of both Churches is political rather than moral.

The Greek and the Bulgarian Churches are at enmity. The Sultan, seeing that European sympathy was with Bulgaria, was astute enough to encourage the Greek movement. That brought rival "bands" into Macedonia, not to wage war on the Turks, but on the Bulgarians, who were coercing Orthodox Bulgarians to become Exarchists. This did two things: it caused the Christians to kill one another and it reminded the Powers that there were other Christians besides Bulgarians in Macedonia. Turkey made all sorts of concessions to Greece, concluded commercial treaties, and, more important, upheld the Greeks in South Macedonia in wresting churches and schools from the Exarchists. Greece is the tool of the Sultan in complaining to Europe that the Porte would have made an end of the brigands long ago if it had been allowed liberty of action by the Powers.

The Balkan States cry out for Turkey to be dis-

possessed of Macedonia. If that were done a European war would be precipitated. Neither Austria nor Russia would allow Bulgaria or Greece to have it, and Germany would take care that neither Austria nor Russia got it. While the Greek priests do the bidding of Greek politicians, Greek politicians get their orders from Abdul Hamid, and Abdul Hamid is governed by the long-armed policy of the German Emperor. The future of the Balkans is more likely to be decided at Berlin than elsewhere.

The European Concert, to maintain the *status quo* in the Near East, is a futility. There is no *status quo*. In the diplomatic wire-pulling one country is ever securing an advantage over the others. Russia formerly had it; Great Britain had it recently; Germany has it now.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SALONIKA.

Mount Olympus at Sunrise—Ancient and Modern Greeks—Albanians  
—Women of Different Races and their Dress—The “Converts”  
—English Manners and Others—The Turks of Salonika  
—The Art of Driving Bargains.

I SHALL ever think that at the Mount Olympus Hotel in Salonika I had the best room. Perhaps every other wayfarer was assured he had the best room—just as at Chamonix it is understood that every bedroom window looks out upon Mont Blanc.

Anyway, at the break of day, when the quay was awakened into the life and colour only to be seen in the East, it was pleasant to throw back the shutters, look across the way to where the quaint *caïques* were bobbing on the burnished bosom of the sea, and then away, over a pat of mist resting on the waters, to the crest of Mount Olympus flushed with rose by the young sun.

It was indeed pleasant for a modern pilgrim like myself to fill lungs with crisp ozone, stretch idly in pyjamas in a deck-chair on the balcony, whiff a Kavala cigarette, and think of the ancient Greeks who thought Olympus touched the heavens with its top, thought that there was neither wind nor rain nor clouds, but an eternal spring, where the gods wantoned and where Jupiter held his court. That was when the world was young, life was poetry, and the Greeks were brave.

Beneath my balcony were modern Greeks, sitting at little tables on the pavement, sipping their five-o'clock-in-the-morning coffee, smoking, chattering, quarrelling, reading Greek papers, enjoying the *Graphic*, which is found in every Salonika restaurant—crowds of them, mostly podgy, wearing European clothes and the obligatory fez.

There is a row. Two Greeks jump to their feet; their black eyes flash; their tongues clip insult. They press their hands to their waists as though searching for stilettos. "Bah!" to each other. They move apart, breathing fire. It is war to the death. Then one weeps and peevishly picks up a stone and throws it girl-like at his foe. His foe runs away. And this is the up-to-date manner in which Greek meets Greek!

One afternoon I went on a little yachting excursion. The breeze was sprightly, the sky clear azure, the sea merry. I got a good view of Salonika, a white and clean city making a curve with the bay, rising on a sharp slope, and then suddenly checked by walls and turrets. Mosques and minarets provided picturesque points. It was all entrancing, and yet somewhat like a scene to be occasionally noticed on the drop-curtain of a theatre.

Salonika has its distinctions. Near the quay, where are the big hotels and boulevards and the syrup-sipping and the horse tramcars, is a touch of Europe. Within the town the streets narrow and are covered; the bazaars are gloomy and Oriental and smelly—the more Oriental the more smelly. There is the aroma of the East. At one part of



Salonika you can get a nice French dinner. You can jump on a tramcar and in five minutes you are in another land, where there are no chairs and tables, nothing but mats and Turkish food and the heavy narcotic smoke of turbaned Moslems puffing narghiles.

The population is hotch-potch. When you get above the poorer class, garb alone is no aid to decide nationality. Everybody speaks Greek and most know Turkish. But you have to note the features, the eye, the walk, the general manner, to decide whether this man be a Turk, a Greek, an Armenian, a Bulgarian, or a Jew. The shifty eye tells the Armenian, the swagger of demeanour proclaims the Greek, the quiet alertness reveals the Jew. They are all Turkish subjects, and all have to wear the fez.

But here are men of distinction, tall, swarthy, proud in their carriage. These are Albanians, with quilted white petticoats, black caps, silver-braced coats, and a couple of revolvers stuck in the girdle. They are the dread of the Turk. They are part of the Turkish Empire, but they do not recognise Turkish authority. They do as they like. They pay what taxes they choose. If an Albanian kills a Turk, of course the Turk provoked him. Turkish authorities will do anything to conciliate the Albanians.

The beautiful women are Greek. They are tall, carry themselves gracefully when young, dress well in the Parisian style, and are decorative and amusing in the little gardens by the sea-front where at

sun-down everybody gathers to listen to indifferent music and drink indifferent lager beer. The stalwart, big-boned, plain-featured women in red skirts are Bulgarian.

But the most striking costumes are those worn by the middle-aged and elderly Jewish women—not by the young Jewish women, for they, following the example of their Greek sisters, prefer last month's Parisian style. But this garb worn by the Jewesses is peculiar to Salonika. Three or four hundred years ago great crowds of Jews were driven out from Spain. Many came to Salonika. Now, whilst the fashion of costume has changed all over Europe, the Jewish women of Salonika, on passing the age when "the latest thing" attracts, wear the precise costume that was worn in Spain before the persecution. From mother to daughter, through long generations, has the style of this quaint garb been passed, a symbol and a reminiscence of how the Jews were hunted by the Christians before they found refuge in a Mahomedan land.

Being a mere man I hesitate even to attempt a description. At first shot I would say the Salonika Jewess is like a middle-aged and portly Geisha girl wearing a smoking cap. At second shot I would say she looks like one of Tom Smith's Christmas crackers on end with a head sticking up. For third shot take this: a plain Jewish face and the hair brushed smooth, but the plait twined about a low-crowned crimson fez. The jacket is zouave, generally satin, silver slashed. It is open in front, show-

ing a flowered, or a white, but generally a green, soft, cross-bosom covering, leaving much of the bosom bare. Around the throat are ropes of real pearls; tassels of pearls rest upon the breasts, and at the back you will find two heavy green bands with clusters of pearls in size and quantity proportionate to the wealth of the owner. Pearls are the one ornament, and the Jewish woman gives a fair indication of the position she holds in Salonika society by the quantity she wears.

Another class of women, differing not only in costume but in caste, and peculiar to Salonika, is that of the *Deunmeh* (convert). Two hundred and fifty years ago a man appeared among the Jews and proclaimed he was the real Messiah. The Turks put him to the test by ordering him to perform a miracle. This was impossible, and he acknowledged he was not the Messiah. Then this Jew turned to Mahomedanism and, as he had great power over his followers, they did the same. Now the Turk has a great contempt for the man who changes his faith. The consequence was that these *Deunmeh*, though Moslem in religion, were not allowed to marry into Moslem families, and, though the converts are Jews by race, no Hebrew man or woman would demean themselves by an alliance.

So the *Deunmeh* have been a class apart. They have had to marry amongst themselves, and this they have been doing for two hundred and fifty years. Altogether they do not number more than ten thousand, and their headquarters are at Salonika. The fact that the Jewish-Mahommedans are

ostracised by both Jews and Turks, and so live in isolation, has had the effect of making them witty, keen, the sharpest of business men. The *Deunmeh* are amongst the richest people in Salonika. Certainly those I saw were cultured, well-bred, and had an aristocratic air not to be found among the others.

The *Deunmeh* ladies have faces pale and pensive and with the delicacy of alabaster; their eyes are large, dark, and dreamy; they are tall, handsome, and lackadaisical. The way they compromise the severity of dress incumbent upon them as Mahomedans with the characteristic fondness of Jewish women for finery is ingenious. They always dress in black, and the head-covering is a thin shawl. But the cut and the adornment of the dress are exquisite; the head-covering is tastefully arranged; forearms are bare; black fans are wafted and held up—not too rigorously when the lady is beautiful and knows it, which she generally does—so that the face be hidden from the eyes of men. There is nothing but black in the dress of the *Deunmeh* ladies, but their grace and ingenuity make it distinctive.

Then there are the Turkish-Mahomedan ladies, who never appear in the streets save swathed in plain black or blue gowns, keep their faces covered, never walk with their husbands, never sit in the gardens listening to the band, are kept in the harem, and have no man to talk to besides the husband. I was told that the Mahomedan ladies eat their hearts out in envy of their Christian and

Jewish sisters who can dine with their men friends, go carriage drives, visit the *café chantant* in the evening. They see that the Infidel treats his women folk with consideration.

“ Ah,” said a Salonika man to me, “ the Turk will never break down the barrier between himself and the Christian in the matter of the freedom allowed to women. A Turkish woman would willingly sacrifice her nationality to have the liberty she sees Christian women enjoy.”

There are three Sundays a week in Salonika, Friday for the Moslems, Saturday for the Jews, and Sunday itself for the Christians. Or rather there is no Sunday at all, for there is never a day when you notice any cessation in business.

Much of the business is done at the cafés. If you want a man you go to his favourite café and not to his place of business. Some cafés are busy in the mornings and others busy in the afternoons, and all are busy in the evening. The Salonikan loves the shade. At one hour a café will be packed. The sun creeps along the pavements over the mass of little tables. Gradually customers go to the tables on the other side of the road and leave deserted the sun-baked side.

Dining at home is not popular. The Greeks like to sit beneath the trees and have dinner served from the adjoining restaurant. And they are charming, gay, and courteous. I should have liked them very much if I had not had the misfortune to see so many of them eat. Their table manners were atrocious; they made noises over their soup; they

messed the food ; they held their fingers and forks pointed starwards, and they shovelled vegetables with their knives.

The more I travel the more I am convinced that the manners of England are the best, and I have been in near forty different countries. I do not say the English way is the best just because it is the way I am used to or because it is different from foreign countries. I say it because I have always noticed that among the better classes of all countries the way accepted as best is toward what is regarded as best in England.

Now though the Turks are a minority of the population of Salonika, they are the ruling class. The wonder is that the quay is so long and so fine. It must have been built by foreigners. It was decided a little time ago to widen the front. All that was done was to get one man to go to the outskirts of the town, load a wheel-barrow with *débris*, wheel it to the quay, and tipple it into the sea. A friend of mine calculated it would take four hundred years at that rate for the necessary quantity of material to be procured. When there is a road to be repaired part of the work will be done. Then everybody will get tired and no further progress will be made for perhaps a couple of years. The Turk, when you talk to him, will argue it is rather a bad thing to keep a road in repair. Keeping a road in repair occupies only a few men. Let it get very bad and then a great number will be required. Further, the higher officials like a road to get beyond repair. Then a large sum will be needed to make another

road, and the heads of departments get their "squeeze."

For a great port—looked upon with greedy eyes by Austria, and to be the ultimate possession of Germany, so Berlin thinks—Salonika does its trade in a rather haphazard way. The Greek flag flies most often from the masthead of incoming steamers. British vessels number maybe thirty in a year. Cotton, tobacco, and opium are found more profitable than cereals. Fezzes and cigarette papers come from Austria. About £20,000 worth of cigarette papers alone, mostly of inferior quality, comes yearly from Austria.

The visitor will hardly have put his nose into the dark, shadowy bazaar before he is politely bowed to by some Armenian or Greek or Jew who keeps a store of antiquities. Foreigners are notorious purchasers of rubbish, and all alike are supposed to be inordinately rich.

You plead you are not interested in antiquities—which is not truthful—and that you have no money to purchase if you were. The Jew smiles, bows, and would not trespass, would not dream of forcing a purchase, but thinks the distinguished visitor would regret it if he departed without seeing his collection, which everybody knows is the best in the city. Please! So you go to the shop. If you are a novice or show the slightest enthusiasm for anything, you are "done." If you are an old hand, you set your wits against the dealer's wits, bring "bluff" into play, and exercise an exemplary and dilatory patience.

This was my personal experience, for I did not mind dawdling a few afternoons, pretending to be *blasé*, but keeping an eye open for bargains. The place was a higgledy-piggledy mass of old Albanian guns of which I could have bought a hundred at a Turkish lira (about a sovereign) apiece. Silver carvings—and the silver very bad—chains, lamps, ornaments, lay about, dusty and black with age. It was like a litter in a scrap-iron store. The Jew declared everything to be silver. I scraped one piece and showed it was plated on copper. Well, well; he had been deceived by the ruffian from whom he bought it! What would I give? Nothing! My eye was on something else, a quaint silver bowl inset with turquoise. Like the expert he was, he saw. Ah! what would I give for that? What did he want? Three lira! I tossed it aside, saying it was not worth more than a *medjedeh* (about four shillings). Oh, no, no; two lira; well, then, one lira. “If you have anything really good let me see it,” I said, “otherwise you are wasting my time.” He had got me!

His eyes gleamed. I was a customer. Step upstairs! Pardon the wretched place! A chair, and a cup of coffee and a cigarette! It was a real pleasure to have an English gentleman. “But I don’t say I’m going to buy,” I observe. “Oh, no, just look; I quite understand, just look.”

The place is piled with carpets, some old and good, most new and bad. He wants me to buy the new and bad. I tell him I can buy the same things at the same price in London. Silver? A



sword! A silver scabbard, beautifully worked, and with coral inset in the handle. Only twelve lira! I offer three. Oh, the gentleman is joking, and the sword is put away—but not far. Embroideries? Oh, yes, there are some exquisite embroideries from Asia Minor, from Rhodes, from elsewhere. I give reluctant admiration. But the price—why, the Jew must think me foolish, or with more money than sense. How much for that piece? Five lira—no, just for luck and to get a sale he will sacrifice himself and let me have it for four lira, though it wrings his heart to do so! I offer one lira! Ah, the gentleman is joking again.

In my inward soul I am determined to have certain things. But there must be no eagerness. I politely inform the Jew he is too rapacious, and that I don't think I'll buy anything. "Oh, sir!" I rise to leave. I finger the embroideries I fancy. He understands. I examine the silver sword again. He understands also. I see a pretty Greek cast. Oh, yes, very pretty, but it would smash before I got it home. I pick up the turquoise-studded bowl, likewise one or two other silver bowls which take my fancy. They are used by Turkish ladies in the bath for laving the water over their shoulders. I think they would do nicely as finger-bowls in my own house. But I drop them after a casual glance. Sorry there is nothing which pleases! Won't I come again; he is quite certain we should come to a bargain? Well, maybe, but I won't promise. So I depart.

The next afternoon I happen to stroll through

the bazaar, showing interest in things I would not purchase. "Oh, sir, please, please come as you promised." It is my friend the Jew. I look at my watch. I have no time; at least I have only half an hour. We go to the shop. More coffee and more cigarettes. All the things in which I had shown interest are on one side. I at once reject several articles and say I would not have them at a gift. The others! We go through them again. At last I get together precisely the things I want, rare embroideries, bowls, sword, cast. Why, the price—and he has come down—is thirty-eight lira! And I did not intend to spend more than ten. Ten lira! He picks out several things he will let me have for ten lira. Oh, no, I would not have those! He assures me that never had he been so willing to make a sacrifice; he loves gentlemen from England; they are so much nicer than men from other countries; indeed, he had become fond of me; he did not want to make any money, he just wanted me not to be disappointed when I got home that I had let such a chance go. And when was I leaving Salonika? In two days' time. I jump up. I have an appointment and I am behind my time. I cannot make any purchases. Perhaps I will look in again? But his prices are so extortionate! No, it is no good coming round to my hotel! I'm dining out. Good-bye! But let him keep the things on one side on the odd chance I may look in again.

A day goes by and I never approach the bazaar. The next day I saunter along with a friend. I pass

the store, but the Jew hears of me, and comes running, panting. Please, please; his heart has been hungering for me; will I not step into the shop and have a cup of coffee? And when am I leaving? To-morrow morning! Ah, and I have not bought anything. The same things are again brought out. My friend knows much about Turkish antiquities. We discuss values in English. It is on his advice I do not boggle over particular articles, but offer a lump sum for the lot. It is the total sum which touches the Jew's imagination. He would like to sell the things on which there would be a profit and keep the others. But I won't have it; it must be a fixed price for the lot. Well, well! He muses and calculates and looks all the things over. Twenty-five lira he will accept, and he pulls a wry face. I offer ten lira. He shrugs his shoulders. He is sorry. I say I'm sorry. We rise to leave and glance cursorily at other things. He will take twenty lira! No, it is too much. I pretend to be indifferent; he is openly sad. Some day, when I again visit Salonika, I'll call on him again! Good afternoon! We leave the shop. "I want them," I say to my friend, "and I'd better give him the twenty." "Wait a second," is the answer. The Jew runs up. "It is ruin, but you shall have them for sixteen lira." "That's his bottom price to-day," observes my friend. All right! The dealer dances with joy. He is full of delight. He will take a cheque. Everything will be brought along to my hotel in an hour. Ah, he knew he could make a bargain!

“ If you could have stayed for another two days,” said my friend to me, “ you would have got them for twelve lira, and I fancy I, who live here, could in time have got them for ten.”

Anyway, that is a sample of how business is done in Turkey. No one ever asks a fair price; he asks the biggest price, quite independent of value. If you are ignorant and pay it, that is your look-out. As a rule twice as much is asked as the dealer is prepared to accept, and he knows you offer half as much as you are prepared to pay. Much time is spent by him in reducing his figure, and you in increasing yours. It is the custom.

An acquaintance of mine, who had lived many years in Turkey, went into a Bond Street shop to buy a pair of gloves. “ How much? ” “ Three shillings and sixpence, sir.” “ I’ll give you two shillings,” said my acquaintance. The only reply was a glance and the sharp closing of the box. As the attendant put it away he remarked, “ I said three and six.” The returned Englishman remembered he was not in Turkey. He laughed and explained and bought his gloves.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### HILMI PASHA, "BONHAM'S BABIES," AND SOME STORIES.

The Viceroy of Macedonia—Major Bonham and the Gendarmerie School—"Bonham's Babies"—The Salonika Explosions—Tales of Greek and Bulgarian "Bands."

HILMI PASHA, the Inspector-General of Macedonia, is one of the most striking and remarkable of men. He stands between Turkey and the European Powers. It is his duty to conciliate Europe, but yield as little as possible. I am sure he has the true interests of Turkey at heart, and would be glad to see the Macedonian problem settled; but he realises the absolute hopelessness of the task which his Imperial master has set him.

I was introduced to him by the British Consul-General at Salonika, Mr. R. W. Graves, who has the widest, most acute appreciation of Macedonian affairs possessed by any foreigner. Hilmi Pasha is tall and thin, but with a feverish vitality. He would be thought haggard were it not that the eyes—large, piercing, inquisitorial—are full of fire. They attract and they rivet.

Hilmi is a tremendous worker. He is at his desk at daybreak, sees secretaries, dictates despatches, receives a constant stream of callers, smokes endless

cigarettes, drinks innumerable cups of coffee, never takes exercise, keeps on working till midnight.

He is a nervous man. All the time he is speaking his long fingers are twitching almost convulsively. He speaks rapidly, but never dogmatically ; always with an appeal to your intelligence, as a sensible man, that the view he presents is the correct view. If you did not see him in a fez you would imagine him to be a Jew. There is a Semitic touch about his features. He has the Hebraic nose, but he is really an Arab.

Formerly he was Governor in Yemen, and ruled with a rod of iron. Now he rules Macedonia with a skill that is wonderful. Though ever under the eye of foreign representatives, he is never lacking in suavity, whilst constantly guarding the interests of the Sultan.

For three years Hilmi Pasha has been Viceroy in Macedonia. With all the jarring elements, he knows better than anyone how futile have been the endeavours to secure anything in the nature of abiding tranquillity. He would retire from all the brain-racking complications were he not commanded by the Sultan to remain at his post.

Now one of the troubles in Macedonia is that the soldier police, the gendarmerie, are ignorant, illiterate, and so badly and irregularly paid that they must live by blackmail, and that they never find out who commits a crime if it is made worth their while not to do so. To remedy this there has, under foreign pressure, been established at Salonika a Gendarmerie School. It is under the charge of Major

Bonham, a highly capable officer possessing the rich faculty of persuading the Turks to do what could never have been secured by dictation. The recruits are jocularly known as "Bonham's Babies." He is a genial father to them, and the affection felt for him by the raw, sheepish-looking peasants who are brought in from the mountains to be licked into shape is not without its amusing side.

But Major Bonham has hardly a fair chance. Rarely has he a man under his charge for longer than four months. It is, therefore, little short of amazing how during those four months a hobbled-hoy can be straightened up, taught to march in the German style, and have some character put into him. But there is the fear, and indeed the probability, that when such men get back to their villages, and especially under the influence of their soldier associates—who have a contempt for new-fangled European ways—they will speedily relapse into their old dilatory slouch.

I spent a morning at the school. The poor physique of the men impressed me. Yet these were the best that could be picked. Of the last batch of 300 peasants that were brought in, 90 per cent. were rejected because of their lack of staying power.

Though the material is bad, Major Bonham is pleased with the results. The Turkish authorities have no enthusiasm for what is being done at the Gendarmerie School, and it is with reluctance that they provide funds for its maintenance. The men themselves, however, are keen. They are worked hard, but they never get kicked, and they value a kind

word. Major Bonham has established a mess-room for the Turkish officers. Till this big, cheery Englishman came the officers had no place but the cafés in which to spend their spare time. Now they have a large decorated and carpeted room. There are plenty of newspapers. They drink nothing but water, and they devote their evenings to learning French.

It inclines one to smile to go into the classrooms and find between two and three hundred Turkish men learning to read and write—great big fellows laboriously and awkwardly making Turkish pothooks and slowly going through the Turkish equivalent for C-A-T, cat. But they learn quickly, and as soon as they master the simplest words their interest is stimulated by being given stories to read. They take turns to read. Thought and attention are cultivated by someone being called upon to repeat the story from memory. There is mirth at the muddlers. But interest never flags. The more promising men are retained as instructors to the newcomers. The others, at the end of a few months, are drafted to frontier outposts. But I believe the benefits of the school soon ebb and disappear.

These gendarmes—who are distinguished by wearing light blue jackets, in contrast to the dark blue worn by those who have not had European training—reside in districts which are periodically dotted with outrage. Whatever is done will be misrepresented by either Bulgarians or Greeks.

The Salonika explosions will not have faded from public recollection. A number of Bulgarians while



driving past the Ottoman Bank, suddenly threw some bombs at the soldiers and gendarmes employed to watch it. Three soldiers were killed. Three of the conspirators were also killed and three wounded. The Bulgarians fired the bank with dynamite, attempted to destroy the Turkish Post Office, threw bombs in various parts of the town, and put out the gas. It was found that an underground passage had been made from a shop on the other side of the street to the bank, and a mine, loaded with dynamite and connected with the shop by electricity, constructed. It must have taken months to make this passage. The earth was carried away in handkerchiefs and small paper parcels and thrown into the sea or elsewhere at a considerable distance from the spot. A complete plant for the manufacture of bombs was discovered, including thirty-six quarter-pound jars of nitro-glycerine.

After the outrage between thirty and forty Bulgarians were killed by the Turks through resistance to arrest or in attempted flight. The participation of a Bulgarian merchant of wealth and position in the outrages proves that it is hardly possible for any Bulgarian of whatever standing to escape the clutches of the *Komitaji*.

Following the events at Salonika, all the Bulgarian schoolmasters in the province of Dédé Aghatch put on deep mourning for forty days.

At the village of Banitsa, near Seres, two "bands" were surrounded by troops, and after severe fighting most of the "bandsmen" were killed, as well as most of the male inhabitants who

were in the village at the time. Some thirty or forty women were violated and most of the houses burnt, only twenty-two out of 170 being left standing. In the *sanjak* of Seres 1,600 houses were burnt. Of these only 109 were Turkish; all the rest were Bulgarian. At the village of Konski three peasants were tortured by the Turkish officers searching the village for arms. They were stripped, bound, and laid upon their backs on red-hot embers, while a woman was burnt on both arms. All this was by way of retaliation on the Bulgars for the Salonika outrage.

Mr. Consul-General Graves, writing to the British Foreign Office, stated that almost all the crimes committed by the Bulgarians had been provoked by attempts on the part of the Patriarchists (Greeks) to profit from the present misfortunes of the Bulgarians by recapturing schools and churches which had passed into their hands. The Bulgarians, of course, retaliated. Later he wrote that among the documents found on the body of a Bulgarian revolutionary were "half a dozen copies of a petition drawn up in Bulgarian and Turkish to be signed by the inhabitants of Patriarchist villages, asking to be placed under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate." There were also instructions in cypher as to the means to be employed in forcibly obtaining signatures to these petitions.

In the village of Osnitsani an old man of sixty was decoyed out of his house by a "band" wearing the gendarme uniform. They demanded lodging for the soldiers, who, they said, had just arrived in the



MACEDONIAN PEASANTS.



village. The old man was killed with knives near the church; there were sixty-five wounds on his body. Before killing him the "band" tortured him inhumanly, split his skull, drove the knife through his ears and eyes, and ended by throwing a heavy stone on the head of the victim, already beaten into a shapeless mass. A fortnight before, the poor old man, who was the most learned and most important Christian in the district, had gone to the episcopal chief, his eyes filled with tears, and had stated that agents of the *Komitaji* had demanded from him, with threats of death, the seal of the village, in order to seal a petition addressed to the Exarch that the village might detach itself from the Patriarchate!

In two villages between Salonika and Yenijé a Bulgarian "band" was called in by the Greek villagers in consequence of the oppressions and exactions of the Albanian guards, shepherds, and other hangers-on of several large Turkish landowners in that district. A fight took place, in which the Albanians lost three killed. "It is, indeed," says Mr. Consul-General Graves in reporting this occurrence, "a curious inversion of the natural order of things by which the insurgent band is called in to punish or avenge the crimes of the nominal protectors of life and property, while the last to appear on the scene are the military and police, who content themselves with reporting the dispersal of the rebels."

Colonel Verand, the chief of the French representatives in Macedonia, has stated that he and his officers were much impressed by the barbarous ruth-

lessness of the *Komitajis* and by the powerlessness of the Turkish authorities to protect those who had incurred their vengeance.

The Turkish Ambassador in London told Lord Lansdowne at the latter end of 1904: "It was notorious that for some time past 'bands' formed in Greece came to carry out their designs in certain European provinces of the Turkish Empire. The Greek Government . . . tried to represent the incursions of these 'bands' as reprisals for misdeeds committed by Bulgarians against Greeks." Despite their assurances to Turkey, the Greek Government found themselves unable to take measures to prevent these incursions, and meanwhile a Macedonian Committee founded in Greece openly issued revolutionary proclamations, and fresh "bands" were formed to render the movement more active. Collisions were constantly occurring between the Turkish troops and Greek "bands," while the Bulgarian "bands" made savage reprisals on the Greek. At Vladovo three Patriarchists were murdered by Bulgarians because they would not refuse to pay the *hejaz* duty (on bringing and selling wood from the forest) as the Bulgarians directed, but continued to bring in wood. A few days later another Bulgarian "band," furious at their loss of four killed and three wounded in a fight with a Greek "band" that day, entered the village of Girchista, and murdered the Greek schoolmistress and six other persons.

These stories are not mere tales brought to my ears. They are all taken from reports written by British Consuls to the British Foreign Office.

## CHAPTER XX.

### MONASTIR.

The Cut-throat Part of Europe—Murder a Commonplace—Massacres by the Turks—Bursts of Ferocity and Bursts of Philanthropy—Outrages by Greek and Bulgarian “Bands”—The Risings of 1903—Audacity of the *Komitajis*—Relations between the Bulgarian and Turkish Governments.

THE town of Monastir, capital of the vilayet of Monastir, lies in Macedonia just about half-way between Bulgarian and Greek territory. North, the majority of the Macedonians are Bulgar; south, the majority are Hellenes. The villages meet, cross, and mix in the Monastir vilayet. The reason, therefore, we hear so much about disturbances at Monastir is not because the Turks there are more wicked than Turks elsewhere, but because there is a persistent feud between Greek and Bulgarian political religionists.

A winding railway line runs from Salonika to Monastir. There is one train a day, and it crawls leisurely through a picturesque land. All the little stations are pretty. Each has its flower garden, and each station house is trailed with gorgeous creepers. There is plenty of fruit to be bought; lads sell jars filled with chilled water. There are Turks and Greeks and Bulgarians, all merry, greeting friends, seeing friends away—quite a happy country scene. Yet this is the cut-throat part of Europe!

Monastir is an undistinguished, motley sort of town of some 60,000 inhabitants, 14,000 of them Greek, 10,000 of them Bulgarian, four or five thousand Albanian, two or three thousand Jew, and the rest Turk.

There is a sufficient variety in costume—but after a month or two the jostling of differently clad races ceases to attract the eye. Monastir is an ordinary Turkish European town, even to the attempt at a garden where the richer Turks and Bulgars and Greeks come and sit at little tables and drink beer and listen to a string band composed of girls from Vienna.

Everybody is jolly. Murder is so commonplace that it arouses no shudder. In the night there is the little bark of a pistol, a shriek, a clatter of feet. "Hello! somebody killed!" That is all.

But though geniality reigns, you notice things which make you think. Half the population consists of Turkish soldiers. Night and day they are about. On all the neighbouring hills you see military encampments. A caravan of mules laden with maize comes in from the country, and each four mules are convoyed by a soldier with a gun ready.

Monastir goes about its business. But it stands on the fringe of a fearful massacre. Bulgarians are in a minority, and are avoided by Greeks and Jews. In the cafés plots are hatched. A man whispers in your ear. Last night two Bulgarians were stabbed to death! Hush! they deserved it. Had not the Bulgarians put poison into the communion wine at the Greek church?



One murder a day is about the average. Sometimes all is quiet for a week. Then half a dozen men are wiped out and the average is maintained. The Greeks have warned the Bulgarian residents in Monastir that for every Patriarchist murdered by the "bands" in the country they will murder two Bulgarians in the town.

Sarafoff, the insurgent Bulgarian leader, is pressing the peasants so hard for contributions that they are forced to sell their cattle at ten to fifteen shillings a head in order to satisfy him. At Prilip, which I visited, a Moslem youth returning from his farm with his mother was murdered by Bulgarians; his mother was impaled alive and afterwards mutilated in the most barbarous manner.

The number of Turkish troops in Macedonia is something like 150,000. This means that practically the whole male population in several parts of Turkey has been forced to leave its home and its ordinary work to take part in the concentration in these provinces. Such a state of affairs produces the most terrible misery.

At the village of Moghila, near Monastir, after the destruction of a "band," both Bashi-Bazouks and soldiers proceeded to strip the dead of their outer garments, footgear, and arms, and lacerated the corpses with knives and bayonets. Almost every house in the vicinity was sacked. The Turks carried off whatever suited them, and cut into ribbons the new sheepskin coats and other garments they could not take away. Corn and other foodstuffs were scattered on the ground and burned. Finally

about a dozen cottages were set on fire with petroleum.

The village of Smyrdesh was wholly destroyed by the Turks on the pretext that the inhabitants had provided the *Komitajis* with means of subsistence. Out of a population of 1,200, 140 men, women, and children of the village were killed, and out of 286 houses only twenty or twenty-five were left standing. The booty carried off was large, comprising all kinds of stores and household goods, as well as cattle, horses, and the sacred vessels in the church. A family of seven persons was massacred, and the corpses were piled one atop of another in the fireplace.

In some villages in the Monastir district the Bulgarian population has seriously contemplated a change of religion as the only means of securing comparative immunity from the Turk's oppression—because the Turk is, for the time being, favourable to the Greeks. On the other hand, a sister of an Orthodox (Greek) priest, a woman of seventy, was tortured by a Bulgarian *Komitaji*, who cut off pieces from her feet and stuffed them into her mouth until she died. She was suspected of having given information to the authorities of Sarafoff's presence in Smyrdesh.

Mr. James McGregor, late British Consul at Monastir, reported that in the rising of 1903 the Turkish troops, consisting of eleven battalions, and accompanied by several hundred Bashi-Bazouks, fought with about 400 insurgents, and were let loose on the village of Smilevo, which they sacked and burned,

leaving only four houses standing out of 500. More than 2,000 of the inhabitants sought refuge in the forests, and of those who remained in the village twenty-one elderly men and sixty or seventy women and children were cut to pieces, and forty young women were carried off to Mussulman villages, where they were kept for a week.

The dreadful autumn of 1903, when the Bulgarian insurrection broke out in Macedonia, has left deep traces. Then the insurgent forces were computed at 32,000 men, armed and drilled. Bridges were blown up and bombs thrown. Krushevo was occupied by insurgents, against whom the Turks and Bashi-Bazouks came in force. After defeating them the troops entered the town, massacred seventy-seven people, burnt and pillaged 570 shops and houses; hundreds of people were ill-treated and beaten and women were violated. Of course, the Turks caught none of the insurgents, who decamped from one side of the town as the Turks entered at the other. The pillage and destruction continued four days. The Bulgarian quarter was spared, owing, it is said, to bribes given to the Turkish soldiers. The rest of the inhabitants, mostly Greco-Vlachs, were ruined, and were naturally incensed at the Bulgarians escaping the general destruction. It was suspected by the Greeks that the Turkish commander was in league with the insurgents, and had of set purpose attacked the Greek inhabitants. The mere investigator cannot say. Things are so cross-grained in Macedonia.

Six hundred women and children from villages close to Monastir, who arrived in a deplorable condition, were not allowed by the authorities to enter the town. After the representations of the English Consul, Hilmi Pasha provided them with bread and sent them to a neighbouring village, and finally to their own villages. The local authorities of Kastoria, where the troops made a clean sweep, were ordered to provide timber for the reconstruction of the ruined houses. A mill was built in each village at public expense, assistance was to be given in the harvesting of the crops, all stolen live stock to be restored and paid for, and the taxes for the current year to be remitted. Thus the Turkish authorities alternate between bursts of ferocity and bursts of philanthropy.

The sum distributed by the Porte for the restoration of the destroyed villages—of which so much was made by the Turkish Government—amounted to about fifteen shillings per family. The villagers in many cases refused it, as they were unable to undertake the obligation to rebuild with such utterly inadequate means. Later, Mr. McGregor reported that, in some parts of the Monastir Vilayet at any rate, the Turkish Commission, although slow and face to face with many difficulties, seemed to be honestly endeavouring to carry on its task in the most satisfactory way.

The whole country is a complicated mass of disorder. That the Turks are guilty of savage excess in the "punishments" is true. But it is difficult whilst criticising them to feel much sympathy for

our "brother Christians." In one village near Monastir a Greek "band" fell upon a Bulgarian house in which a wedding was being celebrated, and killed, in the space of twenty minutes or so, thirteen men and women, and wounded five or six others. Turkish officials were only despatched to the spot on the following day, although there was a military post within earshot. A few days later a Bulgarian "band" murdered a number of Patriarchists out of revenge.

Then I heard of the case in which a family of four Greeks, two of them women, were murdered by a Bulgar "band," which compelled another member of the family to take a letter to the *Kaimakam* (local Governor) stating he was the author of the four murders. A "band" at Prilip, under the leadership of an amnestied political prisoner, killed a notable of that town, wrenched out his nails, put out his eyes, and finally decapitated him. The same day a rich man of the place was cruelly maltreated, while his old mother was outraged and then hanged.

What is done by the Turkish troops is the result of instructions from Constantinople. But when there is an endeavour to reach a conclusion whether what is done by the Greek and Bulgarian "bands" is with the sympathy, active or passive, of the Governments at Athens and Sofia, one is stepping on very delicate ground. As to Greece, my own opinion is that the "bands" are not only winked at by the Greek Government, but are actually encouraged by the Turkish Government. At present there is no

quarrel between Turkey and Greece, and it is "playing the Turks' game" for the Greek "bands" to kill Bulgarians. As to the Bulgarian Government, it is, officially, anxious to check the incursions of "bands" into Turkish territory. But so strong is public feeling in Bulgaria in support of the revolutionary movement, so ardent to do all that is possible to free the Bulgarian Macedonians from their oppressors, so anxious indeed for Bulgaria to cross swords with Turkey in war, that the position of the Government at Sofia cannot be otherwise than compromising.

It was thought that when Europe intervened to force Turkey on to the path of reform, the Sofia Government would call off the revolutionists. Note what Boris Sarafoff, the insurgent leader, writes: "You ask me whether this was not the moment to abandon our revolutionary activity, now that Europe has taken up the cause of the Macedonians. We reply that we should regard ourselves as traitors to our unhappy country were we to discontinue our revolutionary propaganda before we have convinced ourselves that our cause has appreciably benefited by the intervention of Europe. . . Europe has repeatedly intervened diplomatically in Turkey . . but each time the result has been not reforms, but a general massacre of the Christians. . . We demand the reforms which the Treaty of Berlin guaranteed to us. Turkey will not grant them to us without the armed intervention of Europe. It is for this reason that we have taken up arms." The revolutionaries want war.

Even the Turks have thought war the only solution. After the risings of 1903 in the Monastir and Adrianople Vilayets, Mr. Fontana, the British Vice-Consul at Uskup, wrote: "The common theme of conversation in Turkish cafés and meeting places among both officers and civilians is the unbearable state of things as at present existing; and a sentiment of concentrated illwill towards Christians in general is gradually making itself felt. . . Officers and men are sick and tired of their present weary incertitude . . . and they say that war, at whatever cost, would be infinitely preferable to the existing deadlock. Officers and upper-class civilians inscribed as *Ilavé* make no secret of their determination, in case of war with Bulgaria, to burn, on the march to the frontier, every Bulgarian village they pass . . . and to destroy every town and hamlet as far as Sofia."

During the insurrection the Porte were constantly accusing the Bulgarian Government of fomenting and encouraging the rebellion, in spite of their reiterated and categorical repudiation of having done so. There can be no doubt that Bulgaria and Turkey were within an ace of war. Troops were massed by both nations on the frontier, the Turkish being a very large force. As far as can be ascertained, the Bulgarian Government was quite sincere in its denial of having given encouragement to the insurgents, and certainly took far greater precautions on that side of the frontier than the Turks did on theirs to prevent "bands" or contraband of war being smuggled across. After

repeated representations the Porte at length consented to withdraw their forces on condition that Bulgaria disbanded the reservists who had been called out, in the proportion of one Bulgarian regiment to two Turkish regiments.

After the repression of the Macedonian insurrection Sarafoff went to Sofia, where he received an enthusiastic reception from an immense crowd. It might have been thought that the Bulgarian Government would have found means to prevent this demonstration, even if only for the sake of appearances. The Government refused to take any action against the other insurgent leaders who took refuge in Bulgaria, on the ground that they had committed no offence in that country, and, therefore, unless the Ottoman Commissioner lodged a formal complaint which would be heard in a court of law, and must be supported by evidence—which, of course, could not be produced—it had no grounds for proceeding against them.

The audacity of the *Komitaji* is illustrated by the fact that a revolutionary theatrical troupe arrived at Philippopolis, and gave out that the performances were to represent revolutionary scenes in Macedonia and the Adrianople district, and that the proceeds were to be devoted to “an even yet more active struggle against our persecutor and enemy, the Sultan.” The performances were not interfered with by the police, as the Prefect thought it inadvisable to prohibit them lest the revolutionaries of the troupe should spend their time in more violent pursuits, to the detriment of public order!



Friction has existed between the Turkish and Bulgarian Governments. General Petroff has said on behalf of the Bulgarian Government that "so far as Bulgaria was concerned there was complete calm; but he could not guarantee how long this would last if the Ottoman Government continued its present policy of provocation. The vexatious treatment of Bulgarian merchandise in Turkey, the refusal of *visas* to Bulgarian passports, the system of persecution in districts like Seres, where no outbreak had occurred, and the support afforded to the Patriarchists in their attempts to force the Exarchists to join their Church, were part and parcel of a policy undertaken for the purpose of pushing matters to a crisis."

During 1905 the official relationship between the Porte and Sofia became diplomatically "correct." In 1904 an Agreement had been signed between Bulgaria and Turkey, the conditions of which paved the way for a distinct improvement in the relations between the suzerain and vassal States. Sir George Buchanan, the British Agent at Sofia, who is decidedly friendly to Bulgaria, says: "The Agreement, it is generally recognised, has raised the prestige of the Government both at home and abroad, and has placed Bulgaria in a more advantageous position than that of any other Balkan State with regard to the Macedonian question. . . . The journals of the National and Tsankovist parties speak, on the contrary, of the Agreement as a shameful surrender, from which neither the Bulgarians nor the Macedonians will reap any benefit. It is, they assert, contrary to the national

aspirations, and imposes on the Principality obligations which it can never fulfil [*re* the punishment and deterral of revolutionary bands], and which will consequently be a fruitful source of future conflicts with Turkey." Sir Nicholas O'Connor, British Ambassador at Constantinople, says: "Several hundred prisoners have been released in the Adrianople vilayet. . . As to the wisdom of releasing at the same moment so many persons connected with the revolutionary movements, doubts may well be entertained, especially after the experiences of February, 1903; but, at all events, the Turkish Government has fearlessly accepted the only condition that rendered an agreement with Bulgaria possible at this moment." Higher Turkish officials in Monastir professed great satisfaction with the conclusion of the Convention, but it only intensified the chronic discontent prevalent among the Mussulman masses.

Bulgaria, while insisting she has performed her part of the bargain, is grumbling about the procedure of the Porte. General Petroff says the reforms are still non-existent, and all, therefore, Bulgaria can do is, by maintaining a correct attitude and by faithfully fulfilling her obligations under the Turco-Bulgarian Agreement, to deprive the Porte of every pretext for shifting the responsibility for the non-execution of the reforms from its own shoulders to those of the Bulgarian Government.

It has been stated by the Turkish authorities that Sarafoff caused a large quantity of fezzes to be introduced, *viâ* Sofia, into European Turkey. to-

gether with costumes resembling Turkish uniforms, made in Bulgaria, in the hope that thereby the crimes of the Bulgarian "bands" would be attributed to Turkish soldiers, and also with the view of deceiving Turkish troops when the "bands" were pursued by them.

All of which goes to prove that discontent in the Balkans, though diplomatically cloaked over, is liable to burst forth again at any moment.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE QUAIN'T CITY OF OCHRIDA.

Among Brigands—Attacked by Goat-dogs—The Dogs Dismayed  
—A Grateful Albanian—Resna—Melons, Melons all the Way  
—Hard Life of the Albanian Peasants—A Thirsty Ride—  
Water at Last—A Young Turkish Soldier and his Devotions  
—Ochrida—The Chief of Police and his Horse—A Hot-bed  
of Intrigue—Healing Water.

THE main street of Monastir was swathed in the Cimmerian blackness of two hours before dawn. But there was the sharp click of horse-hoofs, and the shiver and neigh of cold and impatient animals. The clang of a sabre, the thud of a rifle-butt, the clink of spurs came with the muffled talk of deep Turkish throats.

When I pressed back the shutters of my room in the Greek inn where I stayed the thought came that the place was in siege. The flicker of my lamplight fell upon a jangle of unmounted horsemen, tawny complexions in sad contrast to the crimson of the fezzes which all wore. The lightened gloom was punctured with the glowing points of many cigarettes—for the Turkish soldier, though he may lack food, is for ever twirling or puffing a cigarette.

This was the escort which had been sent by the Vali of Monastir. I was going into the fastnesses of Albania. But there were other travellers proceeding as far as Ochrida, a day's journey on the

way. We joined forces and escorts. And when, after munching a poor breakfast by candlelight, we got away with the first glint of approaching day, we must have awakened half Monastir with our clatter, the scramble of hoofs on the cobbles, jolting of accoutrements, and sharp shouts of the soldiery.

The road was well marked. It curved to the sweep of a long range of bald hills. Goatherds, men living almost the life of the goats themselves—lank, sallow, half-frightened children of the wilderness, wearing cloaks of whole sheepskins—looked wistfully from the little fires by which they were crouching for warmth ; they called off their dogs, which are half wolf, from the bare-toothed and snarling resistance they offered to our advance, jumping savagely before the horses as though they would grip them by the throat.

The morning shewed that across the valley the hills rose in soft cadence. Among the tree-clumps nestled villages, picturesque in the landscape, but forbidding on close acquaintance. Those hills, like the hills we hugged, were dun and unfertile ; but the crevices and chasms, watered by the thousand rivulets of the mountains beyond, were streaked with the vivid green of prolific vegetation.

“ Oh,” said the captain of the guard, “ this is a dangerous place. All the hills are infested with brigands. We are now approaching the village of Kazanihu. All the people are brigands. But you are safe—none dare attack when there is an escort of troops ! ”

If the villagers were brigands they were the most

wretched specimens of their profession imaginable: weasel-eyed, slinking creatures, with no flesh on their bones and the scantiest of rags on their backs. I doubted if they had the courage to attack a mule caravan.

“The brigands have gone into the hills,” explained the captain; “we may see some later. You have a revolver?”

I fancy he was endeavouring to demonstrate that the life of a single foreigner would not be worth twopence if it had not been for the protection provided by himself and his soldiers.

Whilst the horses were getting ten minutes' rest before being put to a long climb into the hills I went for a saunter. I had not gone a hundred yards before two brutes of goat-dogs came bounding toward me, yelping and meaning mischief. I fingered my revolver. Naturally the first instinct was to shoot. It is remarkable what a lot of thinking you can do in five seconds when hard pressed. I remembered first a bit of serious advice given me by a British Consul, never to shoot a dog belonging to an Albanian goatherd unless you are prepared immediately afterwards to shoot its master before he has time to shoot you. Secondly, I recollected having read somewhere—goodness knows where—that a dog will never attack a human being who is sitting down.

With infinitesimal faith, but with the alacrity of a Japanese gentleman in comic opera, down I flopped. Incidentally I may remark that I prepared for catastrophe by whipping out my revolver, intent

on settling dogs and master if there were need. Sad to relate, however—in the interests of dramatic episode—the dogs evidently thought, as I subsequently concluded also, that I presented an extremely ludicrous appearance. Any way, they halted at about five paces, and stood in strained attitude and with bristling hair, showing their teeth at my collapsed self.

How long squatting on one's haunches is effective in restraining the bloodthirsty propensities of an Albanian dog I don't know. But the goatherd, with gun slung behind his back, came scampering over the rocks, using, I daresay, Albanian language to its full abusive extent on the dogs which had behaved so reprehensibly to a meek-eyed foreign gentleman. He was so characteristic a hillsman—and all the billies and nannies were racing over the rocks as though anxious to afford any little service in their power—making quite a picture, that I levelled my camera at him. Ignorant hillsman! He thought it was some infamous invention with which a "dog of a Christian" intended to inflict punishment on a faithful Mahommedan. He did not corroborate the warlike reputation of his race. Instead of swinging his gun into position and opening fire on his own account, he clasped his hands and pleaded I would check my wrath. I realised that much, though I could not understand a syllable he grunted. Up ran my dragoman full of respectful indignation that I had strayed from himself and the soldiers, and breathing furious curses in Turkish on all Albanian men, dogs, and goats.

The Albanian, through my dragoman, was profuse in apologies, and hoped the *effendi* would not have him punished by the soldiers. When I assured him that he had done nothing except the right thing, and followed this up by my usual peace-offering of a cigarette, the poor fellow seemed as grateful and as obliged as though I had rescued him from the bastinado.

As, in the glowing heat of a cloudless day, we climbed slowly, many Albanians were met. They were not wearing the cotton kilt in which they are depicted in pictures, but white, tight-fitting trousers of blanket-like material, with a broad, black stripe down the side of either leg. Their shirts were full and loose, and their caps were white or black and of collar-box shape—a little evidence, as the fez was not worn, that Turkish supremacy was not acknowledged. As a rule they rode neat, quick-stepping ponies. Better proof than the terrorising language of the captain of the escort that danger was about was afforded by the fact that instead of their rifles being slung behind the shoulder, they were invariably lying across the lap of the horseman.

From the summit of the bleached hill, with not a blade of grass on the way, a rich plain was revealed. The dull, leaden breast of Presba Lake was on the left, and the little town of Resna just discernible on the right: welcome to the eye, for hunger had set in, and Resna was to provide a meal and a rest in the heat of the day for a couple of hours.

It was Saturday, market-day, and the Christian villagers from the hillsides, mostly Bulgarian, some



Greek, had the market-place choked with produce. The Turks were few; the Albanians were in the hills. But here was one of the phenomena of Macedonia—for Albania lay much further on—a mixed town of Bulgarians and Greeks. Politically they are at daggers drawn, and occasionally at daggers sheathed in one another. It was not, however, murder which now concerned them; it was the sale of melons.

Every market-place I visited in the whole of the Balkans was half-piled with melons. It almost seemed as though the people, emulating Sydney Smith's report that the inhabitants of the Scilly Isles eke out a precarious living by taking in one another's washing, maintained existence by purchasing and eating one another's melons.

The place was a hubbub of barter. It was dirty, and, of course, it was picturesque. It was easier to note the difference between the Greek and Bulgarian women than between their men-folk. Not only were there distinctions in attire, but there was difference in physique. Like peasants all the world over, they were heavy, stodgy, and with little intelligence in their countenances.

Occasionally, I know, it is possible to catch a glimpse of a pretty peasant girl. But working hard, which comes early in life, with cares, brood of children, and labour in the fields from sunrise to sundrop, wears and tears, and by early middle age the women are haggard and worn. They have that set despondency of feature which you ever find with those who labour close to the starvation limit.

There are no improvement committees in this region, no scientific enquiries into physical degeneracy. The people have the mute contentment of ignorance—except where politics and religion are concerned. Half the children born in Macedonia die of malnutrition.

A level but big-bending road makes round the hills from Resna to Ochrida. A near cut is over the hills by a faintly-marked mule-track. It was by this road we went. We scampered across a basin of a plain, struck the hills abruptly, and started climbing. The way was up a jagged, broken tangle of rocks. We sat forward in our saddles, and gripped the manes of our horses whilst, with strained sinews, they made the toilsome ascent.

We passed through a medley of vegetation and barrenness. We pushed up clefts of rock which had in them the pant of an oven, and we sheltered in leafy glades where there was cool and the trickle of water. On a brow of scarped sandstone we wheeled our horses, looked to the valley from which we had ascended, looked beyond the shimmering lake to where the world was cut off by a long range of red and arid rocks.

Horses and riders were in a lather, pressing a slow way up that mountain side, beneath the fierce onslaught of a midday sun. Again we reached a patch of woodland. The trees were all crooked and gnarled. They were bent and twisted by the fury of a thousand gales. We endeavoured to ride through, but the trees stretched long arms of branches as though determined to wrest us from the

saddle. We crouched, keeping our cheeks to the necks of our horses. That did not suffice, for there were Turkish curses when a bough secured one of the soldiers in its grasp. For a long distance we walked.

Then to the bald highland, with not a shrub, not a blade of grass, the ground crumpled earth that burnt to the touch. With a challenge to ourselves that there should be no stop till the summit was reached, we kept steadily to our work. There was no urging of the horses. They took their own gait, ploddingly, ceaselessly, and covered with the spume of exertion. Not a breath of wind tempered the furnace heat. The water in our canteens was lukewarm and nasty. When it gave out, mouths became gluey. The one wish of my heart was to have a good long gulp of cold spring water. One of the soldiers knew there was water ahead, and that gave us patience.

On the summit of the mountain we halted a brief moment to enjoy the blessed satisfaction of a gentle breeze. I believe there was a magnificent panorama of high-tossed mountain ranges to be obtained from that spot. Personally I had no particular interest in panoramas of high-tossed mountain ranges. Water was what I wanted. The horses must have sniffed water. They did not race, because the declivity was too steep, but they hastened, slitheringly, hardly able to keep their hoof-hold among the *débris* of stones which mountain torrents had washed into the path.

So to the brook in a shady dell, where the water gurgled with silver call to the thirsty traveller. We drank deep and often, and rested. After the furious

glare on the far side of the range it was welcome to loosen cartridge belts and sprawl upon the ground in easy attitude. The captain of the guard, myself, and my dragoman lolled in the luxury of laziness, whilst the Turkish soldiers slowly walked their horses beneath the trees, patting them, talking to them, before allowing them to drink. Then they tied the animals to branches, squatted, produced their pouches, and rolled cigarettes, not for themselves, but always for each other, so that they might exchange with courtesy. They, too, put aside their carbines and their cartridges, and stretched themselves within the shade. In the fragrant lush of a sultry afternoon most of the men, after their eight hours' ride, fell into the sleep of the tired.

There was one young Turkish soldier who attracted me. He was as well-set, and almost as fair, as an Englishman, and might, indeed, have been mistaken for a British "Tommy," were it not that he spoke nothing but Turkish, and wore the red fez. Later he became my servant during the rough journey through Albania; and although many of my intentions had to be expressed in pantomime, he was quick-witted and rarely failed instantly to grasp what I wanted. The first thing that turned my eyes to him was that he had an exceedingly fine horse. No two men could have been closer friends than that Turkish soldier and his steed. Whenever there was a halt and the soldier rested, the horse was close to him, having his nose patted and being talked to.

In the drowse and the stillness of the afternoon

my Turkish "Tommy" quietly separated himself from his fellows, and walked down the brook-side till he came to a patch of green. I watched him with idle curiosity. He produced from his jacket a piece of linen, not much bigger than a pocket-handkerchief. This he carefully washed—indeed, I thought he was utilising a spare half-hour for washing. He removed his heavy riding-boots and washed his feet. Again I thought he was performing a simple act of ablution. He was very careful the handkerchief should be clean and spread on the greenest spot of grass. Very careful, also, was he that his feet should be clean.

All the preparation was for prayer. He stepped, barefooted and clean, toward the little improvised prayer-carpet. His face was toward Mecca. He clasped his hands before him and prayed; he knelt and prayed again; he lowered his forehead to the prayer-carpet, and with flat palms outstretched upon the ground he prayed a third time. When his prayers had ceased he folded his little prayer-carpet and stowed it within the breast of his jacket. It was an impressive little scene, this pious Turkish "Tommy" taking opportunity during a midday rest to go through the devotions of a true Mahomedan.

A shout of command and the soldiers were up, swinging their carbines across their shoulders, springing into the saddle, and off. There was a break in the trees; we could look, as though from a darkened room, out upon the sun-splashed scene beyond. There was a pleasant maze of hills, and soon we were riding amongst them at a jaunty pace.

That pace had soon to be slackened. There was the descent to be made. So broken was the way, choked with boulders, that no horse could be put to it. We dismounted and walked. The whole hill-side was a turmoil of detached rocks and innumerable mountain streams. There were gullies choked with sodden slaty refuse. To walk through it was like walking through the yard of a coal mine on a rainy day. We jumped from ledge to ledge, halting at times to allow the more slow-going and more cautious horses to catch us up.

Ochrida edged into sight. A little rock-perched place by the great lake of the same name, and behind it a beautiful valley—like all the Balkan valleys, absolutely flat—every yard of it under cultivation; a prayer-carpet of fertility and thankfulness.

We got somewhat ahead of our companion travellers from Monastir. They had their own guard; and not knowing when they would appear, we decided to push on to the city. We arranged ourselves in dignified order. Two of the escort with rifles balanced on their thighs rode ahead. Then came the captain and myself with my dragoon in close attendance, whilst two by two the remainder of the guard followed behind. I daresay we made a very imposing array as, with our horses at a gallop, we scampered into the town, bringing the inhabitants out with a rush to see us, whilst affrighted mothers, like affrighted mothers all the world over, were in shrieking terror that their little Jimmies and Susans and Freddie and Betsies would

be trampled to death by the horses. I don't think we killed a single child.

The streets were little more than alleys, paved with huge cobbles, and with enormous overhanging houses on either side. With tremendous hullabaloo we went through the town. We were met by the Chief of the Police, accompanied by a body of gendarmes, who had heard the news and were hastening out to give us greeting. The Chief of the Police was an exceedingly smart young fellow. But he was mounted on the most tempestuous brute of a horse I have ever seen outside Wyoming. The Chief and myself got through our salaams easily enough, but when we endeavoured to shake hands that fiery, untamed brute of his seemed to resent the arrival of an alleged Christian, and endeavoured to vent its hatred on the horse which was carrying me by trying to kick it into an adjoining coffee-house. My animal retaliated. For about thirty seconds the air scintillated with hoofs.

It was the proper thing that the Chief and myself should ride together through the streets to the lodgings which had been got ready. The way was so narrow that we were constantly bumping with our shoulders into the walls, cannoning our horses into one another, and providing another display of kicking. The mounted police and the soldiery following made a roar like a train in a tunnel.

There was no hotel. But some relatives of the dragoman at the British Consulate at Monastir, Bulgarians, kindly placed their residence at our disposal. The dragoman was a Greek, but had mar-

ried a daughter of this Bulgar household—proof, in this corner of the world, that love laughs at political and racial animosities. Our Bulgarian hostess was in her widowhood. A few months before her husband had been murdered in the street by a Turkish enemy.

The house was by the lake-side. There was a vine-festooned balcony, and here, on the two nights of our halt, we dined. As we sat and smoked and looked out upon the lake, with a full moon overhead, we agreed that the surroundings were much more Italian than anything we had expected to find in Macedonia.

Viewed from a short distance, Ochrida looks like a mediæval town, such as is represented in old plates. It is strongly walled, with the houses cramped and packed within the walls, but desolation beyond. Only, at one side, the wall seems to have fallen away and the town fallen after it, right down to the edge of the lake. It is a disjointed, higgledy-piggledy place, sinister and dark at night, the very spot where a romantic story of filibustering could find a picturesque locale, and where the dark corners seem specially made for lurking assassins.

Ochrida is a hotbed of intrigue. Nothing goes right, for Greeks and Bulgarians are ever plotting against each other, always lying concerning everything that takes place, and the muddling Turk who rules gets no thanks from either side.

Perched on the rocks above the town are the remains of an old castle, with walls fifteen feet thick, but now all tumbled and ramshackle. The Romans



were undoubtedly here—indeed, I came across some Roman remains—but no doubt the castle had its busiest days when the Servian Empire came south. A wretched body of dirty Turkish soldiers were in camp within the fortress. They had little tents, which were rather more foul than the tents of a gipsy encampment. They looked as though they never washed. Their clothes were greasy and torn, and their boots wofully down at heel. I talked to the men. They told me their pay was a *medjedeh* a month, they had not received anything for six months, and during their four years of service their pay had slipped twenty months in arrear.

Whilst we were sitting amongst the ruins a couple of bent and decrepit old women hobbled up from the town. One was ill, and had come to search amongst the wild vegetation which grew about the crumbled walls for a tiny trickling stream of which she was quite confident she had only to drink a few drops and she would be made well again. The soldiers found the place. The water was a muddy ooze. The old cripple gathered a little in a shell, drank it, confessed she felt much better, and hobbled away again absolutely convinced of the miraculous qualities of the water. I could not discover the origin of the belief concerning the virtue of this particular trickle of water. But faith in its efficacy is general amongst Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Albanians, and doctors' bills are saved by hauling the sick ones to this spot to drink the precious liquid.

A quaint old church, that of St. Clement, stands on a lower slope not far away. It is a squat build-

ing, constructed entirely of thin red bricks placed on end, and the tower is low and octagonal. The mother church of St. Clement stands further off, but it was seized by the Turks, who changed it into a mosque, and the Christians were compelled to build another. The interior, dark and damp, has about it the aroma of the mysterious. Little light filters through the cobwebbed, high-perched windows. The *ikons* and the silver decorations are all old but tawdry, and the priest who showed me round gave me a broad hint that if I cared for anything I could have it in return for a suitable present. I was not, however, a purchaser. Probably on this very spot stood a Roman temple. Indeed, two of the pillars are unquestionably Roman, and amongst the rubbish outside I noted a marble slab on which there were traces of a Roman inscription.

The great lake of Ochrida, with the far limit just discernible in clear daytime, is in places pleasantly wooded. On little promontories are Greek and Bulgarian monasteries, where daily they praise God and hate their brother Christians.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE MOUNTAINS OF ALBANIA.

Lake Ochrida—Struga—A Nation of Dandies—Why the Turks Provided an Escort—Confidence of Albanians in the English—A False Alarm—Kjuks—A Beautiful Prospect—A Start at Daybreak—A Perilous Descent—Roman Bridges—Rudimentary Roads.

WEST of Ochrida I entered into Albania proper. In the course of a day's horse ride I passed from Bulgarian villages to where there were only Greek villages, and by night-time I was in a country which was purely Albanian.

The first stage, as far as the town of Struga, is along the northern shore of Lake Ochrida. A good, broad, but dusty cart-road joins the two places, and cattle and charcoal-laden mules and horsemen are always to be met.

There are plenty of boats on the lake, rather gondola-shaped, propelled with huge, shovel-like oars. Curiously, sails are never utilised on any of the Ochrida boats. However excellent may be the breeze, and however long the journey, taking sometimes a full day, the whole distance is done by oar-pulling. This is not because the natives lack the intelligence to take the advantage of sails, but because the mountain gales are so sudden and tempestuous that in an instant a boat with canvas might be swamped.

The old-fashioned water-wheel utilised for irrigation is often to be seen. To a sort of treadmill are attached twenty or thirty tin cans. A man, as he works the treadmill with his feet, turns the wheel which raises the water, which is spilt into a trough and carried off to the adjoining fields. It is a simple combination of healthful exercise with usefulness. A man can take a pleasant four or five hours' walk before breakfast and never get any further than home.

In Struga are few Bulgarians or Greeks. The dominant population is Turkish. A more striking people are the Albanians. The men are tall and dark, and have handsome, regular features. There, and, indeed, all through the country, the Albanian struck me as something of a dandy. He loves his jacket to be braided with silver and gold. His kilt is usually spotlessly clean. His shoes, often of red leather, have a huge puff-ball on each toe, which did not strike me as beautiful, but which the Albanian himself thinks particularly "swagger." The brace of revolvers carried at his waist are invariably carved and inlaid, whilst if he prefers a gun it is long and slender and also carved and inlaid, often with precious stones, with an inset gold inscription running along the barrel.

Beyond Struga the country became wild. There were no villages, and few people were met. By a gradual rise through sparsely wooded country we struck into the hills. We halted at a little *caracol*, a kind of outpost, where rest some dozen Turkish soldiers to keep a ready eye for brigands in the hills.

After that came hard work crossing a range rising some 3,500 feet above the lake, and called Cafa Sane. We led our horses. The scenery was like a Scotch moorland—humped, and for miles covered with bracken.

Thus to a high-placed plain, where we met plenty of tall, fearless-eyed Albanians. Farmsteads were to be seen, but no villages. The Albanian prefers the solitary life of his own little farm among the mountains, though it may be many miles from a neighbour. When he drives his buffalo into the fields to plough the soil he always takes his gun with him. He never knows who may be coming along.

We were now in a bandit-infested land. The captain of my guard began to show nervousness, though I confess that I personally, getting a little weary of sitting long hours in the saddle, would have enjoyed a brush with these gentlemen. I happened to know, or I thought I knew, a little fact of which the Turks who accompanied me were ignorant. They took the utmost precautions—too zealous precautions, I thought—to save me from capture. I knew well that in the Greek-Bulgarian country I might have been a fairly useful prize to one of the revolutionary “bands,” not because of my sympathies with their movements, but on account of the thousands of pounds at which I might be valued and which could be squeezed from the Turkish Government. But here I was all right.

Let me explain. I paid nothing for the escort which accompanied me. The Turkish authorities did not give me the escort because they desired to do

any personal honour to myself. I should have preferred to travel alone with my dragoman. Had I done so the Turks knew there was a large possibility I might have been captured by one of the revolutionary "bands" in the hills, that there would probably have been a rumpus, and that I should not have been released until the ransom, be it £6,000 or £12,000, or whatever else the sum, had been paid. The Turks, therefore, provided the escort, first, to save themselves from the rebuke that their country was so unsettled that a peaceful traveller could not pass through it; secondly, because they preferred to spare soldiers to accompany me to being called upon to pay a heavy sum of money in ransom.

This was all right from their point of view so long as I was in districts where "bands" were at work. It did not, however, apply in the least when I got into the wildest part of European Turkey. The fact is that the Albanian has his hand against every Turk because he is his hereditary enemy. But he has no quarrel at all with Europeans. Certainly he has no quarrel with anybody who comes from England. In the Albanian mind there is a firm belief that England is the friend of their country. I talked with many peasants; and although at first they did not know whether I was an Austrian, a German, an Italian, or a Frenchman, the instant they knew I came from England I noticed a change of demeanour and an anxiety to do me honour.

All Albanians may be said to be brigands in regard to Turks. Though brigands were in the hills,

I was quite certain they had no evil intentions towards myself, for though an Albanian will kill you he will not thieve from you. Had I and my dragoon worn the Turkish fez, I daresay we might have had an encounter with the brigands. But the hillmen, who may have watched us from a distance, knew perfectly well it was a European going through the country, and they had no desire to offer molestation. I pleased myself with thinking, and have often thought since, that instead of the Turkish soldiers saving me from attack, it was myself who saved them from the leadstorm of Albanian rifles.

Be that as it may, the captain of the guard was careful. He always had two, and sometimes three, of his smartest men about a couple of hundred yards ahead keeping a sharp look-out. Whenever there was a bend in the way the soldiers spread so that no opportunity was presented for myself to be picked off. It was all very interesting, and to me rather amusing. It recalled the days when, as a little chap, I used to play "robbers" with my school-fellows.

Once there was a moment of excitement. We were on a patch of level country, when suddenly round the back of a wood wheeled half a dozen Albanians armed to the teeth. The advance guard pulled rein, swung round their horses, unslung their rifles, and stood in their stirrups ready for eventualities. I confess that, as these hillsmen came dashing along, my hand wandered to my hip pocket where my revolver was carried. The soldiers spread as though to be ready to open fire. But the Albanians,

warlike though they appeared, had no warlike intentions. They rather enjoyed the fright of the Turks, of whom, however, they took no notice, although they gave me a smile and a salute as they rode by.

Like a white speck in the distance we saw our resting-place for the night. It was a new *han* which had been built at a spot called Kjuks. It looked the most romantically situated spot imaginable, resting on a ledge of rock, overlooking a beautiful valley, and with an interminable view of mountain tops.

With the fall of the sun and the valleys deepening into gloom, and all the mountain peaks flushed rosy, it was one of the most exquisite scenes conceivable. What a place for a holiday! Only in these degenerate days we like to take our appreciation of scenery with the additional prospect of a good dinner, or in the comfortable enjoyment which follows a good dinner. There was no good dinner at Kjuks. Charming though the *han* was at a distance, close at hand it was just like any other *han*. It was a big, dirty, badly whitewashed barn. The kitchen was a fire on the earthen floor. There were apartments with windows, but no glass in the windows. There was no furniture, nothing but dirty boards. I took three of the rooms: the largest I gave to the soldiers, another I gave to the captain of the guard and my dragoman, and I kept the other to myself. We made tea and drank much of it, though it was smoky. Then an hour was spent in bargaining for three chickens to provide food addi-



tional to the gritty rice which the soldiers were carrying in their saddle-bags.

I could have raved about the scenery if only I had been staying at a comfortable hotel. The colouring of the leaves in the wood which trailed down to the noisy river would have been worth ecstatic description. I could have gone into raptures over the conformation of the grey and creviced rocks, standing like solemn castles guarding the way. I could most certainly have burst into a rhapsody in regard to the crimson haze over the mountains—if only I had been sitting on a hotel verandah with no other care in the world than to hear the gong for dinner. As it was, I smoked my pipe, admitted it was all very beautiful, promised myself I would come again when some hotel company had built a palace on the eminence, and then went to the kitchen to see how the boiling of the fowls was proceeding.

The only illumination I had was a candle stuck in a crack in the floor of my room, and the floor itself served for seat and table. The soldiers sat downstairs in the murky, vagrant light of the fire, singing doleful Turkish love-songs. With my boots as a pillow, and my hands in my pockets for warmth, I took my sleep.

I doubt if, in travelling, there is anything more eerie than journeying through a strange land in the mysterious light which hangs over the world at dawn.

Traveller, dragoman, and soldiers were all in a shiver as, in the darkness, we set out for Elbasan,

which we had promised ourselves we would reach that night. We had climbed high the night before to reach Kjuks. Now in the black of the morning we had to climb further. None of us spoke. We were too cold to speak. The leaders kept within a dozen paces. We had to ascend broken clefts of rock. Though now and then the animals hesitated and pawed, they put forth effort. Day came with the thinnest haze hanging over the world and clouds still resting in the great black ravines beneath us which looked like monster graves.

The descent was zigzag. The torrents of innumerable centuries had worn out chasms, so that our route cut into the sides of the mountain, cut out again, dropped, and then seemed to slice further in. At the bends tumbling stone had obliterated the track. Rarely at such points was it more than twelve inches wide. At first one held breath, whilst the horse, picking its way as though on a tight-rope, walked round a precipice edge where was a sheer drop of a thousand feet. The heart jumped into one's mouth when a horse belonging to one of the soldiers slipped. I dared not turn round, for fear of disturbing my own horse. For an instant there was the excited struggle of the animal regaining hold. Instinctively we halted till the frightened beast regained its nerve.

On another occasion we were making our way along the edge of a crevice where the path was soft and uncertain because of a tumble of slaty shingle which had slid from the mountain top. I happened to be leading, letting the reins hang loose, for I was

confident the horse could pick its way much better than I could guide it. I turned my face to the slaty wall because to look into the gulf, which seemed to fall from my very knee, made me feel positively sick. Just then a defiant shepherd's dog appeared and raised a barking protest. The horse stopped dead. Had it reared in fright I should never have been able to tell this story. To have pressed the horse on might have led to disaster. My Turkish "Tommy," who was away at the back of some seven or eight other horsemen and on safer ground, slipped from the saddle, climbed into the rocks, crawled somehow overhead and past me, and with stones drove the dog off. Then we went on. In a second or two we were on safe ground. It had been amongst the most tense two minutes of my life. My dragoman was as pale as paper, and if a mirror had been handy I probably should have found I was not looking particularly pink.

At other places the road was through a defile, just wide enough at the bottom for the horses to find a tread, and rising slantingly to a dozen feet above the head. Now and then were patches of cobbled way, which seemed to begin anywhere and end nowhere. These were remnants of two thousand years ago, when the Romans were in possession of the country. All through Albania we came across pieces of Roman way. Sometimes we lighted upon them abruptly, and lost them with equal abruptness. Occasionally they led to a precipice side and then disappeared, telling that the country had altered somewhat since they were built. Fre-

quently the modern track diverged from that made by the ancient conquerors; but up a hillside could be seen the stone path like a broad, grey ribbon stretching over the hills. Broken and hazardous as was the route I happened to be following, it was the highway across Albania, running from Macedonia to Durazzo on the coast; and along it, though now deserted, a mighty army of long dead and forgotten had travelled in the story of over twenty centuries.

The Turks had done nothing to improve this road. It was just as Nature and the Romans had left it. At one place we seemed to make a sharp drop amongst black rocks. The winding, zig-zagging track had been worn for so many hundreds of years that a channel was cut out of the rock which was knee-deep when walking. Though the place was just a mass of knuckled rocks, it would have been impossible even for a blind man to miss his way, so well had the feet of countless generations worn the path.

That path led into the valley, where flowed the muddy Skumbi River, purling on its way toward the Adriatic. It led also to a bridge, built by the Romans, well arched, and as serviceable to-day as it was when they used it.

I saw a number of these Roman bridges in Albania. Some were useful as ever they were; some were in part decayed, with slabs and boulders gone into the stream; others had broken in twain. But I never saw a bridge which the Turks had repaired. There were great sections of ancient

bridges, partly stretching over rivers as though appealing to one another to be joined. The mending would not have cost much; would often have saved making detours of miles to find a fordable point. Not in a single place did I see a piece of road that was serviceable in joining one town with another.

I did see roads, however, which were monuments of futility. Between the Skumbi bridge and Elbasan the country is fairly level. Here were evidences of heroic, but silly, efforts to make a way. The authorities gave instructions to all the inhabitants of the region that they were to give four days' work a year to provide a good road to run from Elbasan to Struga. At the present pace it will not be accomplished for four thousand years, and will then not be any good. I saw this road-making going on, but only in those places which happened to be the easiest to travel over. The ground was smooth and level. It looked quite nice. A little rain, however, would turn the whole thing into slush. Then would come a mile or two of district where the people had not done their four days' work, and no vehicle could possibly travel along. Then there would be a mile of road made by the Government: plenty of earth thrown up like a railway embankment, with chiselled granite culverts, which were quite needless because they allowed escape for tiny streams you could jump across at their worst, and now all dry. Turkish officials at Elbasan were pleased with this "carriage way," as they love to call it. They overlooked the fact that before the carriage way could be reached from

Struga there were some forty miles of wild mountains, and before it could be reached from the Elbasan side the Skumbi River had to be forded at least five times, and the route along a hillside was no wider than a footpath. When I suggested that the difficult, rocky parts should be attacked, the invariable reply was, "Yes, but that is the hardest part, and so we don't do it."

A year or two ago an Italian engineer was engaged to oversee the making of a road. He began on an easy slope in the hills, and spent a million or two of *medjedehs* cutting out a broad way. It started from nowhere, and it ended where the rocks began. Then the Turks thought the engineer had better return to Italy. As it is, the patches of road are sheer waste. Nobody ever uses them, because they are not so easy to travel over as the rough track which has been worn haphazard.

As things are now, even when the Skumbi River is reached there is much rank scrub to be pushed through, and there are many torrents to be waded, to say nothing of the several miles to be splashed up the bed of a dribbling stream, before the minarets of Elbasan rise above the trees which encircle the city.

On the day we reached Elbasan we had been in the saddle for fourteen hours.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### ELBASAN.

The Central Town of Albania—Albania like Scotland and the Highlands in the Sixteenth Century—Chronic Guerilla Warfare—Elbasan—Twenty or Thirty Murders a Week—Ducks as Scavengers—Albanian Silk—The Best Hotel at Elbasan—A Single-minded Landlord—Mr. Carnegie's Fame.

WERE the Albanians to cease their vendettas, stop their clan wars, and cohere into a nation, Elbasan would be the capital. It is the most central town in Albania. But there is little chance of that taking place so long as the present blood courses in the veins of these mountain warriors.

Like hillmen all the world over, they are much more independent, defiant, and even aggressive than peoples who live on the plain. To the north, in the Dibra district, a Turk's life is not worth the toss of a *medjedeh*, so fierce is the hatred of the Albanians in that part. Further south the rancour against the ruling power is not so strong, and ebbs the further south one goes, until down near the Greek frontier it practically disappears.

A week of hard travelling by horse will take one from the northern parts to the southern. In the course of the journey will be found very striking differences in feature. The northern men are shorter, more swarthy, and have the quick, black eagle eyes of those who are ever on the watch to

give offence or to repudiate insult. Present-day Albanians are a mixture of races—Italian, Greek, Slav, Bulgar—whose ancestors in the olden times, driven by the conquerors of Macedonia, fled to these mountains, whither they could not be pursued, and where, although they had common interest in resisting aggression from the outside, they have never allowed to die out the flicker and often the flame of tribal animosity.

Seeking for a simple parallel, I might say that the condition of Albania is not unlike that of the Highlands of Scotland in the sixteenth century, when the clans were at constant feud with one another. Many a time I thought of similarities between Albania and Scotland. There are parts of the country reminiscent of the Highlands. The passionate love of country is a characteristic of both. The alertness of the Scotch Highlander to resent insult is only equalled by the quickness of the Albanian to shoot anyone who may disagree with him. The quilted petticoat of the Albanian is certainly similar to the Highlander's kilt. And if you could hear the wail of Albanian music in the hills you might, without much stretch of the imagination, fancy you were listening to the skirl of the bagpipes.

Albanians acknowledge the authority of their own Bey, or chieftain, whilst they repudiate the authority of the Turks. The head of the clan will inflict punishment on any clansman who offends against the common good of his tribe. Every valley has its own Bey, and most valleys are in a condition of war against one another. Clansmen are



afraid to cross the ridge of mountains into neighbouring valleys for fear of falling a prey to an enemy's bullet. This fact caused me inconvenience because I found it difficult to secure guides who would show the way over the mountains to some village or town I was anxious to reach, because either they did not know the route or were afraid of the consequences.

The clan feuds were so disturbing that a few years ago some of the great Beys did meet at Elbasan and make a truce. The order that a member of a rival clan was not to be shot on sight had its effect for a time. You cannot, however, make an Albanian behave otherwise than as an Albanian. Now the truce has lapsed, and guerilla warfare is again the rule.

So self-contained are these valleys, with such a lack of communication, not only with the outer world, but with each other, that in the course of half a day's ride I frequently noticed distinct changes in details of costume. For instance, in one valley the men would wear tight-fitting, thick felt caps, looking for all the world as though they wore white smoking caps. In an adjoining valley the men would wear tight-fitting linen skull caps, whilst still further on were men with black felt caps.

Not only are the Albanian clans in a state of perpetual conflict with each other—if they were able to join forces they could clear the Turks out of Albania in a year—but members of the same clan are engaged in constant vendetta. Albanians occasionally die from ordinary disease, but most of them die from

differences of opinion. When a man kills his enemy he must flee to the mountains, because it is the duty of the nearest of kin of the dead man to sally forth with gun and stalk the murderer till he kills him. Sometimes he gets killed himself. Then the family of the dead man wage war on the family of the man who shot first. The vendetta begins, and lasts for years. Straight face-to-face fighting is not necessary. A bullet from behind a boulder or a stab between the shoulders in the darkness of night are constant methods by which wrongs are avenged. There is nothing very unusual in finding a murdered Albanian; indeed, it is so usual that the Albanians take it all as a matter of course. They know nothing about courts of law and such-like methods of settling differences. Their instincts are primitive: a man offends you and you remove him by killing him.

Elbasan is a town of some twenty thousand people. There is plenty of room for quarrelling. A murder in the streets is rather more common than a street fight is in an English town on a Saturday night. The Chief of Police, a Turk, told me there were twenty or thirty murders every week. He added that not one murderer in ten is caught and imprisoned by the authorities. It is not the "game" for the Turks to meddle. When a man is killed his friends like to have the settling of the account with the murderer, whilst if he is thrown into prison, not only do they feel they have a distinct grievance against the meddling Turks, but the friends of the captured man have also a grievance in that he

was not given fair play, allowed to escape or take his chance in the vendetta.

To put it quite plainly, the Turkish authorities are in dread of an Albanian outbreak. They will do anything for peace and quietude. This explains why they do not make many endeavours to collect the taxes which are exacted from other Turkish subjects. Even if an Albanian kills a Turk they find ready excuse by declaring there has been serious provocation. The Sultan conciliates the Albanians by having his bodyguard at Constantinople composed of Albanians. He breaks the power of the Beys by inviting them to Constantinople, making much of them and covering their breasts with decorations.

There is no stricter monopoly in Turkey than the tobacco Régie. For a Turk or an Armenian or a Bulgar or Greek to infringe the Government monopoly is to run risk of being cast into prison. The Régie at Elbasan is defied. Tobacco is openly sold. The soldiers of my escort did a little trade in it. Their bread-bags they loaded with tobacco, stuffed their pockets with it, even their pistol holsters, so that they might take it back into Macedonia and sell at a profit. I know they went on short commons in the matter of food so that their bags could be used in this illicit traffic. The captain of the guard knew what they were doing. They grinned when they saw that I realised it also. Afterwards I heard that each of them made a profit of about two *medjedehs*, because there is a demand for such tobacco, it being much superior to that obtained from the Régie.

In most Turkish towns the scavenging of the streets is left to the dogs. In Elbasan this useful sanitary function is performed by ducks. There are hundreds and thousands of them in the streets, belonging to nobody and picking up a precarious livelihood from the refuse which is cast into the alleys of the bazaars—for drainage is a thing that is expensive, and which, therefore, the Albanians can get along very well without. The much-talked-of Oriental odours of the Eastern bazaars are, in hot weather, not so productive of poetical sentiment as fanciful writers would indicate. There are no windows to the shops; rather, the shops are all windows, with no glass, but the proprietor sits in the centre, hammering copper pots in which the inhabitants can stew their meals, or sharpening daggers with which they may settle their differences. Every man carries a dagger—usually two. The women, closely cloaked in black, slither along with downcast eyes. If any man is so foolish as to let his approving eye fall upon one of these ladies a quick and sudden death by stiletto at the hands of her male folk is the consequence. If she acquiesces, and is inclined to soft glances, the only difference is that both get killed. I made no experiments myself, but I was assured that Elbasan is the most dangerous town in all Europe in which to make any endeavour toward flirtation.

Do not suppose that the people of Elbasan have nothing else to do than quarrel. Some of the finest silk in Europe is manufactured there. All the fields in the vicinity are given over to the rearing of silkworms

on mulberry trees. There are no big factories, but the manufacture is carried on by the women of the households, who do the weaving, casting the shuttle from hand to hand. The weft is not so close as in silk produced by modern machinery in France, and it is impossible to obtain a piece more than some thirty-six inches in width. But there is a quality and a distinction about the Albanian silk which none of the silk of more cultured manufacture possesses. What the price would be in a European market I cannot say; but in Elbasan itself I obtained the finest possible material at about two shillings a yard, and then I fancy I was paying twice as much as an Albanian would have paid. The trade with outer countries is disjointed and fragmentary. A merchant proceeding to Monastir on the one side, or Durazzo on the coast, will take a mule-load of the silk by way of speculation. So after he has had his profit and the purchaser has made his, and the man who trades with Trieste has secured his share, and the Trieste man has passed it on to the dealer in Vienna, and the Vienna merchant has doubled the price, and the shopkeeper has made his legitimate profit, the lady who desires a frock of Albanian silk must pay a considerable figure for it.

There is no regular trade or any other communication from Elbasan. I wanted to despatch letters. I was told that about once a week the post went to Monastir, but it did not go unless there were plenty of letters to take; whilst the Durazzo route, which was much the quicker way to get a letter to England if it could be started on its way at once, was

more uncertain because the conveyance was more haphazard, and no one could say within a couple of months when letters would be despatched.

I had been told by the officer of my guard that there was one good hotel at Elbasan. I stayed at it. It was a loft-like place, with a broad, dark passage way leading into a courtyard, where caravans and muleteers rested. It abutted upon a narrow, evil-smelling roadway. A covered balcony was on the first story, and right over the doorway was an old oil-tin, occasionally filled with brownish water, which was the only washing accommodation in the place. The result was that when one was doing ablutions the slops were spilt on anybody who might be coming in at the main entrance. There was no channel to carry off the stuff; the neighbourhood might, therefore, without exaggeration, be described as unwholesome.

By paying the excessive price of about two shillings a night I got an apartment to myself. The planks in the floor were warped, providing ready entrance and exit to the innumerable rats with which the place was infested, and giving me casual glimpses of the horses, pigs, ducks, and hens in the stables beneath. It reeked with the odour of a byre. During the two days I was in Elbasan it rained a lot. The weather was sultry, and I was not at all surprised at a chronic headache.

The landlord of my inn was a big, deep-throated Albanian who had met Europeans elsewhere, and displayed his gratification at the opportunity of showing his acquaintance with the world to fellow-

Elbasanites by bringing troops of his friends, insisting on shaking hands with me and getting me to shake hands with all of them. It became so monotonous that at last I was obliged to get a couple of soldiers to guard the stairs. Nothing, however, could restrain the curiosity of my host. When I stripped to the waist and proceeded to have a wash and a shave he stood by the doorway narrating all I was doing to a crowd of his fellows who blocked the way in the street below. He spoke only Albanian and Turkish; but he would stand by the hour with head cocked attentively on one side listening to my dragoman and myself conversing in English. "Wonderful! wonderful!" he constantly exclaimed in Turkish; for how on earth two people talking such gibberish could be intelligible to one another was something he was incapable of understanding. When I made notes in my diary he looked at me with the amazed eyes of one witnessing the performance of an adroit acrobat, in that I wrote from left to right instead of in the usual sensible Turkish way of from right to left. When he knew my weakness in diet was well-made Turkish *pilau*, he brought three of the cooks from adjoining cavernous restaurants, struck an attitude, pointed to me, and informed them that here was the honour of their life—to make *pilau* which was much beloved by the *effendi*. "Wonderful! wonderful!" he exclaimed when I opened a tin of sardines. He ran and told all his friends about it, and probably to this day it has not been decided how the fish got into that tin. Amongst the eatables I had with me was a Dutch

cheese. That filled him with the greatest astonishment of all. He looked at the red thing, turned it over, shook his head, and sighed, "Wonderful! wonderful!" Would the great and distinguished *effendi* let him taste it? He munched a piece. "Wonderful! wonderful!" said he. Then he told my dragoman he was more convinced than ever that the English were a great people, when they could grow melons like that!

Most of my time in Elbasan I spent as the guest of the principal Albanian gentleman in the town, a young man whose knowledge of languages outside Turkish and Albanian was limited to Italian. He had never been abroad—not even to Italy. One thing he knew about England was that good guns were to be bought there. The possession of a double-barrelled gun of English manufacture was the ambition of his life. Of course, the English were a great people—because they were rich! When I assured him that we were not all rich, that some of us were very poor, he suddenly asked, rather inconsequently, "What about Carnegie?" Here was a gentleman in the very heart of wild Albania who knew that Mr. Carnegie was a person who spent most of his time writing cheques for anybody who might desire them. Did I know Mr. Carnegie? No, I had not that honour. Was it likely that Mr. Carnegie would ever come to Elbasan? Possibly, but I did not think it at all likely. Did Mr. Carnegie speak Turkish? He might do, but I doubted it. Was not Mr. Carnegie a man who gave away money and money and money—and he threw wide



his arms as if to indicate Mr. Carnegie's illimitable millions. Oh, yes! Then if Mr. Carnegie really wanted to be the hero of the Albanian people—as great as Gladstone or Byron—let him send a million of money to the people of Elbasan, so that they would never have to do any more work. I replied that the idea was a good one, if Mr. Carnegie could be persuaded. But why not to Elbasan as well as to any other place? I really could not say, except that perhaps the Pittsburg multi-millionaire had been so busy that he had never had time to think of the modest claims of Elbasan upon his munificence.

For two hours my friend the Albanian talked about Mr. Carnegie and the obligation under which, it appeared, he was to send money to Elbasan. The conversation was only concluded when I made the solemn promise that if ever I met Mr. Carnegie I would lay before him the claims of Elbasan. Which I will.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE ALBANIANS.

Albanian Ferocity and Chivalry—A High Sense of Honour—  
Language—Religion—Customs—Lack of Unity—Outrages.

THE Albanians may be divided like the Scotch. The Highlands of the North are inhabited by clans; in the more fertile Lowlands of the South the clan system disappears.

And as the Scots, centuries ago, whatever their differences were, met on common ground in hatred of the English, so the Albanians find unity in one sentiment—hatred of the Slavs.

The surrounding nations have been so afraid of them—because of their ruling, inextinguishable passion for fighting—that Albanians have been much left to themselves. The absence of roads, the perilous mountain passes, the tribal jealousies have made each little region, clasped in high impenetrable mountains, self-contained.

A fierce chivalry is everywhere. A woman can travel safely in Albania because she is weak. The Albanian, however, would no more hesitate to shoot a man for a fancied insult than he would hesitate to shoot a dog that barked at him. There is a stern independence.

The Albanian has no art, no literature, no



A GROUP OF ALBANIANS.



national politics, no "Albanian cause," no individuality as an Albanian in contradistinction to neighbouring races—except that, above all, his honour is sacred. But within his honour is included much. He is not a thief—though he is entitled to the belongings of the man he kills. He will not take the advantage of robbing a man who is gunless. That touches his honour. He will not touch a woman, for by the law of tradition he is entitled to shoot a man who interferes with his womenkind. So he keeps both his eyes and his hands off the women of others. It is not fear of consequences that makes him moral—the whiz of bullets is no deterrent to the Albanian—but his honour is touched by the reflection that in attacking a woman he is attacking somebody who cannot retaliate.

Again, an Albanian's word is even better than his bond. My experience showed that when an Albanian said "I'll do it," he never failed in the performance. He will lie volubly in endeavouring to obtain the better of a bargain, because he is convinced that you also are lying, and that, therefore, you and he are on equal ground. When the bargain is made he is on his honour, and for his own sake, not for yours, he is honest.

The language is formless and bastard. There is a national alphabet, but it is hardly ever used. In one part of the country Latin characters are employed, whilst in another part Greek characters are common. In some districts much Italian is incorporated into the language, in other districts much Greek, and in others much Slavonic. The conse-

quence is that Albanians living fifty or sixty miles apart have the greatest difficulty in understanding one another. Further, there are marked racial differences between the Gheg Albanians, who live in the wild north, and the Tosk Albanians of the less rugged south. You would conclude they were different nationalities. So they are. Indeed, it would be quite easy to prove that the Albanians are not one people, but half a dozen peoples. They are the children of desperate races, defiant and outlawed, who were neither exterminated nor absorbed by the conquerors, but retained their independence by secluding themselves in the fastnesses of the Albanian mountains.

The tribes of Albania have no common religion. Some are Moslem in faith, and some Christian. There are both faiths to be found in the same clan. The most important of the northern tribes, the Mirdites, is Christian: Roman Catholic. Down south the Albanians are Christian, and, being contiguous to the Greek frontier, favour the Orthodox Church. The Moslem Albanian is influenced by his Christian neighbours. He drinks wine, and is particularly fond of beer—I was able to get bottled lager from Munich—and he swears by the Virgin.

The Albanian is ignorant and superstitious. He believes the hills are inhabited by demons, and is convinced that the foreigners, especially the Italians, only want to push out the Turks to get possession of the country themselves. They hate dominance, and would rather have the purely nominal rule of the Turk than the stringent rule they might expect

from Italy or Austria. The agriculture is poor, and is pursued with no intention further than to supply immediate needs. There are no manufactures, except the little silk-weaving at Elbasan. As for trading, it is not understood.

The customs of the Mirdites and of the Tosks vary considerably. The Mirdites attempt some semblance of government, but all that is done is decided by the chiefs of the more powerful clans. Their laws are Spartan-like, and often cruel. A curious thing is the practice of having adopted brothers. Two men swear to be brothers. The relationship is regarded as so fraternal that the children of either are not allowed to come together in marriage. The Tosks are more industrious than the Mirdites, and some of their Beys rise to comparative wealth.

Though the Albanian would like to throw off even nominal subjection to Turkey, it is this subjection which prevents the whole land becoming a cock-pit of murder and pillage between the clans, and it also keeps off the Italians, who certainly would like to capture the country. So Albania does not count for much in the Balkan problem. Of course, in a general Macedonian uprising the people could and would harry the Turks. But as they cannot combine, they have no political influence.

It would be strange if in so warlike a land there were not outrages. The first consul sent by Servia to Pristina was murdered by the Albanians within six months because he refused to take his departure at their behest. Because of personal dislike they expelled the Turkish governors of Pristina and

Prisrend. The Turkish authorities took no notice. Three noble Albanians at Nich, after a copious dinner, took their guns, and started firing upon the farmers. One was killed outright, and another wounded. Some days afterwards two of them violated the pregnant wife of another farmer. They gathered the children round a large fire, made them sit down, and then, arming themselves with shovels, threw the embers upon their arms and legs. Sofia, an Albanian bandit, chief of a band of ten men, demanded from the Mayor of Doumuntzé 575 francs for the ransom of the village, in default of which the village would be burnt. Sofia had exacted the same amount of ransom the previous year. At the same time he invited a rich man whom he had carried off the year before to pay a second ransom of 575 francs under pain of death. Finally, the Mayor, under pain of death, had to supply fifty dozen Martini cartridges. In a vineyard near Uskup a Christian passed by a band of fifteen Albanian Moslems who were smoking and drinking coffee. Said one of them, "Suppose we kill him?" The Christian was killed.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### BERAT.

A Dismal Journey—Berat at Sunset—A Fever-breeding Town—Koritza—A Specimen of the Eastern Christian—Good-bye to Berat.

ALMOST due south from Elbasan lies Berat. How far the distance is as the crow flies I do not know. In the East you never reckon by distance, but by length of time. By hard riding, and with only two halts of half an hour each, the journey was accomplished in fourteen hours. With the exception of the last half-hour it rained during the whole of the time.

We were to have started at two o'clock in the morning. The Albanian guide, whom I had hired to show the way, and my dragoman and myself were ready. The Turkish soldiers, however, were not eager to turn out into the rain and the dark. Two days' halt in a town like Elbasan, where there were the attractions of the coffee-houses and cheap tobacco, had demoralised them.

When the men who acted as advance guard were ready some of us made a start. The guide, on an ambling nag, which made a terrible fuss in progress, but never seemed to go very fast, led the way through the dark alleys of the city, whilst we were challenged alternately by ducks and soldiery.

Beyond the city I cried a halt to let the soldiers catch us up. We sat with bent heads and backs toward the slashing rain, waiting for the laggards. At the end of half an hour, as there were no signs of them, I sent back the guide. He gave spur to his nag, and disappeared into the darkness. Soon came the sound of shouting from the city, and one of the guard raised an answering yell. Up rode the captain and his men, swearing they had been scampering all over Elbasan trying to find us. We were ready to go on; but we had lost our guide. Another half-hour was wasted before he came back. We were cold and wet, and I was in no amiable temper at the waste of considerably over an hour before a real start was made.

A disconsolate crowd we were during the first hour or two. Nobody spoke. The only sound was the splash of horse-hoofs in the mud.

Daylight came slowly and with no joy. The country was flat and swampy, cut by innumerable racing streams, which growled angrily over huge boulders. Frequently the curve of a stream had to be followed for half a mile before a place could be found to ford. The waters rose higher than the girths, even up to our knees, and there were moments when the animals, uncertain of their foothold in the icy swirl, were like to lose balance and bring disaster.

I do not know how many times we crossed streams or the same stream in serpentine twist. In heavy rains the whole of the valley, a couple of miles wide, can be no other than a river. There

were patches of willows, but the track was over mud-banks and stretches of grey cobbles.

Rain was continuous. I was wearing a much-advertised macintosh, but even that got soaked right through. The soldiers were muffled and heavily cloaked. They were too melancholy even to smoke cigarettes—which showed they were melancholy indeed. We stood in the rain within the shelter lent by our horses, and munched sodden bread for our midday meal.

There came a crack in the clouds, and far to our left we could see the crest of Tomorica, the great mountain of Central Albania. But the rain settled down again, and shut out the view. Then, of course, our guide lost his way. It was little wonder he should, in that wilderness of desolation. But all the Turks and the solitary Briton cursed him for an ignoramus. He led us up streams, made us climb steep mud-banks, made long detours. Then he confessed he had never been to Berat before, but thought he knew the way from what some mule-teers in Elbasan had told him.

By the pocket compass I knew the direction, and my maps showed that the valley would lead to Berat. For an hour we floundered. At last we struck a trail which we followed. Then we fortunately met a peasant with a couple of mules. He put us on the right way. Instead of following the valley we could take a cut over a spur of the hills which would save us three or four hours. We found the short cut. It was a piece of the old Roman path, made of huge boulders, but worn into

cups with centuries of wear, so that there was imminent danger of one or more of the horses breaking a leg. It was as steep as a stair, completely overhung with trees. We were compelled to bend our bodies until cheeks rested on the manes of the horses. So close-knit were the trees that at some points the passage was almost as dark as a tunnel.

It is to be hoped that the Roman legions, when they travelled this way to Berat, found the path more easy than the Turkish soldiers and myself found it that wretched drizzling afternoon. The one satisfaction was the firm knowledge we were on the right road.

On the mountain top the rain ceased, the clearest of blue skies was revealed, and down below us the valleys were filled with billowy clouds.

The evening of that soaked day made recompense. Our way was through continuous slush. Being inured, we did not mind. We raised a shout when Berat hove in sight. It is not a city you come across casually. It raises its walls from a great knuckle of black rock which guards the entrance to the valley. With the sun shining full upon it, it looked the kind of battlemented city one finds in illustrations of mediæval chivalry. But Berat has outgrown itself, and, like Ochrida, tumbles down a slope to the River Arum, on the muddy flats of which, and near a fine specimen of a Roman bridge, it stretches itself.

Gloriously impressive though the upper city looks in the glow of the setting sun, all romantic thoughts disappear during a walk within its gates. The foul-

ness of the upper city is only equalled by the disgusting condition of the lower. I was told there had been no rain for three months; now there had been a couple of days' downpour. The sun blazed upon the mass of damp filth, and the conditions were vile indeed. The upper town is inhabited by Albanian Christians, whilst the lower town is chiefly occupied by Albanian Moslems. Each section seemed to be desirous to outrival the other in making the place a stew-pan of fever.

Perhaps it is because for a couple of days I was racked with fever, and only secured relief by hastening to the hills in desperation of pain, that my recollections of the place are not quite so genial as I admit I should like them to be. I had the customary foul sleeping accommodation, and my diet consisted largely of quinine. I should have made my escape the first morning had it not been that I was almost prostrate, and because it was impossible to find anybody willing to act as guide over the mountains to Koritza, lying to the east. Austrian maps which I carried indicated that there was a way. I saw the Governor of Berat, but he had never heard of a path. I told him I was making my way back to Monastir. What I could not make him understand was that I was anxious to go by land. His constant argument was, why not make for the coast, to Valona for instance, and there find boat which would take me round to Salonika quite comfortably in a week, and another day would land me at Monastir by train? It was so easy, so comfortable compared with the trials of crossing the

mountains, which, he assured me, nobody had ever accomplished. I interviewed muleteers, rather awkwardly I confess, because it was by means of double translation—through my dragoman who spoke Turkish, and then through the captain of the guard, who spoke both Turkish and Albanian, while the muleteers spoke Albanian only. The information lost much in the transit, especially as the captain was not at all desirous of making the journey. He, though protesting he was willing to follow me anywhere, was positive there were no villages, that no food was to be obtained, and that with the rains the precipitous paths would be quite impossible for the horses.

Very reluctantly, therefore, I had to abandon getting across to Koritza by the way I wanted, which I calculated could have been done, allowing for the extremely mountainous and broken state of the country, within three days.

When, a week later, I arrived at Koritza by another route, everybody there assured me that the journey between Koritza and Berat was quite usual, and that, although muleteers took three days, anybody willing to travel fast could easily have accomplished it in two! This is the kind of discrepancy which makes the endeavour to understand the Eastern mind so difficult.

Most people I talked to were certain the only way I could get back to Monastir was by the way I had come, or to go to Valona and thence travel by boat. However, I learnt there was a road which ran from Valona to Janina (in Epirus), and I knew

quite well from reading and from maps that there was a track from Janina to Koritza. It seemed to be beyond the Albanian mind to understand that although it might be impossible to get to a place direct, the journey could be accomplished by a land detour.

So I was delighted when I found a man who was willing to guide me, in a day, from Berat to the Valona-Janina road. But he was a Christian, and, I am sorry to say, like so many Eastern Christians, a liar. First of all he insisted that as he was running risk of his life he must be paid five Turkish lira for the hire of three horses and himself as guide. That was an extravagant sum in a country where horse hire is cheap. I was desirous of starting at once, in the middle of the day, but he swore by his religion we could not possibly get to a sleeping place that night. A soldier attendant at the Governor's residence was sure there was a *han* four or five hours' journey further on. He was sneered at; that *han* had been in ruins for years. Then I learnt that the reason the good Christian, who wanted twice as much as would have been excellent pay, did not desire to start until the next morning was because he had no horses of his own, but some ponies were expected in with loads from the south that would have to start back unladen the next morning, and he was trying to conclude a "deal" to send myself and my dragoman upon them to the Valona road in charge of the peasants, who, of course, knew the way, of which he, personally, was entirely ignorant. He would have given

perhaps a couple of lira to the men, which would have been excellent pay, and have pocketed three lira himself. When I learnt the truth I fancy I bundled him rather unceremoniously out of the place. Later he came whining round, saying he could arrange to have me shown for two lira. I told him I would not let him have anything to do with the journey if he was willing to take me for a *medjedeh*. Then he whined about being a brother Christian. I told him that one of the reasons I would have nothing to do with him was that he was a Christian, instead of being an honest Mahomedan like his fellows.

As soon as it was known I had made up my mind to bargain with the incoming caravan myself I had owners of ponies tumbling over one another to let me have the hire of animals. I picked up one man, got his solemn word he was no Christian, and hired him and three ponies for three lira. A very excellent fellow he proved to be. Though my limbs ached and my head was in a buzz with fever and quinine, I insisted on starting in the middle of the afternoon. It was heaven itself to breathe fresh air after the stinks of Berat. Within three hours the fever had gone, and I was glad to have bidden good-bye to Berat and its pestilence.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ROUGH EXPERIENCES IN THE MOUNTAINS.

A Refuse-heap of Nature—Benighted—A Dangerous Path—A Cheerless Night—Cigarettes for Breakfast—On the Mountain Top—The Down Grade—Permet—A Short Cut over the Mountains to Liaskovik—Turkish Courtesy—Albanian Wedding Festivities—A Turkish Bride—A Sixteen Hours' Ride—Koritza again—An Antiquity!—Back at Monastir.

THOUGH it was a blessed relief to escape from pestiferous Berat, there was no room for enthusiasm in regard to the track we were following. It was no wider than a sheep trail, and at places was indefinite. We should assuredly have gone wrong had not the Governor of Berat given me an Albanian gendarme who had been that way before. He had a fresh horse, and we moved as briskly as the broken country would permit, because we had only four hours of daylight, and he promised to land us, before darkness fell, in the *han* where we were to sleep.

We followed Indian file, pushing our horses to the utmost, up shallow river beds and through defiles which rose like frowning walls on either side. Though, when we reached a hill ridge, there was revealed an impressive vista of sombre mountains, we seemed to be travelling over a refuse heap of Nature.

There was nothing definite; the slopes were cracked; patches of bleached grass alternated with

bog. Then came a declivity covered with loose stones, which, when started by a horse's hoof, went clattering to the valley below.

For four hours we travelled quickly through that gaunt and weird part of the world. We had met no one; we had seen no hut. Darkness enfolded us. Our guide never ceased his pace as he spurred across rivers and hugged the side of the hills.

A night of pitch blackness. It was impossible to see a dozen yards. The wind soughed and shrieked over the mountains. There was the patter of rain, the sudden blaze of lightning, the boom of thunder. The vivid flashes showed our dangerous way, and lit up the country with the eerie glare of a magnesium light.

It was up precipitous hill and down steep dale that we went. Dwarf trees scrubbed us with their branches as we hastened along. We crossed a river where the water surged frothingly to the girths. Across a swamp we went slowly, with the horses plunging to the knees in the mire.

"How much further to the *han*?" was the demand. Ten minutes on.

We followed for a full half-hour. "How much further to the *han*?"

Another five minutes! We followed for three-quarters of an hour. Still nothing but desolation on every hand.

The Turkish soldiers began swearing at the length of an Albanian ten minutes. We climbed to the hills again, and once more began a fearsome descent. A blaze of lightning showed the path was

down a rocky ledge with a dangerous precipice on one side. I have never laid claim to being a courageous man. I was not courageous then. I slipped from the saddle, and decided to walk. I think the Turks were glad of an excuse to do the same.

Picking our way, we lost it, and got separated. It was only by shouting that we kept in touch with one another. It was a good thing that the night was pitch, for had we been aware of the dangers of the route we should have hesitated to pursue it. It was not so difficult to leap from a ledge of rock to boulders, but the trouble was to compel the horses to follow. How we escaped disaster will be a wonder as long as I live.

When some of us got to a swampy hollow we waited for our fellows. It was raining. We were in a wretched condition whilst exchanging halloas with the men who could not find a track. We lit matches, and by the tiny flare gave indication to our friends where we were. The Albanian guide assured us that the *han* was only a minute or so away. He was comparatively correct, for, after a long paddle through swamp with willows reaching to our cheeks, we heard the swirl of a river, forded the turbulent stream, reached higher ground, and suddenly came upon the *han*.

We clamoured at the outer gate for admission. All was stillness. Looking over the wall, as I was able to do from my saddle, I distinguished someone crawling along in the dark. I shouted to my dragoman in English; the dragoman shouted in Turkish to the captain of the guard, and the captain of the

guard shouted in Albanian to the guide. At last the old *han*-keeper, who had imagined he was being besieged by a Greek "band," was made to understand we had no evil intentions. But he kept us shivering for long before he appeared with a dim light and opened the *han* gates. I was glad to throw myself down in my wet clothes upon the mud floor whilst the old man got some sticks and lit a fire which nigh reeked us out of the place. With the exception of munching some sodden bread we had in our bags, there was no supper. We all fell asleep where we lay.

We were on the move again at half-past three in the morning. The only breakfast any of us had was cigarettes. Even cigarettes, when you are cold and clammy, are welcome and refreshing. For hours we followed the river, splashing along its muddy banks, and frequently fording it. My dragoon told me that in the space of that morning we had crossed the river thirty-one times. In places were chasms of black rock. What struck me as peculiar was that the rocks were cracked exactly as though the rock-side was a mass of black bricks, the cracks in most places being absolutely regular.

When we first struck the river it was a tremendous volume of water. We tracked it into the hills until it became a trifling trickle.

It was bitterly cold. We were chilled to the marrow. When morning came, and at last the sun reached us, we were grateful. We were above the clouds. To look back from our height was to see hunchbacked mountains rising out of the sea of

cloud. Occasionally came a break, and we gazed into darksome ravines. They brought to my recollection some of Doré's pictures. But we had not yet reached the summit of the range. We corkscrewed among the broken hills like going upstairs. Indeed, some of the way was just as steep as the stairs in an ordinary house. But there was no balustrade; nothing, if the horse missed his footing, but a tumble into the clouds below.

I shall never forget the morning we were able to stand on the top of that mountain. Behind us were the black ravines; ahead was a mass of billowy cloud, whilst beneath we could gain peeps of a sun-lit valley. Away beyond the clouds was another great range of grey mountains.

Down we went into the clouds, which touched us like a sea-fog; down, until we got amongst the shepherds, shaggy and uncouth; down, until we reached fields of maize and saw Albanian huts; down, until we actually struck a road—a poor thing, but still a road—and reached a *han*. There we had a couple of hours' rest. We were worn with long riding and no food, and did not object to the dirty rice which we were able to procure from the soldiers in charge.

We were now on the road which comes from Valona, making for Janina toward the Greek frontier. It was pleasant to jog along comfortably with no ragged hillsides to climb. We were thankful when, in the late afternoon, we came in sight of the town of Premedi or Permet, which seems to have been stuck out of the way in a crevice of the Nime-

retchka Mountains, a tremendous, imposing range, charmingly wooded near its base. The townspeople sighted us from a distance, and as we crossed the narrow cobbled bridge several hundreds were gathered to witness our arrival.

Permet is quite a pleasant little town, and though it was inconvenient being followed about by gaping crowds, the Turkish officials who called upon me were kind, and helped to hire horses to proceed further on the journey. Here again, however, just as at Berat, I had the utmost difficulty in gaining information about the way. I had been travelling S.E. from Berat, and I wanted to reach Koritza, which was in the N.E. I knew well about the great road which comes up from Janina through Koritza, making for Monastir. I was assured that the only way would be to journey further south until I hit that road, and then my way north would be without difficulty.

Money will do most things, and I was able to get hold of a man who assured me he knew a short cut over the mountains to the town of Liaskovik, which would save the better part of a day's journey. Off we went! It was nothing but a peasants' foot-track, but after my experience of what Albanian horses could do, I had no hesitation in putting them to the work of climbing this range.

The scenery was charming, and much like that of the Austrian Tyrol. The valley, cut by a pretty stream, was backed by the Nimeretchka Range, with clouds trailing the mountain tops. The weather was good and bright. It was curious, after climb-

ing the hills for long hours, to come upon little cups of cultivation, as it were, tiny patches where the Albanians grow their maize. I believe many of the Albanians prefer to live in these fastnesses rather than down in the apparently more agreeable valley, where they would be subject to attack by other clansmen.

Sunshine has a good effect on the spirits. Although we were grimy and unshaven, and in a land of brigandage, we cared nothing, but sang as we rounded shoulder after shoulder of the hills until Liaskovik came into sight. All the country about seemed burnt and barren; so the dark trees in the Liaskovik gardens were pleasant to the eye.

It was Sunday afternoon when we arrived, and as the trading inhabitants are Christians all the shops were closed, the Albanians had on their best Sunday garb, and were out promenading the narrow streets. Again I had evidence of Turkish courtesy. The *Kaimakam* (local Governor) had heard by telegram of my coming. He had sent a party of horsemen down the Janina road to meet me, but as I had come over the hills this additional escort was missed. Further, the *Kaimakam* had unkindly turned some Greeks out of the best room in the local inn, had actually had it washed, and had had the place decorated with curtains of outrageous pattern. This Turkish official was quite a pleasant young man. We had a walk together, whilst he waxed enthusiastic about the future of Liaskovik—what a magnificent health resort it would make, because it was so high and dry, and because of the

sulphur springs in the district, and the sport of shooting bear, pig, goats, and partridges, to be had within half a day's journey.

In our walk we came to an outlying bunch of houses where festivities were in progress over a wedding which had taken place some weeks before. A month or six weeks of junketing always follows a wedding. The picturesquely garbed peasants were gathered in front of their little houses. There was the twanging of guitars and the shrill music of reed instruments. The Albanians danced and postured and sang, and were the lightest-hearted people on earth. Though poor, they were full of courtesy. I watched their happiness from a distance. Soon they sent one of their number with a tray bearing Turkish delight and mastic. The Turkish delight was not particularly pleasant to the palate, and the mastic burnt one's throat; but the kindly greeting to the stranger was there, and I appreciated it. When I turned to go the dancing stopped everybody stood, and the musicians played a good-bye air.

That afternoon Liaskovik was in the throes of much excitement. The son of the Bey was taking to himself as wife the daughter of a rich pasha of Koritza, and the damsel was expected to arrive at sundown that evening. The young couple had never seen one another, for the marriage had been arranged by the relatives. There was, however, as much jubilation and band-playing as though the wedding were the triumph of long years of affection between the pair. The groom and about a hundred



of his Albanian friends, all in Albanian garb and on horseback, had ridden earlier in the day along the Koritza road to give the young lady welcome. I went out to witness the arrival. It was an exciting scene. There was a rush of horsemen: the Albanians were in their most picturesque coats, with silver girdles, and kilts dancing, the tassels of their red fezzes on the constant swing, their red shoes stuck in high stirrups—thin Albanians, fat Albanians, all clinging to their animals as they came pell-mell, beating into one another, through the streets of Liaskovik. Then a procession of ramshackle landaus, dusty themselves with the two days' journey from Koritza, but not so dusty, it seemed, as the guests they were bringing, who were masked in dust, but smiled through it all as they returned the innumerable greetings of the townspeople. At last came the carriage with the bride. It was the most tumbled-about old four-wheeler I had ever set eyes upon; but it was tricked out with coloured streamers, whilst on the top was a kind of red bedquilt. The windows were closed, but one was broken. Inside sat a tiny figure wrapped in red. She was shrouded, except the upper part of her face. Her eyes looked affrightedly on the strange, howling, turbulent mob that filled the streets and gave her raucous welcome. Poor little Turkish bride!

The following day I did the longest ride of my life. We were in the saddle at one in the morning, and it was half-past seven that night before our tired horses took us into Koritza. Excepting a halt

of two hours, between nine and eleven in the morning, we were on the move practically the whole of the time. I fancy the Turkish soldiers used vigorous language in regard to myself for bringing them out in the middle of the night, for, as I have said, if there is one thing the Turk hates it is to travel in the dark. I was given the customary stories about the brigandage in the district. I do not know how many men had been picked off who had presumed to travel out of broad daylight. My reply was that I did not want to break through their habits, but that I was going on, and that they could come on later if they wished. The moment they realised I meant what I said they were willing to sacrifice their lives by accompanying me and resisting the attacks of any brigands who might be on the road.

The country opened out and was pleasantly undulating, but without any striking features. During those sixteen hours we trotted along without any adventure.

At Koritza I heard through my dragoman that it was possible to pick up interesting antiquities in the town. I sent for the men who were supposed to have valuables. They brought me wretched newly-made Austrian rugs and villainous Greek oleographs. I made them understand I wanted antiques, and nothing but antiques. One man was struck with a sudden inspiration. He had a wonderful antique, two thousand years old at least! It was Greek—it was Roman—he did not know what it was, but it was very, very valuable! It was the head of a bull, small, wonderfully cut in precious

metal—a most valuable antique! I was interested, and asked him to bring it to me. He did. It was wrapped in a handkerchief; he unfolded the precious thing. It was just an ordinary tin-opener with a bull's head—such as you can purchase for 4½d., but with the blade broken! Some traveller had thrown it away because it was useless.

More difficulty about horses. I desired to cross country to Kastoria. Quite impossible! There was no road, and what road there was would take two days. And then, when I learnt there was a very good road, there were no horses to be obtained.

The fact of the matter was that between Koritza and Kastoria Bulgarian revolutionary bands were in the hills, and the owners of horses were not going to run any risk of having them captured. They did not mind the foreigner being seized, but they had qualms of conscience about their animals.

So once again I changed my route, and made back to Monastir by following a road along the western side of Lake Presba. I did not regret it, because the way was pleasant, and the scenery really beautiful. The lake-side road was fringed with fir-trees; little farmsteads were by the way; there was shade under the vines, and grapes were a penny a bunch. On Presba Lake are a couple of pretty little islands, and on these islands are Greek monasteries. It would have been a delight to spend a month in this exquisite spot, boating on the charming waters, and visiting the grottoes by the lake-side.

In the course of that day I left behind the

country of the Albanians, and got back into Macedonia, where the population was Bulgarian. The men of my escort were pleased to turn their horses into the lake and let them splash in the cool water.

My dragoman and myself rode on ahead. We were going through a wood, and came to a bend, when we suddenly encountered a priest on a pony having conversation with a Bulgarian. The fact that the Bulgarian was armed was proof he was a revolutionary. The two men were a little startled at a couple of European-clad individuals approaching them. We saluted them pleasantly, and I managed to get a photograph. Within a minute along came the Turkish soldiers. When the Bulgarian "bandsman" sighted them he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. He sprang into the adjoining wood and disappeared. The priest became particularly meek, and sent his pony ambling along, pretending he was altogether too religious a person to be connected with the revolutionary movement.

We reached Resna that night, and were back at Monastir by the middle of the next day.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A NIGHT ALARM. USKUP. THE FINISH.

Difficulties in Hiring—A Disturbed Region—Taking Refuge in a Harem—A Midnight Visit from a "Band"—At Uskup—War the only Solution of the Macedonian Problem—A Gloomy Forecast—Germany's Designs.

THOUGH the Turkish officials were courteous, they always endeavoured to head me off from going through a disturbed district. Yet they constantly protested that the country was quiet. The Vali of Monastir assumed I would return by rail to Salonika. In conversation about the Bulgarian "bands," he assured me the country to the north, which had been the scene of so much disturbance, had, by the valour of Turkish arms, been reduced to quietude, and was now as peaceful as England itself. When, therefore, I stated my intention of striking across country till I hit the Salonika-Uskup railway he was disconcerted. True, there was a carriage road, but it was little used; the sleeping accommodation was vile, and he was certain that after my rough experiences in Albania I should prefer the comfort of a railway train! I politely ignored all this, said I had heard much about the beauty of the scenery, and, as it would probably be some time before I should be in Macedonia again, I preferred to go by road, especially as it would occupy no longer time

than if I went by rail. Rather reluctantly he conceded the point, and promised that I should have an escort of four mounted soldiers.

Being well aware that an attempt would be made to frustrate me by instructions to the owners of horses to say they had none to spare, I hastened back to the Greek inn and sent out my dragoman to bring in one or two men who owned horsees and vehicles, which by courtesy were called landaus. They were quite willing, especially when they knew there was to be an escort. Still, as the country was troubled, and there was no saying what might happen, they refused to take me to the nearest point on the railway, a day and a half of quick travelling, for the usual charge of a lira and a half. They would accept nothing less than four lira, although that was more than I should have paid to travel first-class by train. Ultimately the bargain was struck for four lira. I arranged for a vehicle and three horses to be ready at daybreak the next morning.

That night I dined with Mr. Wilkie Young, who was in charge of the British Consulate at Monastir. During dinner my dragoman sent a message that there was trouble, because all the horses in Monastir seemed to have been stricken lame. I took that as an endeavour to squeeze an extra lira or two from me. When, however, at midnight I returned to my inn, I was met by my dragoman, who with dismayed countenance informed me the driver with whom I had made the bargain would not go at all. Feeling nettled at what had been done—for I knew instructions had come from the officials to put

obstacles in my way—I sent to the police headquarters, got two gendarmes, and made them fetch the driver, who first pleaded he had no horses, then that his horses were worn out and could not possibly do the journey under three days, and finally that he would not make the attempt for ten lira because there were so many “bands” about. Then, though it was two o’clock in the morning, I sent a message to the Vali reminding him of his promise to give me an escort, and saying that I intended to start in a couple of hours, and expected the soldiers would be in readiness, but that I was having inconvenience because the driver had it in his head there was the likelihood of encountering a “band,” which the Vali knew was impossible, and then I courteously hinted that I should create a row if he did not exercise his authority and compel the driver to fulfil his bargain. The result was a command that the driver should be ready, for the gendarmes would be at the inn by four in the morning.

I lay down for an hour’s sleep. The gendarmes came. But there was no sign of vehicle or driver. The stable was found, with horses and a carriage ready, but no driver. I decided with my dragoman we would drive ourselves, and let the owner take his chance of payment and recovering the animals. Then there crawled out of a dark corner a weazened, consumptive old creature who said he was the brother of the driver, who could not do the journey because his wife was ill, but that he would come with us instead.

So, after the customary vexatious delays, we

made a start. We struck north through a pleasant valley, watered by the river Karusu. There were plenty of mule caravans, but all were accompanied by troops as escort. Before midday we reached Prilip, a nicely-wooded town with a mixed population, chiefly engaged, it seems, in political squabbles and in settling them with the dagger. From there we made for the mountains. The disturbed state of the land was evidenced by the fact that even peasants were accompanied by soldiers. Every few miles was a *caracol*, where a bunch of gendarmes were on the constant watch for revolutionaries. The scenery was magnificent, but what was more interesting was to halt and have chats with the soldiers concerning their conflicts with the "bands."

Yonder was the village of Macova, where, only three days before, twelve houses had been burnt by a "band," because it was supposed the villagers had given news to the soldiery of their presence in the neighbourhood. Over there was the village of Orovsji, where a Bulgarian "band" had been surrounded and seven of them killed, though four of the soldiers also lost their lives in the enterprise.

All through the afternoon I was never lost sight of by the soldiers at one *caracol* or another, despite the fact that I had four mounted horsemen with me. The instant we were sighted soldiers came from the *caracol*, watched from the neighbouring hills, and kept us in view until soldiers further on picked us up. It was exciting. With my usual ill-luck, however, no Bulgarian "band" made its appearance.

Owing to the innumerable halts and the almost



tearful request of the escort not to make any endeavour to travel in the dark, I was compelled to pull up for the night at a little place called Isvor.

It was a Bulgarian village, and, as I learnt afterwards, a somewhat risky spot to halt at. As an additional precaution I discovered that of the four men who accompanied me only one was a Turk, one was an Albanian, whilst the other two were Bulgarians in Turkish employ.

The *han* was nothing but a mud hovel, filled with smoke, and I had no relish to spend the night there. I sent two of the Bulgarians into the village to make some arrangement with a peasant to let me pay for the use of a room. It was then the Turkish soldier came to me, and, through my dragoman, urged that I should avoid staying at a Bulgarian house, for the risk was too great: he and his Albanian mate would be powerless if an attempt were made to capture me for ransom purposes. I had got so weary of such stories that I paid no heed. The Bulgarians, however, came back with the news that no Bulgarian would take me in, nor supply me with food, because as I was accompanied by troops they would fall under the suspicion of the "bands."

As fortune would have it, I was endeavouring to cheer my disconsolate self with a pipe, as there was to be no supper that night, when an old fellow came down to the stream-side to water his cattle. He, under the expectation of a couple of *medjedehs* as reward, had a suggestion. He was half-Bulgarian, half-Albanian, and was in charge of a tower belong-

ing to an Albanian Bey, to which the latter had been in the habit of bringing his ladies in the summer-time. The Bey, however, was supposed to have Turkish sympathies, and therefore for the last three or four years he had left Isvor alone and had taken holiday with his ladies in some other part of Macedonia. The old caretaker was certain the heart of the Bey would be delighted if ever he heard that an *effendi* from England had made use of the tower.

We went to it. It was a big, square erection of three stories, built of boulders, except the top story, which was of wood. There were no windows to the lower story, only a doorway, with the door heavily studded with iron and guarded by a thick-walled courtyard, the gate of which was also iron-studded. We made ourselves prisoners for the night. I could not help laughing, however, at seeking refuge in a harem from capture by revolutionaries. This was the second time in my life I had been a visitor to the harem of an Oriental. The first occasion was in Persia, eight or nine years before, and all the poetry which had been in my mind about the gorgeousness of a harem was dissipated when I was shown over it during the absence of the ladies, and found it a very tawdry and gimcrack place. This tower of the Bey, however, served the double purpose of place of refuge as well as harem. It would be difficult, indeed, to force an entrance.

The best room was finely carpeted; there were couches with silken cushions, and on the walls were

huge mirrors and gaudy pictures. The old man cooked some rice whilst I dictated a letter, to be handed some day to the owner, expressing my apologies for having taken possession of his residence for a night, and my thanks. After we had fed on half-cooked rice, the soldiers lay down to sleep in the lower apartment, whilst my dragoman and myself occupied the upper. I threw open the little casement which shuts the women's part of a Moslem residence, so that we might enjoy the cool and delicious air.

Perhaps I had been sleeping for a couple of hours when my dragoman hurriedly awoke me with the whispered "Listen! there are horsemen outside. It is a 'band!'"

I crept on tiptoe to the open window, and there, sure enough, in the heavy darkness could be discerned some five or six horsemen. It was evident several men on foot were endeavouring to break open the door which guarded the yard. I got out my revolver. The dragoman slipped down the narrow stairs, and quietly awoke the soldiers. They came up stealthily, bringing their rifles.

The interesting occasion had come when an attempt was being made to get hold of me. I knew there was no personal danger to myself, unless it might be from an accidental bullet. Besides, with our protection we were more than a match for the half-dozen men below. We watched them in the dark for maybe a quarter of an hour. They were fumbling at the gateway, conversing in mumbling tones, but not getting much "forrader."

It became tiresome crouching and waiting for something to happen.

"Perhaps," I had said to the soldiers, "they will clear off if we let them know we are ready for them."

Then one of my escort shouted something, and at the same moment fired his gun over the heads of the revolutionaries. The horses jumped at the gun-crack. The attackers moved off, and disappeared. We waited to see if they intended to return. But, as all was silent, I lay down and went to sleep again.

At daybreak I asked my dragoman how he had slept.

"Not at all, not at all! I was afraid those Bulgarians would be returning and setting fire to the tower. Let us get away!"

We went on. By nine o'clock we were in Keuprulu, a Turkish military centre, with a railway line, a station, and a passable restaurant. There, whilst we were enjoying a Turkish breakfast followed by cigarette-smoking and coffee-drinking, as the guests of the Turkish officers, I was able to realise I had struck civilisation again. A gramophone was screeching out "The Honeysuckle and the Bee."

At midday came the train from Salonika. A couple of hours later I was at Uskup, with cordial welcome from Mr. Ryan, in charge of the Consulate, enjoying the luxury of a bath and a sprawl in a long, low, padded basket-chair, specially invented for the convenience of lazy Britons.

At Uskup I had opportunity of another interview with Hilmi Pasha. "Ah!" he said to me with a sigh, "I am investigating lies, lies—nothing but lies!"

He recognised that the Powers meant well in the intention to take under their charge the financial control of Macedonia, so that taxes might be gathered fairly and expended properly. But he indicated rather than said it was all toward the exasperation of Turkey, who wanted to do the right thing, but wanted to do it in the Turkish way. I tried to read between the lines, as it were, and I saw the thought that many Turks would prefer the conflict of war to the badgering and the wire-pulling of different chancelleries to which the Porte is subjected.

It is regrettable to state, but I have never met an individual whose opinion was worth anything who believed that the intervention of the Powers, the rebukes to the Sultan, and the coddling of Macedonian finance can do more than stave off the terrific explosion of war which is apparently, alas! the only solution of a terribly perplexed problem.

That Bulgaria—taking advantage of the revolutionary propaganda which is officially repudiated—will, before long, pick a quarrel with Turkey there is little doubt. Prince Ferdinand is against war; but popular passion will be too strong for him. Greece will throw in her lot with Turkey, and Servia will probably come to an arrangement with Bulgaria. The influence of France and England will succeed, possibly, in keeping off the interference of the other Great Powers, though Turkey will assuredly have a financial ally in Germany.

At present Bulgaria is zealously preparing her armaments, as Japan, through long years, prepared for the conflict with Russia. There is the difference that whilst Russia did not really expect war, Turkey does, is also preparing, and in many quarters is eager. To imagine that Bulgaria—admirably, even superbly equipped as she is—will march through Turkey is, in my opinion, a huge mistake. I cannot resist the conviction, however, that in the end Bulgarian arms will prevail.

It will be when Bulgaria requires the full fruits of her victory that a grave crisis for the peace of the whole of Europe will occur. Neither Austria nor Germany, nor Russia, nor perhaps Italy, will acquiesce in the creation of another Power in the Near East. Roumania and the smaller States, like Montenegro, with no greater political ambitions than to be left alone, cannot be expected to be silent onlookers while holding the knowledge that their ultimate fate will be absorption. Albania will blaze with insurrection.

That the picture I draw is black and pessimistic I realise. But it is no blacker than the picture which is in the mind of every diplomatist who understands the Balkan problem at its true value. There is a glimmer of hope, as I have hinted in another chapter, that a solution may be found in a great Balkan Confederation, with the Turks a party to that Confederation. But that, it may be, is a counsel of perfection.

At present Germany stands outside. She will have no hand in the reform of Macedonia and the

restriction of the power of the Sultan. The attitude of Germany is sinister. Her policy is that of the long arm. Her price for aiding Turkey will be first concessions, then protectorates, then possessions. But with Turkey defeated she realises, as everybody realises, that the Balkans will be a hell-pot of anarchy, and she expects to be the Power which will subjugate the rivals. Over their weakened bodies she will march to the Ægean. But who can doubt it must be a bloody road she will travel?





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