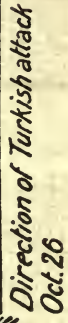
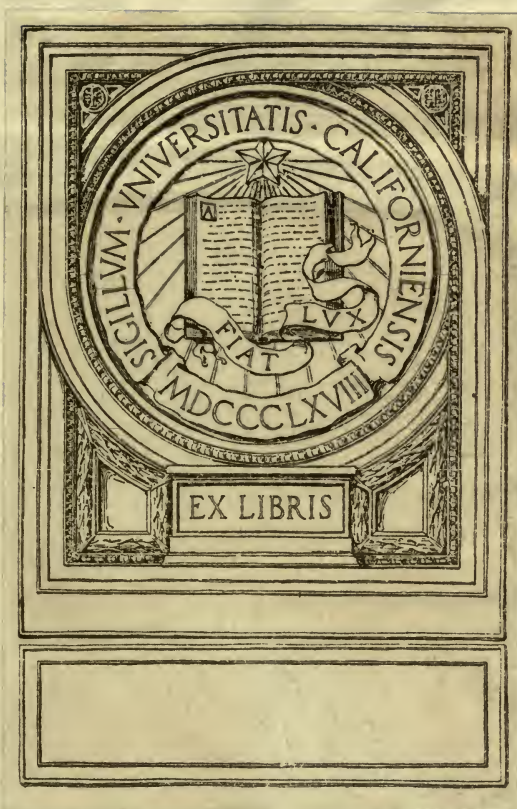




- Direction  
of  
Turkish  
attack  
Oct. 23*



*Italian line till Oct.28*  
*Italian line after Caneva's retreat on Oct.28.*





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**ITALY'S WAR FOR A DESERT**



Days of  
California



THE OASIS OF DEATH.

*Frontispiece.*



# ITALY'S WAR FOR A DESERT

BEING SOME EXPERIENCES OF  
A WAR-CORRESPONDENT WITH  
THE ITALIANS IN TRIPOLI  
BY FRANCIS McCULLAGH

Author of "With the Cossacks," "The Fall of Abd-ul-Hamid," etc.



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DEDICATED TO MY  
COLLEAGUES AND FELLOW-CORRESPONDENTS  
BRITISH, GERMAN, AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN  
RUSSIAN, AND FRENCH  
WHO WERE NOT AFRAID TO TELL  
THE TRUTH ABOUT TRIPOLI

#### NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS

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## PREFACE

“WHAT necessity is there,” it may be asked, “for a book on the Italian war in Tripoli? The reports of the battles—such as they are—have already been given very fully in all the principal newspapers of the world.”

My reply to this is that though this war in Tripoli has been conducted in the twentieth century, and under the eyes of some forty newspaper correspondents, no fair nor complete picture of any portion of it has yet been drawn.

This *lacuna* is largely due to two causes, the official censorship of Italy and the unofficial censorship of the Italians who are for one reason or another in favour of the war.

The Italian censorship not only prevents (and quite rightly of course) the publication of all military information which might be of service to the enemy, but also draws the blue pencil through telegrams that tend to make the Italians depressed, to indicate how endless the struggle is likely to be, to show how well the Turks and Arabs fight.

So merciless and sweeping is the censorship that we find the whole Italian Press, headed by the influential “*Corriere della Sera*,” conducting a campaign against it. Even the extremely jingoistic “*Giornale d’ Italia*” complains of the *mutilazioni senza pietà apportate dalla censura ai dispacci de*



*nostro inviato* (pitiless mutilations of our correspondent's despatches by the Censor).

A Milan paper, of which a copy lies before me as I write, begins gaily in its largest type an account of a battle telephoned from Rome. At the sixth line, there is a break and we find in brackets the words "*tagliato dalla censura*" (cut off by the Censor). Throughout the accounts of the battle of Sharashett telephoned from Rome to the great provincial papers, the words "*interrotto dalla censura*" occur nearly as frequently as the responses in a litany.

The Government acts systematically in this matter. It puts every possible obstacle in the way of independent accounts being published until its own optimistic, official account has been printed all over the country. Naturally, these early accounts are the ones which are wired abroad by foreign correspondents and which fix themselves in the public mind not only in Italy, but elsewhere. If ever there was a pitiable spoon-fed Press, it is the Press of Italy at the present moment. This Tripoli conflict was largely journalistic in its origin, but the journalists who beat the jingo drum before the war began have been consistently treated as little children ever since. The first account of the battle of Sharashett, on which they were compelled to rely, was a strongly "doctored" official account which did not speak of that breaking of the Italian line by two hundred and fifty brave Arabs, which was *the* feature of the action, but which did speak of the capture of a Turkish flag by a bayonet charge which never took place, for the flag was discovered, after the battle, under a heap of Arab dead in front of the trenches.

On October 27th the "Agenzia Italiana" circulated a semi-official note on the battle of the 26th.

This note said that the battle was "almost decisive." It pointed out that as a result of that victory the Arabs of the interior would be terrorised by the Italian name.

"And what ought to fill us with legitimate pride and patriotic enthusiasm," it added, "is the dash, the indomitable power of resistance, the irresistible heroism of our soldiers; the magnificent conduct of the war on the part of the commander-in-chief and of all the officers; the admirable military organisation which we have been able to show before the astonished eyes of Europe on land as well as on sea."

And this after a battle in which some of the Italian soldiers threw away their arms and fled before exactly two hundred and fifty of the enemy, a battle so unsatisfactory from General Caneva's point of view that the Italians retreated next day over a mile, with the result that the enemy was able to come close enough to bombard the city and to drop shells even on the residence of the Generalissimo himself! But, of course, I forget that this retreat was due "to the effluvia from the corpses." So the official account said.

These are only a few out of an endless list of instances which I could give of the Italian Government's mendacity and suppression of the truth in its official and semi-official bulletins regarding the present war. The Japanese Press was much freer during Japan's great struggle with Russia than the Italian Press is during this campaign with a few thousand isolated Arabs to whom Turkey can send little or no assistance. The Russian commander-in-chief in Manchuria was far less dictatorial in his dealings with the Press than the present Italian



commander-in-chief in Tripoli city. Italian correspondents who communicate too abruptly to their newspapers the amount of the Italian losses get twenty-four hours to leave the country. On October 31st General Caneva expelled two Italian correspondents, Signor De Luca Aprile of the "Giornale di Sicilia," and Signor Bordiga of the "Lavoro." I do not know how many he has deported since that time.

I have already pointed out that even the most jingo of the Italian newspapers have protested day after day against the methods of the Censor. But I am doubtful if the abolition of the censorship would be of any good to them. The intolerant Chauvinist spirit, which they themselves called into existence and carefully fostered during many years, is now their master, the exacting god to whom they must offer incense. If an Italian journalist told the truth about the war he would be expelled from Tripoli, lose his means of livelihood, run the risk of being mobbed, and ultimately find that he had got to fight some half-a-dozen duels with indignant "patriots." As some of the leading English and American newspapers were represented in Tripoli at the outbreak of the war by Italian journalists who also contributed to Italian newspapers, the English and American Press suffered, directly or indirectly, by this Chauvinist menace almost as much as the Italian Press itself. And when we come to the question of the oasis massacres we must particularly bear this point in mind. Even when a foreign newspaper was represented at the front, by one of its own staff, that gentleman saw clearly that if he wanted to stay with the Italian army he would have to close his eyes to that army's shortcomings. Some-

times the paper for which he wrote was more prudent than he, and, not wishing to lose a good correspondent on the spot, it neglected to publish any of the criticisms on the Italians which he sent.

Because Dr. Walter Weibel, of the "Frankfurter Zeitung," tried to tell the truth about what was happening in Tripoli it was made impossible for him to live or to work there, and on November 20th he had to leave. On November 26th another very able and conscientious German journalist, Dr. Gottlob Adolf Krause, of the "Berliner Tageblatt," was bluntly told by the head of the Italian Press Bureau that he would have either to write in a pro-Italian style or else to quit the country. ("Entweder Sie schreiben in Zukunft Italien wohlwollende Berichte, oder Sie werden ausgewiesen.") Many examples of this kind could be given. In fact, on this subject alone a whole book could be written. The writer of such a book could show how much our worship of "first news" injures our Press. In some armies toadying and the ignoring of unpleasant facts are essential to journalistic success, and I foresee that in foreign wars, foreign semi-official journalists will in course of time do all our work for us, because their telegrams will come first, and the "scoop" is an idol before which all editors grovel.

Even here in England the wildly intolerant Chauvinism of the Italians leads to what practically amounts to the establishment of a censorship in this country, to a loading of the dice in every possible way, to a continual misrepresentation of the state of feeling here.

At the outset of the war some "patriotic" Italians sent to the Italian Government a congratulatory message written on National Liberal Club notepaper.

This message was reproduced in Italy as a proof that the National Liberal Club was with the brave Italians in their spirited and unselfish attempt to release the Arabs of Tripolitania from the intolerable yoke of the Turk.

On my return from Tripoli, I was persuaded by the late W. T. Stead, that noble-hearted champion of the oppressed in every land, to hold a meeting in a London hall with the object of telling my fellow-countrymen how the war in Tripoli was being carried on. That meeting was broken up by seven Italians who had come there purposely to interrupt, and who paid no attention to the shouts of many among the audience, one of whom said: "This is an English meeting. We want to hear what the speaker has to say. If you don't want to hear him, go home!"

Judging by a telegram which appears in the "Neue Freie Presse" of March 18th, the same methods are being employed by the Italians in Munich towards the distinguished Austrian explorer Otto Artbauer, who is now lecturing in Germany on the Italian atrocities which he saw committed in Tripoli. But I notice, by the by, that in Germany the interrupters find themselves outside the door in a marvellously short space of time, so that the Bavarians hear all of the lecture for which they have bought tickets.

While writing the present book in an isolated house on the Surrey Downs, I was interrupted one day by the arrival of three gentlemen who had come from London in a motor-car and wanted to speak to me.

They were Signor F. T. Marinetti, who calls himself a "poet," and who said that he had just come from Tripoli and was staying at the Savoy Hotel; Signor Boccioni, who is, I believe, a "futurist"



painter; and another gentleman who did not give his name, but whom I suspect to be the London correspondent of the "Giornale d' Italia." The object of these gentlemen in motoring all the way from London was to fight a duel with me, and they managed to find me at home when there was nobody else in the house, save a maid-servant.

This was the second invitation of the kind I have had since my return from Italy. I told them that I would communicate with them in due course; whereupon one of them threatened to attack me there and then. A long but incorrect account of the incident seems to have appeared in all the Italian papers, for I find it in the "Nuovo Giornale" of Florence (March 12th) as being telephoned from Rome, where it had evidently appeared in the "Giornale d' Italia." As a matter of fact, all that happened was that I promised to communicate with my challenger at the Savoy Hotel, in case I ever felt anxious to fight a duel with him. Then the "poet" got on his legs and began an oration which lasted a quarter of an hour and afforded me a good deal of amusement. He told me that I had never visited the trenches at Tripoli, having probably remained concealed in some *cantina* inside the town. He said that Mr. Grant, of the "Daily Mirror," had invented the atrocities so that he might be expelled, since he was afraid of the cholera and his paper would not recall him. All this was very amusing, and the manner in which my visitor strutted about the room like a hero in melodrama was more amusing still. But there is a serious side to this question. Is it not rather impudent of foreigners enjoying the hospitality of this country to thus burst, armed I presume, into the houses of men who criticise the conduct of

their troops in Tripoli? It may practically amount in some cases to the imposition of a censorship. Newspaper correspondents, whose business requires them to be frequently abroad and sometimes to visit Italy or pass through it, will be inclined, once they see the violent intolerance of the Italians with regard to comments on this war, to gloss over or ignore altogether anything at which these thin-skinned jingoes would be likely to take offence. This is especially the case when the correspondents in question have no very strong feelings either way, and are only concerned—in case they visit Italy or Tripoli—in having a “good time” and in getting their news out first.

The result of all this is that we have got a rather one-sided view of this war. The news about it which is allowed to reach the world is the result of a careful system of selection, mostly carried on in Italy itself. The Italian editors are of opinion that if they publish anything calculated to jar on the minds of the jingoes they will be inundated with protests and their circulation will suffer. And they are right in thinking so. Early in the war the “Daily Graphic” published a letter from an American archæologist, Mr. Richard Norton, who had been excavating in Cyrenaica and who denounced the Italian raid, as he had a perfect right to do. The entire Press of Italy immediately set upon him with a deafening howl of indignation. Columns appeared daily for weeks in every paper in Italy denouncing the wickedness, the mendacity of Signor Norton, and the treason of the “Graphic” in publishing his letter. All over Italy subscribers to the “Graphic” stopped their subscriptions on account of “le ignobili calunnie del ‘Graphic’ contro l’ Italia.” Reading-rooms and



libraries refused to let it enter their doors. Public meetings were held to denounce it. Some newspapers published, day after day, lists of people who had for ever renounced the "Graphic" and all its works and pomps. Finally, the "Graphic" had to come to terms with its infuriated Italian readers and to publish an explanation.

This absurd intolerance of criticism is as noticeable in the Expeditionary Army as it is in Italy. The Censor at Tripoli refused to let pass a harmless phrase of Mr. Bennet Burleigh's to the effect that "though the disembarkation of the Italian troops on October 12th had been conducted with very creditable efficiency and speed, British marines could probably, owing to their greater experience in such matters, conduct it even better." The Censor objected to its being said that the British tar was in any respect better than the Italian. He wanted no criticism, but only praise, praise, praise,—bucket-fuls of it.

Herr von Gottberg tried to send to the "Lokal-Anzeiger" a message to the effect that "the Italian Press has probably given a more pessimistic view of the Turkish position than the facts of the case warrant." This was at the time, just after the landing of the expedition, when the most vapid nonsense was circulated about the extremities to which the Turks were reduced, when it was asserted in the Italian papers that they had no water, little food, hardly any cartridges, and were hanging around Bumeliana simply because they wanted to get something to drink.

Nevertheless, that phrase about the Italian Press had to go out. The Censor would not allow it to pass on any account.

About the middle of October Reuter's correspondent sent an impartial and accurate summing-up of the situation, in which, while bestowing very high praise on the Italians, he ventured to dwell on the difficulties in front of the invaders, especially the difficulties of a march into the desert. "It can only be said," he declared, "that the Italians have entered upon a gigantic undertaking without calculating sufficiently the means necessary for overcoming all the obstacles which they are bound to encounter and without foreseeing the enormous expenses which they will have to face."

Because he dared to say this the Roman Press was furious with him. The semi-official "Tribuna" (October 18th) declared that the statement which I have just quoted "is contrary to all that has been written up to the present in the Italian Press and in the foreign Press, and is also in clear contrast with the evidence of facts."

The "Tribuna" published this just and moderate message under the heading of "Reuter's imaginings," and, personally attacking Reuter's agent, it hinted that the difficulties he experienced in getting to Tripoli had rendered him unable to hold the balance even.

And here I might stop just for a moment to show what the Italians want to be written, what they themselves write about the Tripoli adventure.

Signor de Felice, the famous "Socialist" deputy from Sicily, who also acted as a correspondent of the "Messaggero" in Tripoli, wrote a letter which appeared in that paper on October 19th describing "the manner in which our troops are advancing into the interior." The troops are going, he said, in three columns, one column by Tripoli-Misura to

Tagiura, Sidi Ben Nur and Gazr-Gefari, "an old fortified castle in which there was a respectable Ottoman garrison which, on hearing of the arrival of our troops, fled in great haste and joined, it is said, other Turkish forces which have gone in disorder towards the interior." "Another column marched on Gharian, which may be called the capital of the Gebel. It has traversed Ghea, an oasis rich in water; and Cars-el-Azizie, a most fertile place, also abundantly supplied with potable water."

But the gem of De Felice's article is the statement that, by the time his letter will have appeared in print, this latter column "will already have reached Gharian." . . . *Anche questa guarnigione probabilmente fuggirà all' arrivo delle nostre truppe.* ("This garrison also will probably fly before our troops.") This amazing deputy adds, in conclusion, that "the fugitives will not delay long before surrendering."

A glance at the map of Tripolitania will show that, at their present rate of progress, the Italians will take about fifty years to get to Gharian—unless they go as prisoners. There are already nearly one hundred Italian prisoners there and in Fezzan, and the collection may grow.

De Felice, I might remark, is the discoverer who, after having driven in a carriage out to Sidi Messri and seen some blades of grass (*qualche filo d'erba*) and a plain covered with absolutely useless scrub, rushed back to Tripoli and wrote for the "Giornale di Sicilia" a glowing report on the agricultural possibilities of the new "colony," winding up with the exuberant telegram: "We have visited the desert: all the land most fit for cultivation."

Now, if a Socialist, Radical, Little-Italy deputy talks like this, what must we expect of the extreme



jingoes and imperialists? As I want to avoid as much as possible the reproach of making this book one of rollicking humour, I refrain from quoting the imperialists on the commercial possibilities of Tripolitania unless where it is absolutely necessary. My readers would be bound to get the impression that I was quoting from some wild skit on the war, that I had, by some mistake, got hold of an Italian political adaptation of "Alice in Wonderland."

I shall give still another instance of the incredible intolerance of the Italian Press on the subject of Tripoli. As his despatches from Tripoli at the time of the massacres show, one of the most pro-Italian of the foreign correspondents with General Caneva's force in October last was the war-correspondent of "The Times."

I do not mean that this gentleman suppressed the truth out of deference to Italian susceptibilities. I mean that, as a military man himself who had combated savage or half-savage tribes on the Indian frontier and in other parts of the empire, his sympathies were with the professional soldiers, the white men, the Europeans, and not with the irregular and possibly treacherous natives who wore no uniform and whose officers had, most of them, been to no recognised military school.

But occasionally this correspondent felt obliged to drop a friendly word of criticism, and that word of criticism made the Italians wild.

Even so well-balanced a paper as the "Corriere della Sera" (October 19th) describes one of his messages as "grotesque malignity." This was because he had said that, in the first night attack on Bumeliana, the Turks had only twenty men, whereas the Italian correspondents had placed the

number at five hundred. As will be seen in the following narrative, the precise number was fifteen. "The Times" correspondent had, as usual, been too favourable to his brethren, the professional soldiers.

When the same journalist courteously begged the Italian Press not to lose its sense of proportion, since the war was, after all, a small one, of no military importance to the world at large, the "Ora" of Palermo (October 20th) cited this statement as showing "*il mal' animo dei corrispondenti esteri verso i colleghi italiani.*" My friend Mr. Percival Phillips was scoffed at because he prophesied that, owing to the way in which the Italian soldiers were allowed to drink water from the public fountains and to eat unripe fruit, cholera would soon make its appearance in the Italian camp—as it did.

Italy is, in short, the militant suffragette of the nations. She breaks diplomatic, international, hygienic, and strategical laws as Miss Christabel Pankhurst breaks windows, and then she raises an ear-splitting, hysterical yell if anybody ventures to criticise her, even if any friend and accomplice attempts to tell her the right way to do it. She goes cruising in the Ægean with her fleet exactly as Mrs. Pankhurst goes cruising in the Strand with her hammer. By making herself a general nuisance and exposing us to the risk of a Balkan war, Italy wants to worry Europe into making Turkey give her Tripolitania.

I must admit, however, that here and there in Italy the voice of reason is sometimes heard. Signor Mario Borsa, the chief editor of the "Secolo," wrote on one occasion to the "Tribunali" a powerful letter in which he denounced the spectacle which his country presented to the world, "the petty and undignified



spectacle of a people excitable, nervous, as incapable of ignoring vulgar attacks as of tolerating judicious criticism." "We are," continued the same writer, "the spoilt children of praise. For fifty years the world has only had caresses for us. . . . This is an imperialism of a new species." "We have lost our tempers," he says in another place, "on account of the hostile language of the foreign Press. We have grown heated to such an extent that we have only made ourselves ridiculous. We have prohibited foreign correspondents to go to Chiasso to send off telegrams. We have censored and held back their messages. . . . We have seen our ministers and our generals engaged in controversies with telegraphic agencies and with foreign journalists. We have read in the 'Tribunali' that our ambassadors ought to take legal action against the newspapers which defame us."

But these voices were few and far between ; and even editors who took Signor Borsa's point of view were compelled to continue feeding the Frankenstein's monster, the Chauvinistic public opinion which they had been "forming" for the past five years. In their accounts of the bombardments of undefended villages they had to employ terms of praise which would be extravagant if applied to the victor of Trafalgar. In their descriptions of the timid and even cowardly advances of their troops on land they actually compared themselves with the Japanese and with old Blücher. In their selection of letters from the ranks they confined themselves to the reproduction of bogus or censored letters of the usual ultra-patriotic type. It has always been the usual soldier laddie writing to the usual white-haired mother, and saying the usual things about

dying for his country and his king. Now, the great majority of the letters must be of a very different kind, for the great majority of the soldiers are disgusted with this war, and have sometimes to be kept at their posts during battle by officers standing over them with revolvers.

And, as a matter of fact, the "Avanti" does publish some soldiers' letters which are of anything but the usual stereotyped, goody-goody sort. Take the following from the "Avanti" of November 24th. It is an extract from a letter written to his brother by a soldier who took part in the battle of Shara-shett :

"Believe me when I tell thee that I have led a dog's life of it for days and days. It is some ten days now since we have had an attack, but to-day, just as I began to write, we had one for about ten minutes. I was ill for six days, but the doctor said I was shamming and I had to work all the same. We have no roof over our heads day or night. We left Leghorn on October 2nd, and since then I have not had a change of linen and have no other clothes than these on my back. The Turks have taken the rest. I assure thee, dear brother, that it would be better for me if, instead of coming to the war, I had thrown myself into the sea. I have no longer any hope of returning, and will surely be killed by illness or by a bullet. . . .

SARDI DARIO. 11th Regiment of Bersaglieri.

"Che bruttissima cosa è la guerra !" ("What a most ugly thing is war") writes another soldier from Benghazi to his mother. "In this country one has to suspect everything and everybody. One has to suspect the weather and the inhabit-

ants. As I write this note the wind of the desert has been blowing for twenty-four hours. Imagine a great rain of very fine sand which prevents you from opening your eyes, which beats upon your face with an extraordinary violence, which enters into your ears and nostrils and through the openings of your clothes and into your shoes so that it pricks you like pin-points. Naturally I can put nothing in my mouth while the storm lasts, for the food and the bread are covered with sand. Through holes in the tent which serves us as a very bad place of shelter, the sand penetrates until at night one's face is so covered with it that one has to get up every now and then to let the sand fall off. Last night the wind was so strong that it blew down the tent in which I lay with four companions, tearing loose the pegs which had fastened it to the ground. You can imagine the confusion into which we were then plunged. We were almost completely covered by sand, and it took us all our time to extricate ourselves by holding on to the date-palms. In spite of all this, and much more that I cannot write at this moment, my health is good, but I assure thee that these fatigues, this perpetual strain which I am compelled to undergo here, will have indelible effects on my future health and will shorten my existence. Oh ! how often, finding myself alone at night with five or six men under my personal responsibility, [during the rainy season some weeks back] deluged with water, without any resting-place, with nothing but mud to lie down in, with rain pouring down on me in bucketfuls—how often have I not longed for that godsend which will, I hope, at length set me free—a rifle-bullet through the brain ! ”



This is hardly the spirit of Ancient Rome to which the Italian Nationalists are so fond of appealing, but it is the spirit of the Italian troops in Tripolitania at the present moment. Nay, even these letters do not represent the depths of their misery, gloom, and disillusionment, for in the first place the worst letters are not confided to the newspapers lest they get the writer into trouble, and in the second place even the "Avanti" is compelled to pander somewhat to the craze for militarism which has invaded Italy. In the "patriotic" drivel which he sometimes sends from the front, the Tripoli correspondent of the "Avanti" is quite as bad as his Italian colleagues. He would probably have been expelled from Tripoli long ago as "unpatriotic" had he written in a more subdued key.

I may seem in the following narrative to be anti-Italian and pro-Turk, but I believe that, on the whole, I am fairly impartial. I sympathise with the Arabs because they are fighting very bravely for their country, but, on the other hand, I am compelled to rely for many of my facts on Italian papers, either directly or indirectly. The only papers I could get in Tripoli were Italian, so that in some instances I may possibly do injustice to the Arabs. The Italians have practically a monopoly of the news about this war, for the Turks are soldiers, not writers. Very few foreign correspondents care to expose themselves to the fatigues and dangers incident to a stay at the head-quarters of Nesciat Bey; and for information regarding some incidents in the campaign we are compelled to rely almost entirely on Italian sources. Not a single Turk or Arab of the two gallant bands which twice broke the Italian line ever returned to tell the tale, and all the deeds of

heroism which they performed during their last desperate struggles in the oasis will never be known. Unknown also will be all the acts of treachery and cowardice of which the Italians were guilty during these oasis fights. We know some of them, but we shall never know all. On the other hand, we get a wealth of detail about Italian heroism; and as these narratives come from the pens of the ablest journalists in Italy, they are very readable, very seductive. And, of course, there was on the spot the subsidised newspaper which is a usual feature of such cases. In this case it was the "Eco di Tripoli," a journal subsidised by the Italian Consulate in order that it might "servire alla propagazione dell'idea nazionale e alla conquista morale degli arabi." Bravely, indeed, did the editor uphold the banner of Christian civilisation among those benighted Infidels. His name was Moses.

In Italy itself we have the great poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio, working with all his might in order to create a wholly false impression about this war. Hence I say that in the following narrative I give the Arabs no more than they are entitled to.

There are some classes of people to whom these pages will make no appeal. They will make no appeal to military men, who believe that the elastic term "military exigency" covers every species of crime and barbarity in time of war.

They will make no appeal to the Englishman who has caught in some way or other the microbe of Italian jingoism. There are some such Englishmen. They live in Italy, or they write books about that country, or they trade with Tripoli, or they have Italian blood in their veins, but I find that so far as the present war is concerned it is hopeless to argue



with them. They are as blinded as the "Giornale d' Italia" itself.

I do not address this book to those cold-blooded calculators the statesmen and publicists who want to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance, or to help France to do so, who want to make the Italian *Dreadnoughts* neutralise the Austrian *Dreadnoughts*, and who therefore think it better that we should all keep silent in this country about Italian doings in Tripolitania. When they look out on the continent of Europe these gentlemen can only see one nation there—Germany. They can take account of nothing else. They do not remember that Russia was the bugbear to exactly the same extent only ten years ago, that, previous to that, the bugbear was France. They do not realise that Germany may be our ally to-morrow. Then, there are people who think that we should keep a politic silence, and get Italy to pay for it by conceding us some advantages in Egypt. There are people who helped in the unification of Italy, and who are therefore loath to believe that unified Italy can do wrong. There are people who are dazzled by Italy's literature and art, by her old cities, her superb twilights, the bewitching beauty of her hills and coasts, the irresistible charm of her people, by her tremendous past. There are Catholics who object to any criticism of the Italian soldier because many of the expeditionary troops went to the Sacraments before they embarked at Naples, and because the army in Tripolitania is well provided with Franciscan chaplains. Again, there are people in England who believe that the Turk is fair prey, that there is no harm in driving him out of Europe and Africa, and that, in the course of driving him out, no atrocity can possibly be committed. Lastly,

there are people who favour the Italians now, because the Italians favoured us in the South African war. Lord Roberts seems to be one of these ; on no other grounds can I explain his pronouncement last November on a question about which he had no direct knowledge. This distinguished soldier must have been unconsciously biased by the fact that his own proceedings in the Transvaal, so much criticised at the time by a certain section of English opinion, were defended by Italians.

To all these classes of my countrymen I make no appeal. This book is not written for them.

Happily, however, they comprise only a very small proportion of the British nation. They do not form one per cent of the great mass of fair-minded, impartial men and women who say to me : " Don't mind in the least whether Italy was with us or not in the South African war, whether she will leave the Triplice or stay in it, whether she will make us more secure or not at Cairo. Just tell us what happened in Tripoli in October 1911."


And that is what I shall try to do.

Despite my denunciation of the Italian papers, I must thank them for much of the non-controversial material contained in the following pages. I must also thank the " Daily Mirror " for allowing me to use its excellent photographs. And I must express my acknowledgments to the " New York World," the " Westminster Gazette," and the " Daily News " for permission to use material contributed by me to their columns.

## PART I







## CHAPTER I

### IL NAZIONALISMO

To most Englishmen, there are two surprising things in the present Turko-Italian conflict. The first is why this conflict should have taken place at all. We cannot understand the state of mind which made not only possible, but even popular in Italy, this war which seems to us in England one of the worst cases of international highway robbery that have occurred during the last fifty years. In the second place, we cannot fully understand the state of mind in the Italian expeditionary army which made possible the awful events of October 23rd-28th last.

These explanations I shall endeavour to give in the following pages, and though they may render this book somewhat dull, they will, I hope, throw some light at the same time on a dark and intricate subject.

To begin with the state of mind in Italy itself, which made this war in Tripoli possible.

In the first place, Italy has nursed a sentimental claim on this Turkish vilayet for more than a generation. This claim was based on the fact that Tripoli is only a day's sail from Sicily, and that it was formerly a Roman province. I need not point out that these reasons are thin enough, for England was also a Roman province, and the English colony of Malta is nearer to Tripoli than any part of Sicily.

But, of course, there were other causes. Almost

unobserved, a new Chauvinist party has been growing up during the last few decades in Italy. The members of this party call themselves Nationalists. Their opponents call them the Young Turks of Italy, but they do not deserve the name. The men who overthrew Abd-ul-Hamid are made of far sterner stuff. The Nationalists are jingoists of an extreme and candid type. They believe in war for war's sake. They believe that the shedding of blood makes a nation virile, unifies it, intensifies the patriotism of its inhabitants. Their motto is: "If you feel decadent, go out and murder somebody." They preach this extraordinary doctrine without any attempt at excuse or palliation.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to understand this sudden craze for brute force on the part of the weakest of the Powers—a nation which is only, indeed, regarded as one of the Great Powers by international courtesy; a nation which owes its unity not to its own exertions, but to the sentimentality of Europe; in short, a petted and artificial nation which is very much in the same position as modern Greece. It is extraordinary to find the one nation in Europe whose claims to respect

<sup>1</sup> "We wish to glorify war,—the only health-giver of the world," yells Signor Marinetti, one of the many minor poets who are now thumping the jingo drum. "[We wish to glorify] militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the Anarchist, the beautiful ideas that kill, the contempt for woman."

In the Golden Legend we are told of a rich Prince to whom Satan suggested that the blood of a young maiden would cure his disease. So has Lucifer suggested to Italy that a blood-bath will rejuvenate her. In really rich and powerful empires with great armies or vast colonial possessions an imperialistic group has its uses, but Italy can derive no possible benefit from the hysterical poetasters and unbalanced officers who are largely accountable for this war. Of their own windy "patriotism" I am more than doubtful. To-day they are chasing Arabs with poems and revolvers. To-morrow they may be after Victor Emmanuel with bombs. And once the foolishness of their present propaganda is exposed, there will be an inevitable reaction in Italy against even sane and moderate patriotism.

are based wholly on its artistic and literary achievements suddenly and of its own accord "rattling into barbarism." One feels sincerely sorry to see delicate and gifted Italy abasing herself so gratuitously before the brazen idol of militarism. The light and gentle Ariel prefers to be the heavy-handed Caliban. The graceful stag wants to be fat and strong like the bull.

"Italy," says one English publicist, "Italy the flower of our western world, whom we so loved and pitied fifty years ago. It is well that we should be reminded of our folly in that we believed in her tears and thought that liberty would be a cure for her secular griefs. Her tears are dry enough now, and she stands before us hard-eyed, brazen-cheeked, the harlot of Europe boasting with loud tongue her shamelessness."

And not only has she made the world dislike her. Worse than that, she has made the world laugh at her. Her newspapers use the most inflated language about her military and naval prowess. Her generals refer in their proclamations to the ancient Roman Empire. But at the same time her armies manifest a ludicrous timidity in the face of an enemy much inferior to them in numbers and handicapped in every way.

The whole mistake is due to the fact that the clever young litterateurs and the enthusiastic young officers at the head of the Nationalist movement have deceived themselves. They imagined that Italy had only to make an effort in order to transform herself into ancient Rome. But, unfortunately for them, there is a wide gap on this point between them and the soldiers whom they command. These soldiers, on whom of course the success of the Tripolitan adventure entirely depends, knew nothing of Scipio



Africanus or Hadrian, and have no wish whatever to distinguish themselves in futile battles against the Libyan sands. One of them wants to be left in peace on his Sicilian vineyard. Another wants to eventually join his brother who has a barber's shop in New York and is earning "good money." A third who has been in Chicago wants to return again. The Nationalists refuse to face the fact that many things have happened since the time of Julius Cæsar, that America, for example, has been discovered.

The modern Greek jingoists made the same mistake when they insisted on waging war on Turkey. A handful of unbalanced young officers and poets had got heated by reading of the conquests of the ancient people from whom they believed (mistakenly) that they were descended. They remembered Alexander the Great and Xenophon, but forgot about the long Byzantine degradation that interposes between those great figures and the Greece of to-day. Far be it from me to condemn all such revivals. I warmly approve of them whenever they do not lead merely to the copying of the worst features of ancient civilizations. Rienzi was a noble and sympathetic figure because he attempted to restore the better features of ancient Rome; but I have no sympathy with those who think that they are walking in the footsteps of great men when they are only copying those men's worst defects. They remind me of Dostoïevsky's hero, the weak-minded Russian student Ras-kolnikoff, who, for the sake of a little money, battered out the brains of a poor old woman. He always acted on the principle of "doing as Napoleon would have done," and thought that in this case Napoleon would have acted with vigour, decision, and ruthlessness.



Giollitian Italy is the Raskolnikoff of modern history. She attacks a poor little isolated community of Arabs and batters them with cannon because she thinks that Ancient Rome would have done the same. The Nationalists were convinced that the brutality of the war would increase the vigour of the nation. On this point I shall allow an Italian to speak, that sturdy old revolutionary, Hamilcar Cipriani.

“They want a great victory,” he said, in reply to an interviewer, “but how can they possibly win a great victory in Tripolitania when we know that Turkey cannot send an army thither owing to the fact that she has no fleet? The Italian jingo Press has been flooding the country with effeminate twaddle, with silly and imbecile gush in which they magnify the most insignificant skirmishes into great victories, in which they characterise as colossal triumphs combats which end in the Italians prudently retiring within the range of their naval guns. This has rendered us a laughing-stock in the eyes of all the world. We are to-day the stock joke of international humour, which represents us as so many Tartarins hunting lions.”

The joke would not have been complete, however, without its jingo poet. And a jingo poet this tragic jest has got in the shape of Gabriele d' Annunzio. For some time past this writer has been rapidly developing into a sort of Italian Kipling—and a Kipling, I need hardly say, is out of place in any but a very great empire. He wrote some years ago a book called “The Ship,” of which the burden was imperialism, expansion, the acquisition of colonies, the taking up of the White Man's burden. Since

the war began he has written a whole volume of poems in praise of it. Imagine writing heroic poetry about the "victories" of General Caneva! The latest news is that D' Annunzio is personally going to Tripolitania, as Mr. Rudyard Kipling went personally to South Africa.

Why the Italian Government went over, bag and baggage, to the Nationalists, and even surpassed the worst of them in flamboyancy of language, is not difficult to explain. Ever since Italy was united her rulers have been determined to really cement the various communities of which the country is composed by means of an aggressive war. This is evident in everything they did, in the ugly barracks with which they disfigured many a beautiful landscape, even in the aggressive monument to Victor Emmanuel at Rome. That tasteless production was admittedly intended to be "*il monumento della terza Italia*"; and travellers must have noticed that its plinth is all carved into warlike emblems. What a much nobler inspiration the creators of "the third Italy" might have drawn from the *ara pacis* of Augustus, now in great part exhumed! With what simplicity of artistic means and with what tasteful use of symbolical figures did not the Rome of Augustus embody the idea of confident and prosperous peace!

Though Cavour said that "*Italia fara da sè*," he was historically wrong. It was France, and to some extent England and Prussia, which made Italian unity, but it was not Italy. It was Magenta and Solferino, and not the battles of Garibaldi. Italy therefore felt herself in much the same position as Greece. She had started her career with the fatal disadvantage of having won her independence at

the hands of another people. For the last forty years, therefore, it has been the great aim of Italian statesmen to atone for this defect as much as possible by providing her with a Sedan, with some victory which would lead to "the Re-Unification of Italy" as Mr. Richard Bagot calls it, which would weld Romans, Genoese, Florentines, Venetians, Neapolitans, and Sicilians together by the cement of common danger, by the blood and iron of war, and lead to a union very much more intimate than the artificial union of 1870. Hence the scheme to take Tunis and the projected raid on Albania. Hence the unfortunate Abyssinian adventure. Hence the plans of Crispi to seize Tripolitania, plans which would probably have been carried out had that statesman's last Premiership lasted a few months longer.

Another reason predisposed the Italian Government to adopt the Nationalist programme. That reason was—Adowa. It was necessary, thought the Government, to wipe out the shame of Adowa. "We must make amends before all the world," says Scipio Sighele in his recently published book "*Il Nazionalismo*," "for our cowardice after Adowa."

Reasoning on the same lines, France might attack Switzerland in order to erase the memory of Sedan; but in everything connected with this African raid the Italian Government and the Italian Nationalists have a style of reasoning peculiar to themselves. Moreover, they never seem to think that other nations have as much right to attack them as they have to attack Tripoli. If, seized by an imperialistic frenzy, Austria-Hungary pushes down the Dalmatian coast from Cattaro and makes the Adriatic an Austrian lake, she can justify herself by arguments



innumerable culled from Italian Nationalist poems, books and leading articles.

And it is not at all impossible that Austria-Hungary may think this the very best time for undertaking such an advance. With a large Italian army locked up indefinitely in northern Africa, the circumstances could not well be more favourable. And for Austria-Hungary it might be a measure of self-protection. The Italian Nationalists who preached the Tripoli crusade have preached with much greater vehemence, and for a much longer time, a war for the recovery of Italia Irredenta. In his recent book on Nationalism, that high priest of the cult, Scipio Sighele, says that "irredentismo" is "not only an indestructible sentiment, but a necessity and a duty imposed on us by historical rights, by economic interests, by strategical considerations." There is now accredited to General Caneva's army an Italian correspondent from Trieste who loudly proclaims that the attack on Tripoli is only a rehearsal for an attack on Trieste, and, ludicrous as this boast seems to be under the circumstances, it certainly expresses the sentiments of all the Italian Nationalists.

Italy's foolishness in adopting the "big-stick" policy is all the greater owing to the fact that she herself is one of the nations most likely to suffer from an all-round adoption of that policy by the European Powers.

If there is any nation in Europe that should cling to the Garibaldian tradition of always fighting against oppressors wherever they are found, of always assisting the weak against the strong, that nation is Italy. Even from a moral and educational point of view Italy will lose much when she loses the old tradition.



On this subject I shall again quote Cipriani.

“The greatest infamy,” says that old revolutionist, “the most unpardonable crime which the monarchy has committed by means of this pirate-raid on Tripoli is that it throws to the dogs, tramples in a sea of mud and blood, our beautiful Italian tradition, the Garibaldian tradition which makes us shoulder our rifles and fight whenever there is an oppressor to combat, a right to vindicate, a good cause to defend, even outside the confines of our own country, too narrow for our thirst for justice. We were once the knights-errant of the ideal, the heroic Don Quixotes of the nations, and our Dulcinea was called Justice. From the plains of the Rio Grande and Montevideo to Poland, Greece, the Vosges, Candia, Cuba, Albania, in every part of the world, the gentle Latin blood had watered the earth with a beneficent rain of generosity, in the beauty of a sacrifice which asked for no reward.

“This is the true, the great, the noble, the holy Italian Nationalism to which we should have always clung. Six months ago we had the superb pride of being able to say: ‘We have never oppressed anybody. On the contrary, we have given the flower of our youth to break the chains of the oppressor in other lands.’

“And now we kill, we rob, we murder, like the worst of them. We applaud a rapacious conquest, an iniquity which masks itself in the name of patriotism.”

With the “fatalità storica” claim of Signor Giolitti I need not deal. A more serious reason for the adventure, though it is seldom mentioned, was

the low esteem in which the Italians are held by the natives all over northern Africa. The warlike Nationalist newspaper correspondents who visited Tripolitania before the war wrote violent letters home about the scant courtesy with which they were treated. One of them complains that at the Custom-house, at the Castello, and in all the public offices, the Italian was made to wait last. The Englishman, the German, and the Frenchman were always attended to first, while "the descendants of the Scipios" were actually classed with the Greeks, the Spaniards, and the South Americans. It is quite possible that this was one of the unutterable griefs which finally forced Giolitti to take the field. He would make the insolent Arab tremble at the name of Rome.

But why did Italy approve of the Giolittian programme? A variety of reasons might be given. All the so-called "Progressive" parties had grown stale and wearisome to the nation, and had entered upon a process of slow decay. The war quickened this process, and the people cheered the war because it had come as a relief to them after ten years of class friction and general strikes and sectional legislation.

It must be admitted that in most nations we find the same phenomenon. There is a swing of the pendulum from peace to war, from Gladstone to Joseph Chamberlain, from Joseph Chamberlain to Lloyd George. And, moreover, artistic nations, which are regarded by the world as nothing more than picture galleries and playgrounds for jaded tourists, have moments of revolt. They are overmastered from time to time by a fierce desire to show mankind that they are not all born to be Cook's

guides. It was a rebellious mood of this kind that drove Japan into the Russian War. But (and this is a much more apposite example) it was also such a mood that drove Greece into her last ludicrous war with Turkey.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BANCO DI ROMA

I MUST admit that behind this conflict are a great many interests. It is not the work of a clique. Or, perhaps, I should say that it is the work of one clique which has "roped in" a great number of other cliques. It may even be called a national war. There was a general disposition among civilians to make the Government employ the fleet and army in some brilliant way. The great economic and financial prosperity of northern Italy since 1900 made a large section of the nation anxious for the Government to assert itself. Thus Italy may be said to have been ripe for an adventure. And in Tripoli, the conditions for a successful and not too dangerous adventure seemed ideal. In Tripoli, too, the Italian Government had at its disposal a financial institution corresponding to the Russo-Chinese Bank in Manchuria and the Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas in Morocco. Here, as elsewhere, financial interests supply the key to the situation. Here, as elsewhere, we come on the trail of the concessionaire and the financier, so familiar in all recent wars.

The institution to which I refer was of course the Banco di Roma, a vast credit concern with a paid-up capital of over £4,000,000, to which a further £2,000,000 are soon to be added by the absorption of a Ligurian Bank. For many years past the Banco



di Roma has been pacifically penetrating Tripoli. It acquired enormous tracts of land ; it established or financed corn mills and other industrial undertakings ; it prospected for phosphates and minerals. The director of the Bank was a very able business man,—Signor Pacelli, a friend of Baron Sonnino, the well-known Conservative leader and proprietor of an ultra-Catholic and ultra-jingoistic newspaper, the “*Giornale d’ Italia.*” Signor Pacelli has friends in every camp. He has friends even in the Government, for some members of the present Cabinet are financially interested in the Bank. The Italians bitterly complained of the obstacles thrown in its way by the Turks, but personally I cannot sympathise very much with the Italians in this matter, since the object of the Bank was undoubtedly to sap Turkish rule in Tripolitania and pave the way for the entry of the Italians.

The Cecil Rhodes of Tripolitania was, however, a subordinate of Signor Pacelli. He was a banker called Bresciani, whom we first meet with in Massaua. Having failed to make a fortune in Italy’s only colony, Bresciani returned to Rome, where he was warmly recommended to the Banco di Roma as a suitable person for establishing new branches in Tunisia and Tripolitania. Signor Bresciani visited both countries and brought back a report to the directors of the Bank, who at once entrusted him with the work of opening a branch in Tripoli. Bresciani therefore returned to Tripoli, and having obtained the permission of the Vali, he did open the establishment which has been to some extent the cause of the present war. Though the Turks could not prevent the bank from being opened, they were not favourable to it, as they were aware from the

first that it was only an instrument of "peaceful penetration," and would be followed in due course by battleships and Bersaglieri. Signor Bresciani did little or no business, but, at all events, he bought off all his enemies among the Turks and Arabs by means of monthly salaries and promises of employment, when he had once got started. To the unpaid, impoverished Turkish functionary of Hamidian days the Bank came as a veritable godsend, but it was rather a source of expense to Italy.

There is no doubt that it enjoyed the assistance of the Italian Government. When he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Signor Tittoni had frequently denied that he had any interest in the Bank or any intention to acquire Tripolitania, but one assertion was probably as false as the other. Tittoni's own brother is Vice-President of the Bank, and if that institution had had only its own resources to draw upon, it would have been bankrupt long ago. But the Government, that is, the unfortunate, overtaxed Italian people, were behind it.

Various scandals indicated clearly the connection between the Bank and the Government. One was the granting to the Benghazi and Tripoli branches of the privilege of issuing postal orders in competition with the local Italian post-offices !

It was decidedly lucky for the Banco di Roma that it had the Italian Treasury behind it, for all its business speculations turned out badly, and in this way it must have lost several millions. Then, the *impresa diplomatica di penetrazione* (diplomatic work of penetration) cost an enormous amount of money, but this was directly met, of course, by the Government. However, "work of penetration" is an elastic term, and I dare say many people feathered

their nests by means of it and at the expense of the Italian taxpayer.

Meanwhile the fact that it was a kind of Government department instead of a commercial house made the place impossible from a business point of view. If you went thither to get a draft cashed or to get a bank-note changed, you found yourself in the presence, not of ordinary bank clerks, but of budding diplomatists who seemed to consider it necessary to keep you waiting a considerable time before they condescended to notice your presence at all. And, naturally, the Bank suffered on its business side. Its solicitor is said to have once confessed that "the books were in such a state of confusion that he defied the best book-keeper in the world to make head or tail of them."

Some shareholders, afraid that the institution would go to pieces, insisted from time to time on a reorganisation of the personnel in Tripoli. As a result of these complaints, the inspectors-general of the Bank came from Rome in May, 1911, in order to investigate matters ; but just at that time Tripoli happened to be also invaded by a party of jingoist Italian journalists come *per intraprendere la campagna in favore dell' occupazione* (to open the campaign in favour of the occupation). The local director of the Bank accordingly made his excuses to the inspectors, saying that he really had to attend to the newspapermen first. The inspectors acknowledged the justice of his excuse and returned to Rome without having examined his books.

How the Bank of Rome in Tripoli distributed the money which it spent in the work of "peaceful penetration" it is not easy to see. It has not many "bought" Arab chiefs to show for its huge ex-



penditure. Prince Hassuna Karamanli is practically its only acquisition, and he went comparatively cheap—4000 lire a month.

Of course, it made a pretence of employing itself very diligently in legitimate business. It bought skins, ostrich feathers, eggs; but it knew so little about affairs that it often sold those articles at a lower price than it had paid for them. For example, it purchased horses for 40,000 lire, and sold them in Italy for 25,000.

It owns an enormous Esparto Grass mill, the most colossal building in all Tripolitania. It is part-proprietor with a Signor Baldari of an oil and soap factory, and if this does pay, its success is solely due to the activity of Baldari. It is proprietor of a sponge factory, which flooded the market with sponges, but had a formidable competitor in an English Sponge Trust. Now that Tripolitania is part of Italy,<sup>1</sup> however, there will probably be protection for Signor Bresciani's sponges, and the intruding English article will be kept out by a tariff barrier. It has also an ice factory, but the local demand for ice is so small that the enterprise is not a success. It established electric light works, but the Turks would not let it import dynamos, because they were, or pretended to be, convinced that dynamo was only an abbreviation of the word dynamite. It started a steamship line with two vessels, for which it got a Government subsidy of 190,000 lire a year.

Then the Bank lost an immense amount of money on the building of a flour-mill near Benghazi at a cost of 1,800,000 lire. The building operations should, at most, have cost no more than 300,000 lire.

Beginning work with a plethora of employees, the mill found that it had no more than five or six

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* General Caneva's proclamations *passim*.



bags of wheat to grind per day. Recommencing, moreover, its old policy of playing off one nation against another, the Sublime Porte had granted to a young German farming expert, Herr von Lochow, a large tract of land near Benghazi, and somehow or other, this concession proved very detrimental to the Bank's expensive flour-mill.

No wonder that Signor Bresciani began to long for war and to move heaven and earth in order to bring it speedily. For the Bank it was a question of war or bankruptcy ; and now that war has come the mill is very busy of course, as it grinds all the flour used by the soldiers. This, however, is a transitory business and the time will probably come when it will have to revert to its five or six bags a day.

A deputy, Signor Caetani, has even expressed a doubt in the Chamber as to whether those five or six bags will come in future from Tripolitania. He thinks that they will come from Odessa ! But surely this mill might just as well have been built in Apulia or Calabria where it would at least have given employment to Italians.

The Banco di Roma was much displeased with the Ottoman Government because that Government refused to grant it any monopolist concessions. To crown all, a German financial syndicate, headed by Herren Weickert and Encke, established in Tripoli a banking concern whose operations within a short time exceeded even those of the Banco di Roma. Signor Pacelli found himself very soon in difficulties. Clearly it was time to act. It was time for Signor Giolitti to declare that "civilization" must be extended to Tripolitania.

The last straw so far as Italy's patience was concerned, was the Banco di Roma's ruinous speculations

in real estate. Always believing that the Italian occupation was at hand, the Bank had, since the beginning, bought up vast tracts of land in Tripolitania and in Cyrenaica, but especially in Cyrenaica. For this land it always paid at a very high rate.

At the beginning of the year 1911, when serious doubts were entertained of the conquest ever coming off, a large portion of the Bank's Cyrenaica land, bought at 10 lire, was sold at the ridiculous price of 2 lire. The loss, of course, was heavy.

The occupation saved the Bank from a disaster which could not have been otherwise delayed, and since it has in its possession nearly all the reclaimable land in Tripoli it is evident that its gains will be colossal and that those gains will save the situation so far as it is concerned.

The famous Caneva decree, which seemed to be intended to protect the natives against vampire land speculators, is only a fiction. It is well known in Tripoli that the Banco di Roma purchased years ago the greater part of the reclaimable land in Tripolitania. By sanctioning those acquisitions, the Caneva decree will enable the Bank to compel the Government to buy in the near future, and at whatever price and on whatever conditions the Bank demands, the lands which private speculators will wish to get rid of owing to the fact that they are unsuitable for cultivation. At first sight the decree has the appearance of being directed against speculators, but it is not so directed. To those living in Tripoli it is not difficult to discover the real aim and scope of this edict.

I have told how Signor Bresciani succeeded in the great work which the Bank entrusted him with when it originally sent him to open a branch in Tripolitania. That work was to drag Italy into the vilayet, so that

the Italian name should serve as the instrument of his speculations, that the Italian flag should be his best commercial asset, and that any Italian who criticised his enterprise would only expose himself to the danger of being mobbed, spat upon, and denounced as "unpatriotic."

Bresciani was the promoter of the Tripoli enterprise. At present he is practically the autocrat of the situation. The handful of his countrymen who supported him in his business operations now enjoy an unlimited credit at the Bank. Prominent among those lucky ones are Signores Baldari and Belli. Hence the common saying in Tripoli that Tripolitania is ruled by the three B's—Bresciani, Baldari, and Belli.

These men, or the Bank which they represent, have had a monopoly of all Governmental work since the war began. They supplied the rafts and bridges used for the disembarkation of the troops, the animals, the food, the war material. They constructed barracks for the soldiers.

To them or to the Bank every kind of contract is given—contracts for the supply of furniture, meat, flour, wheat, ice; in short, for all the innumerable things required by an enormous number of soldiers, 45,000 of whom are in Tripoli alone.

Several independent Italian business men offered to do the work, but were refused, and the refusal was accompanied by the explicit statement that the Banco di Roma supplied everything which the army or navy or the civil Government required. They repeated their offer, pointing out, at the same time, that they would undertake to do the work cheaper. The answer was always the same: "*Non importa. Ciò non ci commuove*" (No matter. That won't have any influence on us).

## CHAPTER III

### ITALY, GERMANY, ENGLAND AND TURKEY

It now seems clear that the Italian swoop on Tripoli was partly due to a fear that in possible re-arrangements of African colonies due to the Franco-German discussions regarding Morocco, France might have cheerfully invited Germany to compensate herself for her failure to get Agadir by the simple process of annexing Tripoli. Tripolitania was not, of course, France's to give, but really great Powers have sometimes this off-hand and generous way with them when other people's property is in question.

It must, indeed, be admitted that during the Hamidian *régime* Tripoli was regarded by the Powers almost as a sort of No Man's Land which anybody was entitled to annex, and that each of them was jealous of the others on account of it. Until the Anglo-French entente was concluded France dreaded an English seizure of Tripoli; and at the same time Italy suspected France of planning an eastward march from Tunisia.

French books and newspaper articles were full of references to England's dishonourable intentions with regard to the Gulf of Bomba, a Tripolitan port within a day's journey of the Egyptian frontier and evidently intended by nature for a great naval station, an off-set to Bizerta, a half-way house between Malta and Alexandria. It was stated again and again by



responsible French writers that the British Fleet had already contracted the habit of using the Gulf of Bomba as a convenient station for months at a time.

The *Entente Cordiale* put an end to all the French suspicions of Albion, so that nothing was left save the Italian suspicions of France. Italy felt sure that the conquerors of Tunis would also attempt to conquer Tripoli. Consequently she made desperate efforts to exclude from Tripolitania all commerce which was not Italian. She did not want any people save the Italians to sell the Tripolitan Turks or Arabs anything at all. She was even opposed to any but Italian missionaries trying to convert the natives of Tripoli. The French Catholic mission schools, which were subsidised by the Quai d'Orsay, excited her darkest suspicions, and she tried to drive out the French Marist Brothers and the French Sisters of St. Joseph. Had she possessed any influence with the Vatican she would have tried to make the Pope "move on" these Religious to some other part of the world, but not possessing any such handle she erected some years ago a great laical *scuola* for boys which cost her an enormous sum of money to start with, and the upkeep of which has since cost her 80,000 francs a year. The work of the *Alliance Française* also made the Italians suspicious. To counteract it, the Italian professors taught their pupils not only to love the Italian language and the Roman history, but also to hate France and the French. Italian teachers at Homs made it a rule to pour contempt on anything written in the French language. In the anti-French campaign the Italians had a great advantage, for the only foreign language understood in Tripolitania is the Italian language,

and Italian newspapers are practically the only newspapers which are read in the vilayet. Now, these Italian, and particularly the Sicilian, papers have distinguished themselves by a particular animosity against anything that looked like French encroachment on Tripoli. They even attacked French archæologists who had obtained permission to examine the Roman ruins scattered throughout the vilayet. They feared that those archæologists were military agents, precursors of a Gallic invasion—spies, in short. They feared that, because they knew that all their own “scientific,” “archæological,” and “commercial” missions were made up of spies.

But Italy was afraid not only of France. She was also afraid of the English. At least, she feared that we were about to obtain in the vilayet some commercial interests which would make us inclined—not, of course, to take the country ; that was out of the question—but to oppose any disturbance of the *status quo*. Some British subjects had on foot quite recently a scheme for constructing a harbour in Tripoli ; the Turks were, for obvious reasons, extremely favourable to that scheme ; but the Italians were not inclined to wait until it had matured. Indeed, the “Mattino” of Naples actually attacked England some weeks ago, and declared that she, England, criticised the Italian army in Tripoli because she had wanted to “grab” the vilayet herself.

But, of course, it was Germany who was the great bugbear. It has been said, in fact, and with a good deal of truth, that Germany's abrupt despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir led directly to Italy's abrupt descent on Tripoli. In the chapter dealing with the Banco di Roma I have pointed out how the Sublime Porte showed especial favour to German enterprises ;

how it granted to Herr von Lochow one large tract of land near Benghazi and another large tract near Tripoli; how one of those concessions proved very detrimental to an Italian flour-mill; how a German financial syndicate headed by Herren Weickert and Encke established in Tripoli a banking concern whose operations exceeded, within a short time, even those of the Banco di Roma itself.

Whether Italy was really afraid of a German *coup*, or whether she only pretended to be afraid of it in order to work on that morbid dread of Germany which has been the distinguishing feature of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy, this will not be known for a long time, will perhaps never be known. But even the Socialist "Avanti" admits that "at that moment (September, 1911) somebody circulated a rumour of possible action by another Power at Marsa-Tobruk; and it was indubitably Italy's fear of such action being taken that precipitated events and hastened our disembarkation on that coast. Indeed the very first troops sent from Genoa were destined for Tobruk."

I do not believe, however, that Germany ever nursed any designs on Tripolitania or on any part of it. Her acquisition of a port there, so near Tunis and Egypt, would be a *casus belli* with both France and England. That the Germans afterwards manifested a good deal of dislike for the Italians was not because of thwarted territorial ambitions. It was because of the false position in which Germany was placed *vis-à-vis* of her Ottoman *protégé* owing to the hasty action of Italy. And it was also, I know, because of sincere and manly indignation with the Sicilians for their slaughter of the innocent oasis Arabs towards the end of October. Von Gottberg, the "Lokal-Anzeiger"



correspondent, began at first to write in a pro-Italian vein, but a few weeks' experience of Italian methods of warfare made him first criticise, and then hand back his papers.

I am doubtful if even Italy herself seriously believed that Germany would attempt to seize Tobruk. But it is not at all impossible that Italy succeeded in frightening Sir Edward Grey with this bogey and in thus securing his assent to the Italian raid. In the March number of the "Fortnightly Review" there is an evidently inspired article on "Lord Kitchener in Egypt," wherein we are told how Sir Edward Grey was hoodwinked.

"When events in Morocco," says the writer of the article, "were beginning (last summer) to point to Germany's failure to obtain any footing in that country, there was some reason to suppose that the Kaiser would turn his attention to Tripoli. The Italians therefore felt that if the desired territory was not to slip from their grasp they must seize upon it without delay.

"Preparations for war were hurriedly made, and already in the early summer of last year the plans were formulated. The events of July showed the Italian statesmen very clearly that the strong policy of England and France would require all the attention of Austria and Germany for the next few months, and that the moment was thus opportune for a European interference. Neither France nor Germany were likely to worry them. England, however, had to be reckoned with, for though our attention was fully occupied in Europe, it lay in our power to make the Tripoli expedition a most hazardous affair simply by permitting the



Turks to march through Egypt to the seat of hostilities. Before the projected expedition could be launched, therefore, it was necessary for Italy to ascertain the attitude of England and to obtain her promise to hold Egypt neutral. This promise however, could not be lightly given, for it might lead to grave complications with the Porte. Egypt is a vassal of Turkey, and is under the obligation to provide the suzerain State with an unlimited number of troops should she require them; and had the British not been the occupying Power, the Nile Valley would certainly have formed the Turkish base. England, therefore, had to be consulted with regard to Tripoli, and her attitude to Italy recognised as absolutely friendly before war could be declared."

The writer puts this as an inference from what happened immediately afterwards, but it looks uncommonly like an admission of Sir Edward Grey's complicity in the Tripoli raid.

"No public statement," the same writer proceeds, "has yet been made which would indicate that the British Government made any agreement with Italy last summer; but there is very little doubt that some sort of understanding was arrived at. England, it would seem probable, consented to prevent Turkish troops from entering Tripoli via Egypt, and so far as possible to put a stop to all gun-running or other belligerent enterprises. She appears to have undertaken to keep Egypt absolutely neutral and to allow the Porte no assistance from its vassal. The granting of these concessions to Italy is clearly indicated by our present actions in Egypt, which, as will be related

below, are of a very deliberate nature ; while the despatch of Lord Kitchener to Cairo and the outbreak of hostilities as soon as he had arrived in his new abode can hardly be attributed to mere coincidence. It seems quite evident that our attitude to Italy was as follows : ' Since it appears to be inevitable,' said we, ' that some European Power will pounce upon Tripoli, we in Egypt much prefer you as our neighbours to, say, the Germans ; and though we do not wish to offend Turkey by actively taking your part, we will show our friendliness to you by holding Egypt neutral. To do this, however, we shall require to send a very strong man to Cairo, and you must promise not to declare war until he has arrived there. In return for our kindness we shall expect you to play a friendly part towards us in the event of a European conflagration.' "

Lord Kitchener's business in Cairo was therefore to prevent any passage of Ottoman troops through Egypt, or any assistance being given by the Mohammedans on the Nile to the Mohammedans in Tripolitania.

Lord Kitchener's first work was to erect a series of forts along the Eastern desert line of the Suez Canal to deal with the possible danger of an Ottoman army demanding passage through the Nile Valley on its way to Cyrenaica.

The writer of the article cannot refrain from boasting of the successive tricks played by his hero on the credulity of Moslem opinion at Cairo and elsewhere among those he was sent to cajole into an acceptance of the wholly unwelcome neutrality. According to him, Lord Kitchener on his arrival

posed not only as the friend of Islâm, but also of the Turks, sympathised with the patriotic plans of assisting them with men and money, but found each attempt in turn beset with so many difficulties as to amount to impossibility. Where cajolery would not serve, hints were thrown out of a severer nature, of the possible necessity imposed on him by his Government in case of non-compliance with British policy of increasing the army of occupation, perhaps even of annexation. As a first measure the independent Press was at once gagged, and the Nationalist organ, the "Alam," which persisted in giving frontier news and inciting to a disregard of the neutrality, found its doors closed.

It is true that Sir Edward Grey denied in the House of Commons that he knew of "the declaration of war" until just before it was made. But it seems impossible that he knew nothing, through the British Ambassador in Rome, of the Italian plans to invade and seize the North African vilayet. Besides, his amiability towards Italy is rather suspicious. When one member of the Triplice annexed two Turkish provinces which she had long administered, and which had practically become part of her territory, Sir Edward Grey raised a furious protest and nearly brought about a European war. When another member of the Triplice suddenly invaded an African vilayet to which she had no claim whatever, Sir Edward Grey made no protest. Our Foreign Office seems, indeed, to be actually friendly towards the Italians, for, when questioned in the House of Commons, as to the right of General Caneva to treat the oasis Arabs as traitors, it declared that the Italian reprisals were covered by the acknowledged rules of civilised war—a statement contrary to fact and contrary (as

Mr. E. N. Bennett points out in his book on Tripoli to the declaration of Lord Derby at the Brussels Conference on the Rules of Military Warfare, in 1874. The Italians admit that the British Foreign Office has been most friendly to them all along, and the best-informed Italian newspapers published in October last a statement to the effect that, in a communication to the home Government, Lord Kitchener deplored the critical attitude of the British Press towards the Italians in Tripolitania owing to its unsettling effect on the minds of the Egyptians.

As a matter of fact, the friendliness of the British Government towards the Tripoli raid *has* had an effect on certain sections of the British Press, more or less in touch with the Foreign Office. Take, for instance, "The Times," in its reference to the crushing Italian defeat at Bir Tobras. Discussing that disastrous retreat and the failure of another forward movement on the part of General Caneva, "The Times" correspondent says :

"The Arab sees all this, sees that the Italian positions are no further advanced than they were a month ago, and that Italian troops have twice retired upon their base after making a temporary forward movement. He does not see that *the Italians are being cautious and leisurely of set purpose.*"

This last sentence betrays, of course, an evident bias, for Colonel Fara lost his way in the desert, and his retreat from Bir Tobras ended in a complete *débâcle*, the desert being strewn with the arms and equipment of his runaway Bersaglieri. It is to this bias that we must look for an explanation of "The Times'" pose of coolness, moderation, and im-



partiality with regard to the oasis massacres of October 23rd-27th.

The British Government and, to some extent, a portion of the British Press seem to have been petrified into silence by a bogey-man story of German designs. The Nationalist and financial elements interested in the war seem to have been frightened by the same story. Whether a Machiavellian Government invented it and then circulated it adroitly among these elements so as to prepare the proper atmosphere for the adventure, or whether the Nationalists and financiers first evolved the story and then believed it themselves, is a matter which I shall leave to the future historian.

I shall now say a few words on the position of Turkey in this matter.

In Abd-ul-Hamid's time nobody seems, when the question of Tripoli was discussed, to have regarded Turkey at all. She had only held the province for a quarter of a century. Unable to develop it, she had hermetically sealed it; and, owing to its distance from Turkey, to its isolation between European possessions, and to Turkey's lack of a navy, this last African vilayet of the Sublime Porte was regarded as already, for all practical purposes, lost to Constantinople. The only question seemed to be—who was going to get it?

The Young Turk Revolution in Constantinople did not improve matters so far as the Turks were concerned. If anything it made them worse. The liberal peoples of Europe became sympathetic, but the Chancelleries were anything but enthusiastic.

The Powers felt as justly irritated with the Sick Man of Europe as greedy heirs might feel with a rich uncle who, after making a will in their favour, going

mad, and falling sick to the point of death, suddenly recovered his health and the use of his reason. If Abd-ul-Hamid had remained supreme, the break-up of Turkey was so certain that her heirs could await with patience that cheerful event. But once she showed signs of rejuvenation, and wanted to reorganise her army and navy, the Powers got visibly distressed. Austria-Hungary grabbed Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bulgaria seized a Turkish railway and proclaimed her independence; Greece tried to collar Crete; Italy became more and more insistent about her "claims" in Tripoli.

Why Italy did not act when Austria-Hungary acted needs some explaining. Did Sir Edward Grey tell her that her doing so would take the edge off his attack on Baron von Aehrenthal? Or had she miscalculated, expecting that the Stamboul Revolution would end in the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire? If she took the latter point of view she quickly saw her mistake, for it soon became apparent that, under the new *régime*, Turkey was likely to get stronger rather than weaker. An able and well-educated soldier, Mahmud Shefket Pasha, was rapidly reorganising the army and re-arming her fortresses. He had first to begin with Constantinople. Then he went on to Albania and Arabia. In a short time he would come to Tripoli, and once he had filled that vilayet with good Turkish troops and organised some scheme of harbour defence, Italy's chances would be gone forever.

Mahmud Shefket Pasha has been bitterly criticised for not having taken some steps to protect Tripoli against the Italian attack which had so often been spoken of. Perhaps it would have been difficult for him to have put the vilayet in a thoroughly good

state of defence in the limited time at his disposal, for he had first of all to protect Constantinople itself against an attack by the Bulgarians. He had only a very limited amount of money to spend, and all this money was required for the reorganisation of the European army of the Sultan, for the purchase of arms and ammunition, and for the buying of new guns, mines, etc., for the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. The troubles in Albania and Arabia and the expenses which their suppression entailed postponed still further the military reorganisation of Tripolitania. The thing could not be done. Time, money, men were all lacking.

But if Shefket Pasha could not do anything to strengthen Tripoli, he might, at all events, have omitted to weaken that vilayet. He did weaken it, however, by withdrawing the bulk of the Tripoli garrison for service in Arabia. His object in taking the Tripoli soldiers in preference to the soldiers of Constantinople or Adrianople was because the Tripoli troops spoke Arabic and would be better able to campaign, therefore, in Arabia. Not only did he do this, but he withdrew further detachments of troops from Tripoli to fill up certain *cadres* in the European garrisons.

Before taking these fatal steps he asked the Premier, Hakki Bey, if he could guarantee the absence of any hostile design against Tripoli on the part of Italy. Now, Hakki Bey is a soft, pleasant, very sociable man who, among many other languages, speaks Italian, French, and English. He had been in Italy as ambassador, was very fond of the Italians, and had been quite captivated by Signor Tittoni. His wife is an Italian, he has many personal friends in Italy, and until September last he had been firmly



persuaded that Italy would never attack Tripoli. He accordingly gave the Minister for War the fatal guarantee, and the troops were withdrawn. The result was that in October last, when the Italian raid took place, the strength of the garrison in Tripoli was lower than it had been even during the worst days of Abd-ul-Hamid, lower than it had ever been since the Turkish conquest.

Not only were the soldiers removed. A good military leader was also recalled. This was the Vali, a strong and brave man, Marshal Ibrahim Pasha, who would undoubtedly be an ugly customer to tackle. Signor Galli, the Italian Consul, intrigued to have this stubborn old soldier removed at all costs. Galli had no difficulty in exciting against the Vali all the local Consuls, mainly a weak-minded crew of diplomatic derelicts, who were originally sent to Tripoli as to a quiet backwater out of harm's way by their respective Governments. Galli also intrigued against Ibrahim Pasha both at Rome and Constantinople, and finally this strong man was recalled. In his place was left Munir Pasha, a feeble old gentleman with no military knowledge whatever. Had Ibrahim remained, it is almost certain that he would have re-entered the town between the bombardment on October 3rd and the arrival of the army on October 11th, in which case he could probably have cut to pieces the 1800 sailors who held the outpost line on the fringe of the oasis.

Other reasons induced Italy to strike when she did. Turkey had concluded in England a contract for the construction of a powerful fleet, and had engaged a British Admiral for the reorganisation of her navy. In the eyes of Italy these were very serious matters, for, even with a small navy, a few torpedo-boats, and



a few hundred well-trained naval officers Turkey might be able to do fearful damage to Italian commerce in case of war. From Preveza, which is at the south of Epirus and within sight of Italy, a few good Turkish torpedo-boats could hold up all the Italian merchantmen in the Adriatic; while Italy's colony on the western side of the Red Sea could easily be raided from Arabia on the east. Let us remember that it took Italy three and a half weeks after the delivery of the ultimatum before she had completed the disembarkation of all her troops in Tripoli. Let us remember how slowly and timidly the transports crept south in complete darkness and in such a state of "nerves" that there were panics among the soldiers several times. When we remember these things we can well understand how fearful the Italians were of the Ottoman fleet being increased by the addition of a single unit.

All these things, taken in conjunction with the Morocco negotiations—negotiations which might easily end in Germany getting a foothold in Tripolitania by way of compensation for fancied losses elsewhere—all these things decided Italy to take the brusque course which she actually took. That she did not act too quickly from her own point of view is shown by the fact that on the very day after hostilities were declared, several Turkish torpedo-boats had been completed in English ship-building yards. Had the war been postponed, these boats would have now been in the hands of the Turks. As it is, the British authorities have temporarily taken possession of them.

Another thing that alarmed Italy was a Turkish proposal to form a sort of great territorial army among the Arab tribes in Tripolitania. Italy had evidently

got to strike before this measure was carried into execution, but it was rather inconsistent of her afterwards to say that she had only come to take the Turkish yoke off the necks of the Arabs.

Why Italy ever coveted Tripoli at all is difficult to explain. Her "claims" were that, owing to the proximity of the vilayet to her southern coast, she would be seriously weakened and menaced from a naval point of view in case Tripoli fell into the hands of some other Power.

Her sentimental claim on the vilayet because it is filled with Roman remains and she is the heir of the Scipios need not be taken seriously, for there are Roman remains in many parts of Europe. It must be admitted that Italy has all the exiguous foreign trade of the vilayet; that most of the Europeans there are Italian subjects; and that, next to Arabic, the Italian language is the most spoken in Tripolitania—in fact, it is the only European language spoken there. Still other reasons are the desire of the army chiefs to wipe out the shame of Adowa, the desire of the monarchists to raise the prestige of the ruling dynasty by some great conquest, the desire of the Government to turn the attention of Italians away from troublesome questions of domestic politics.

## CHAPTER IV

### IS TRIPOLI WORTH THE TROUBLE?

I HAVE endeavoured to show the skill with which the Italians attained their object. By a wonderful series of intrigues and calculations they succeeded in their immediate aim, that is in attacking Tripoli when the garrison there was at its weakest, and in bamboozling the Powers and especially England into keeping silent. In Italy itself the *litterati*, the journalists, the military men, the financiers, the Conservatives, were all "roped in." Even the Socialists were, many of them, gained over by the introduction of a Universal Suffrage Bill. The Socialists did not want to embarrass the Government, as if that Government fell it would be succeeded by a Conservative Government and the Suffrage Bill would be lost. The Italian Socialists were thus to some extent in the position of the Liberals, and even of the Irish Nationalists, in the British Parliament last October. They were too anxious not to embarrass the Government.

From the point of view of high international morality, we need not speak of this raid. International morality was bad enough before, but Italy's action in Tripoli has made it worse, and Europe may yet have good cause to deplore this cynical breach of all the diplomatic conventions.

But even from the purely material point of view,

this raid was a mistake. Practically all the impartial authorities who have examined Tripolitania say that it is not worth the expenditure of a single ten-inch shell. Were I to quote all that has been said on this subject, I should never finish this chapter. But I shall briefly say that if Tripoli were very valuable, the French, who have examined it carefully, would long ago have been anxious to secure it.

M. de Mathusieulx, a French explorer, thinks that even in the time of the Romans, Tripoli cannot have been much more than it is to-day, an enormous waste of bare rock and sand.

Colonel Monteil, another French explorer, said in 1893, that Tripolitania will be of little use to the Italians, and that if they get it, they will be sadly disillusioned.

M. Grossi, a professor at the Diplomatic School attached to the University of Rome, published in 1905 a pamphlet entitled "Tripolitania and Italy," in which he said that from an agricultural point of view Tripolitania is useless and, from a commercial point of view, very nearly useless owing to the fact that the few caravans which it used to get from Lake Tchad have now been diverted to Egypt and Tunis.

But the best proof I can give that Tripolitania is useless, is the fact that when the Jewish Territorial Organization was granted permission to settle in the province they declined the offer with thanks, after a most careful investigation of the whole vilayet. Dr. Gregory was one of the five gentlemen who conducted the investigation. Among the others were Mr. M. B. Duff, an engineer with an expert knowledge of water supply, and Dr. Trotter, a graduate in agriculture at Edinburgh who had farmed in the



Sudan. The results of the investigation were very disappointing. "Though Cyrenaica," says Dr. Gregory, "is doubtless the most fertile province of Tripoli, we had reluctantly to report that the country, owing to its large area of useless land and its insufficient and uncertain water-supply, was quite unsuitable for extensive agricultural colonies."

Dr. Adolph Vischer is equally pessimistic. He says that calculations based on the mineral wealth of the soil have no solid basis, and he quotes Professor Gregory and M. Pervinqui re as being definitively incredulous on the question of mineral deposits either in Tripolitania or in Cyrenaica. He does not think that artesian wells would be much good. When he was in Tripoli last year he met a Frenchman who had got a concession for the construction of an artesian well beyond the Meshia (desert), but who abandoned the work after sinking the shaft to a depth of 240 feet without finding any trace of water.

Naturally, however, the Italians are very optimistic about the future of Tripoli. They assert that in the time of the Romans Tripolitania was very fertile, and think that, with an intelligent system of public works and colonisation, this fertility can be restored. But there are in Tripolitania only three zones that have been cultivated, firstly the string of maritime oases stretching a hundred miles or so along the coast ; secondly the sporadic patches of olive plantations which are to be found in the valleys on the northern fringe of the mountains and the high plateaux. Finally, very far in the interior and separated from the coast by interminable rocky solitudes are some tracts of stony land in the valleys of the Soffedjia, Ghirza, Merdoun and Nefed.

The Romans did cultivate these three zones, but

beyond them we find no trace of ancient remains, and an examination of the Roman ruins shows that the level of the land is much the same now as it always was. On this point the testimony of M. de Mathuisieulx leaves no room for doubt and effectually disposes of the theory that a fertile country is covered with a layer of sand which has only to be cleared away in order to restore the land to its former prosperity.

And even if Italy were able, at immense expense, to reclaim some portions of the desert, would it not be better for her to spend that money at home? The preamble of the Annexation Bill sets forth harbours, schools, hospitals, roads and railways as already in course of construction at Tripoli. Would it not have been better to begin with the inhabitants of Sicily, Sardinia and the Basilicata?

The Socialists in Italy are already calling attention to this matter. The "Avanti" asks why Tripoli should get railways before large districts in Italy itself which have been patiently waiting fifty years for them. When the imperialist fever has passed, the deputies for these districts may have trouble in getting re-elected, after all their promises about railway facilities for their constituencies.

In Apulia the peasants are so poor that they cannot buy barrels for their wine, and must actually put it in a hole in the ground-floor, the inner surface of the hole being, of course, treated so as to render it waterproof. Italy has little wealth to fall back on. Her population is too heavily taxed already. In the south she has millions who are as ill-fed and as ill-educated as the Bedouins of Tripolitania. She has a vast population to whom bread and salt are luxuries. She has whole provinces where the illiterates

number 70 per cent of the population. In the villages south of Venice drinking-water is brought in boats owing to the neglect of the authorities to provide water-works. And yet a good irrigation system in that country would cost little and produce good results. In Tripolitania it would cost much and perhaps not succeed.

The Italians think that Tripoli will be a good outlet for their emigrants. But no Italian emigrant will go to Tripoli so long as New York, San Francisco and the Argentine Republic are open to him. The jingoists say that Tripolitania can be made as prosperous as Tunisia, but they forget that though close to one another the two regions are as different as chalk is from cheese, Tunis with Algeria and Morocco being placed by zoological geographers in the same region as Europe, and Tripolitania in the Saharan region. When the Italians took Eritrea and Benadir we heard the same prophecies about those places attracting Italian emigrants. We heard of Italy pouring into those places the "exuberance" of her population. We were to see "*il grandioso fenomeno di una nuova Italia* issuing slowly from the flanks of the great common Mother."

Yet the deputy Luigi Luzzatti now admits that neither Eritrea nor Benadir can ever attract Italian emigrants, "*cosa che molti, anche uomini competenti, immaginavano nelle prime ore dell' entusiasmo e della illusione*" (a thing which even many competent men imagined in the first hours of enthusiasm and illusion).

It will be the same thing with Tripoli. No Italian emigrant will go thither, so long as there is such a place as Chicago.

Why Turkey should feel so "cut up" about the



loss of Tripoli is not at first sight very evident. The vilayet is a drain on her none too abundant resources. Some of the Turkish governors have planted olive trees in the favoured spots, but in spite of this, the Sublime Porte knows perfectly well that there is no future for this country, which the Arab devastations and the parched winds of the desert have for ever ruined from the agricultural and commercial points of view. Despite all this the Turks are intensely sensitive about the possession of Tripoli because this last of their African colonies is their only fulcrum for using on the vast populations of Northern and Central Africa the great lever of religious fanaticism. Formerly the Crescent of Islâm floated on all the Kasbahs of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Then Algeria and Tunisia became French. Morocco became practically French, Egypt practically English. In order to maintain his influence over the innumerable Mohammedan tribes of the Dark Continent, there remained to the Grand Turk only one solitary port of entry, Tripolitania. And whatever the peoples of Europe may think, the Foreign Ministers are most of them pleased that Turkey has lost at any rate the coast-line of Tripolitania. Sir Edward Grey is probably as pleased as Signor Giolitti, for he has been told by his permanent officials of certain underhand tricks which Abd-ul-Hamid was accused of having played in Egypt during the time of Arabi Pasha, and of the manner in which during the Sudanese wars, the Mahdi was able to hypnotise millions of fanatics.

In Central Africa the religion of Mohammed has been spreading like wildfire during the last few decades. It is strongly established in Central Africa, from the Nile to the Niger, from the Atlas to the



Congo. And on all these newly-made believers the Sultan of Stamboul has impressed the fact that he is also the Khalifa, the representative of the Prophet, the religious chief of Islâm. Herein, so thought the Foreign Minister of more than one Great Power—herein lay an element of danger for France, England and the other Powers which have colonies in Africa. The loss of Tripoli by the Turks would, in their opinion, considerably reduce that danger.

But, as Marshal von der Goltz Pasha pointed out in the “*Neue Freie Presse*” of March 10, the Sultan cannot afford to abandon Tripoli, as if he did so, he would be regarded as a traitor to Islâm by all the Arabs. And the diplomatists of France and England had not considered the effect which an Italian defeat in Tripoli would have on their Mohammedan *protégés*, not only in the adjoining territories but all over the world.



## **PART II**

### **THE BOMBARDMENT AND OCCUPATION**





## CHAPTER I

### THE BOMBARDMENT

ON October 3rd the Italian fleet, under the command of Admiral Faravelli, began, at 3.35 p.m., the bombardment of Tripoli. The bombardment continued on the 4th, when the Sultanié and Hamidié batteries were destroyed, and at midday on October 5th the Italian flag was hoisted on Fort Sultanié, the Turkish troops having retired into the interior.

The principal ships which took part in the action were the *Re Umberto*, the *Sicilia*, the *Sardegna*, the *Brin*, the *Emanuele Filiberto* and the *Carlo Alberto*. They were divided into two groups, two divisions of three ships each. The first and strongest group was composed of the *Re Umberto*, the *Sardegna* and the *Sicilia*. On the first-mentioned flew the flag of Admiral Borea-Ricci, commander of the division. The second group was composed mostly of inferior vessels—the *Brin*, the *Emanuele Filiberto* and the *Carlo Alberto*. On the *Brin* was Admiral Faravelli, commander-in-chief of the fleet assembled off Tripoli.

The forts which these vessels were supposed to bombard can be seen by a glance at the map. On the east in the oasis is Fort Hamidié. On the west in the desert is Fort Sultanié. In the centre, that is in the city itself, there is a battery beside the light-house, another on the mole, and also one on the north-west bastion. The *Brin* division was to destroy the

central fortifications. The *Re Umberto* division was to destroy the Sultanié battery. The *Garibaldi* and the *Ferruccio* dismantled the Hamidié battery.

Now as for the strength of the various forts. The mole battery had two Krupp guns of 240 millimetres and five cannon of 320–400 millimetres besides thirteen minor cannon and five howitzers. The north-west bastion contained one Krupp gun of 150–170 and another of 190–210 millimetres. The Lighthouse battery had one Krupp gun of 210 and two others of 170. The Fort Sultanié had five Krupp guns ranging in dimensions from 150 to 240 millimetres.

The central forts were attacked first and the first shot was fired at the red fort on the mole at exactly 3.35 p.m. It was fired by the *Brin* and it hit the exterior surface of the fort, but injured nobody. The second shot was also fired by the *Brin*. When a third shot was fired the lighthouse battery answered for the first time, but the shot did not reach half-way to the ship for which it was intended.

This bombardment—for it cannot be called a duel—was carried on at a distance of only three or four miles and was the tamest affair imaginable. The Italians were so close that they could hardly have missed if they had tried. Consequently they did great damage, knocking down the lighthouse, overturning the guns, and converting the fort into a heap of ruins. The central bastion was quite blown to pieces, the great cupola of reinforced concrete which protected the 240-millimetre guns had disappeared. The lower portion of the masonry in this fort had been painted red, and on this red surface there now showed about half a dozen huge white marks caused by shells. The Turkish transport *Derna* was sunk by the Turks them-



LIGHTHOUSE SMASHED BY SHELLS OF BATTLESHIPS.

*To face p. 48.*

*Photo. by Author.*





selves, who opened the Kingston valve. A wretched little Turkish gunboat called the *Hunter of the Sea* was also sunk by its own crew after they had removed the one or two antiquated little pop-guns which the vessel carried. A number of little sailing-vessels in the harbour were beaten into matchwood by a hail-storm of shells, which might well, one would think, have been saved up for a rainy day.

Until the mole was silenced the *Carlo Alberto* and the *Emanuele Filiberto* made no remark, as they had been told to keep out of range of a certain big gun on the mole which was supposed to be capable of reaching them under favourable circumstances. When the mole ceased to reply these two vessels came into action and rained shells on the north-west bastion and the lighthouse battery, but without eliciting any response.

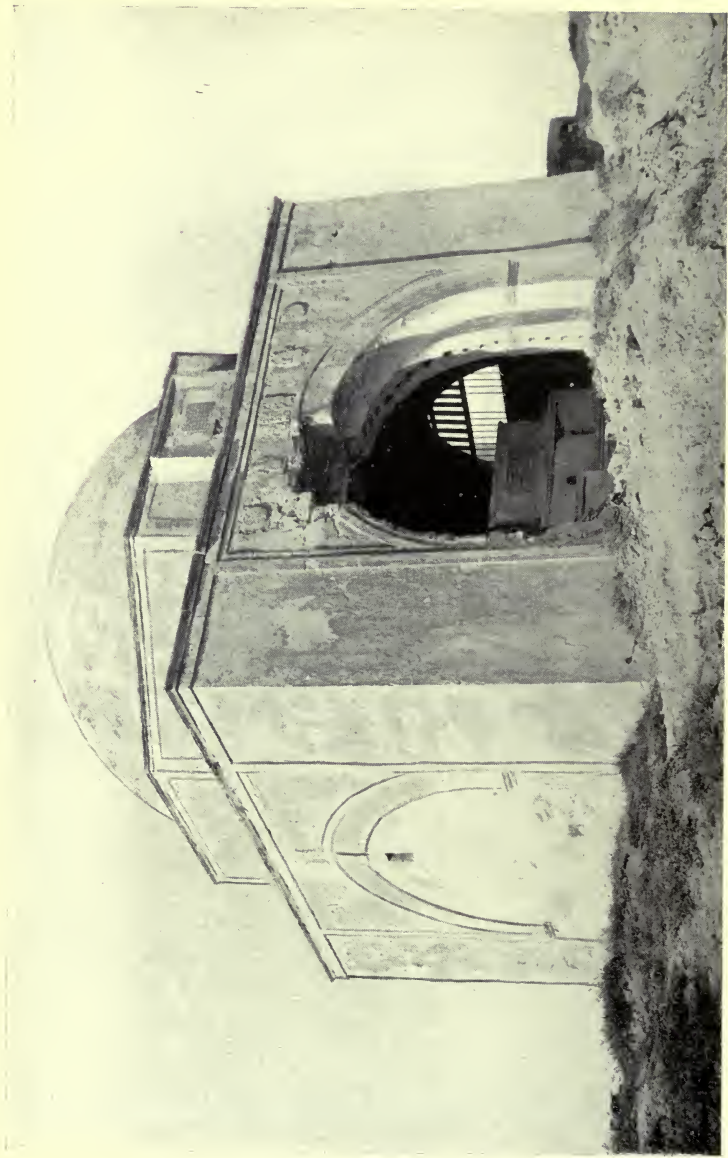
The *Re Umberto* division next proceeded to pound Fort Sultanié. The flagship itself opened fire at a distance of four miles with enormous 522-kilogramme shells. It was followed by the *Sardegna* and the *Sicilia*. For a quarter of an hour the fort did not reply. When it did, the projectile which it sent in the direction of the Italians did not reach half-way to them. The ships fired every minute, raining shells on the forts and moving at a speed of three miles an hour, so that they should not by any chance be hit. But this precaution was unnecessary. The fort could not reach them, though it replied bravely every ten minutes or so until, after being pounded out of shape for half an hour, it ceased to fire. For another half-hour the division defiled slowly in front of the dismantled fort, pouring shells into it, in the hope of eliciting some sort of response. The ships even went to within three thousand yards of the fort, but it

failed to send them any kind of greeting. Nevertheless it was not until six o'clock in the evening that the *Re Umberto* ceased pounding it. Next morning the débris of this fort was found to be on fire. So ended the first day's work. Not a single Turkish shot had reached its destination. There had been very few of them and all had fallen short.

Next day the *Garibaldi*, the *Varese* and the *Ferruccio* continued the dismantlement of Fort Hamidié, a work which they had begun but not completed the day before. An enormous number of expensive shells were poured uselessly and needlessly into this ruined and abandoned battery during the space of half an hour. At the end of that time the fort had ceased to have any resemblance to an artificial work and was simply a heap of battered sand with, here and there, a pathetic gun sticking up out of the wreck as if it wanted to fire at an aeroplane. Then the *Garibaldi* sent ashore two officers and two men to destroy the torpedo-station and any guns that might still have remained intact in the fort.

At this time there was not a Turk in the battery nor ten Turks within a mile of it, nevertheless this sending ashore of a few men was regarded by the Italians as one of the greatest naval feats that had ever been performed, as on a par with Hobson's attempt to bottle up Admiral Cervera's squadron, or the Japanese attempts to bottle up the Russian ships at Port Arthur. One writer calls it "an audacious coup," "a *febbrile* work," "an intrepid act," (*intrepido atto*), a "*coup de main*," and assures us that it was carried out "*con una freddezza ed un coraggio incredibili*" (with incredible coolness and courage). One of the two officers entrusted with this tremendous business was Captain Verri, who had





THE TOMB OF THE KARAMANLIS.



been living in Tripoli before the bombardment under an assumed name and pretending to be an Italian Postal inspector. Being an artillery specialist, he soon rendered the guns useless, secured the sights, and returned safely to the *Garibaldi*. That vessel and the torpedo-boat *Albatross* had, all the time, been sending torrents of shell over his head so as to prevent any attack being made on him by the Turks. One of those shells smashed the tomb of the Karamanli family close by, and exposed the coffins inside. Another shell destroyed a little white marabout among the palm-trees. Verri had found the fort totally wrecked. Amid the ruins lay the mutilated bodies of three Turkish soldiers. As we shall see later, there had been only four soldiers in the fort during the bombardment. Nesciat Bey had sent them there to die and three of them had died.

The *Re Umberto* division steamed down to Fort Sultanié to see if that ruin gave any signs of life. Of course it gave none, though the flagship approached as near as the depth of the water permitted—about a thousand yards. It was still on fire, and, later on, when the flames reached the powder-magazine, it blew up.

On October 5th, the marines landed. First, however, two “expeditions,” as the Italians called them, were sent out—one to the half-submerged *Derna*, another to the Hamidié battery in order to blow it up. The latter expedition was pretty strong and it ran no danger as the Turks were all about ten miles off by this time, nevertheless the Italians had the usual fit of hysterical patriotism. One writer who was on the *Varese* tells us that he and his companions could not take their eyes off the fort. “Our hearts were with our brave comrades.” The blowing up of

the fort was accomplished in the usual way, by means of an electric wire. Unfortunately the landing-party lost their bearings in the cloud of smoke raised by the explosion and the whole fleet was in a terrible state of excitement about them. "That impenetrable smoke," says one author, who was aboard a ship at the time, "that impenetrable smoke seemed to us—though we did not wish to confess it—to be the winding-sheet of our heroes."

But luckily the wind blew the smoke away, whereupon "*un grido di vittoria*" (a cry of victory) rang across the intervening sea. "*Sono salvi tutti*" (All are safe). When this little band of desperate men returned to their vessel, the whole crew welcomed them "*con evviva entusiastica*."

Throughout the following narrative the reader will notice, again and again, these same characteristics in the conduct of the Italians. In playing with their army and fleet they are like children playing with a new toy. They are enchanted, ravished, by the simplest effects. The firing of a ten-inch gun from a ship, four miles out, at a deserted fort situated on the seashore and provided with guns whose range is only one mile, fills them with ecstasy, and they reproduce the photograph of the gunner in their newspapers as that of a "hero."

Unfortunately this childish sensibility and naïveté are sometimes, as we shall see later, accompanied by an amazing carelessness and callousness where human life is concerned.

At 4.30 in the afternoon the sailors landed in two bodies, one party at Fort Sultanié, the other between Fort Sultanié and the city. At five o'clock the Italian tricolour was hoisted over the castle of the Vali in Tripoli itself. There was not the least re-

THE  
GALLERY



WRETCHED TURKISH GUNBOAT "HUNTER OF THE SEA."

*To face p. 52.*





sistance anywhere. The Italians themselves are lost in admiration at the daring and seamanship which they displayed in this attack on Tripoli.

“The bombardment,” cries Signor Bevione, one of their leading writers, “was a marvel of manœuvring and of shooting. The plan, which was elaborated by the Admiral and which results proved to be the best possible plan, was translated into action in a manner that could not have been improved upon. The three divisions manœuvred and fired for three hours before the forts, while mathematically preserving their formation as in a naval review. The accuracy of the shooting is already famous. . . . This record is enough to convince all of the extraordinary efficiency of our fleet.”

And again :

“This is a day which all should bless because it proves the efficiency of the fleet to defend the rights and interests of the country, because it opens the door of Tripolitania, and because it will remain memorable among the natives as a proof of our strength and as the first basis of our prestige.”

The descriptions of the bombardment which have appeared in the Italian Press would be extravagant even if applied to Tsushima or to the terrible naval attacks of the Japanese on Port Arthur. The correspondent of the “Stampa,” who was on board one of the battleships, declared that “the entry into action of the *Re Umberto* division was one of the most solemn spectacles that I have ever seen.”

Now, the ludicrousness of all this will be manifest

when I remind the reader of the following interesting facts :

- (1) There were no Turks in the town. They had all left.
- (2) There were only four artillery-men in each battery, and their duty was to "save the face" of the departed garrison and make a sort of purely formal protest by firing a few shots.
- (3) The forts were, from every point of view, useless. A single vessel could have shelled them from below the horizon. The Italian fleet might have remained invisible while bombarding the wretched place.

Military men of many nations have seen the Tripoli forts, and all of them—all of them, at least, who were non-Italian—laughed loud and long at the sight. M. de Mathuisieulx, a French officer, says of them :

"I do not know what idea can have been in the head of the military engineer who established his forts in a place so open to the sea that one hostile cruiser could pulverize them without being himself perceived."

The German Lieutenant-General von dem Borne, who shows the greatest care not to offend the Italians, cannot, nevertheless, refrain from saying ("Der italienisch-türkische Krieg") that the forts were, when the war broke out, in a "sehr mangelhaften Zustande" (very defective condition).

As for the firing, I have just quoted Signor Bevione as saying that it is already world-famous.

"The city," he declares, "has not been touched



ONE OF THE TURKISH "FORTS." LITTERED WITH ITALIAN SHELLS.





by one shrapnel bullet. The shooting of our ships has been of a miraculous precision."

Now, a naval gunner who cannot hit a fort at a distance of three miles is not much good, especially if he is allowed to waste hundreds of shells. For the Italians did waste hundreds of shells—all sorts of shells: shrapnel, armour-piercing, and percussion.

And, despite what Signor Bevione says, many of these shells flew wide of the mark and killed innocent people in the city. One shell went through the roof of the dragoman to the German Consulate, and, narrowly missing the Consul, who was staying in the house at the time, killed the young wife and two children of the dragoman. So much for the *precisione miracolosa* of the shooting.

It would be more correct to say that the bad shooting of the Italians is world-famous. Mr. E. N. Bennett tells us how he himself saw two Italian war-ships fire sixty-three shots from a distance of 2500 yards at Bou-Kamesch, an old fort near the Tunisian border, on December 31st, without hitting it once, though they tried hard for half an hour. But, of course, the usual lie was wired from Tripoli. It was said that the Turks had fled. As a matter of fact, they had been all the time seated inside the fort laughing at Italian marksmanship.

What a world of difference is there not between this inflated nonsense of the Italian chroniclers and the hard, brief, soldierly letters of Enver Bey, a selection of which is published in the "Lokal-Anzeiger" for January 28th. This brave young man tells us in one letter how he travelled for nine hours at a stretch on a camel, partly through a district which the Italians thought to

be favourable to them. "But they soon greeted me," says Enver Bey, "as the son-in-law of the Khalifa. They accompanied me, and told me how they also had fought against the Infidel. They spoke of the timid soldiers of the enemy, and I could not help laughing at the delusion under which the Italians laboured that they had these people on their side. If I had money I could do much, but it is my boast that I am forming an army without having a farthing in my pocket." And he succeeded in forming an army, for in a subsequent letter he says : "I found 900 desert warriors when I came here, and now I have under me 16,000 trained soldiers."

He is amusing when he tells us how well this little army managed to live on the enemy. On one occasion it took "2 machine-guns, 250 rifles, 2 cannon, 30,000 cartridges, 25 chests of shrapnel, which will be useful to us, and 10 mules which I have harnessed to my guns. Among the dead whom the enemy was unable to remove were 1 major, 1 captain, 5 lieutenants, and 200 men. We wanted to let one soldier whom we had captured run away again, but he seemed to be very pleased at having been captured, and now makes himself useful by cleaning the guns."

Commenting on these letters, the German military critic who edited them for the press, says :

"Der Mann, der das schreibt, der dem Gegner die Waffen nimmt, mit denen er ihn schlägt, mag den titel Major oder Pascha führen, aber ist, bei Allah, von Gottes Gnaden—General !"

(The man who writes this, who captures weapons from the enemy and then fights him with those weapons, may bear the title of Major or Pasha, but he is, by Allah, by God's grace—General !)

## CHAPTER II

### IN TRIPOLI TOWN

TRIPOLI, *October 7th.*

THE panic among the Europeans in Tripoli on the occasion of the bombardment was not such as to raise them very much in the estimation of the Turks. The proprietor of the local "Waldorf Astoria" was among the first who ran. His name is Julius Cæsar Aquilina. He is a Maltese, descended on one side (so he admits) from Julius Cæsar, and on the other from the Knights of Malta. He and all his numerous sons style themselves Chevalier, and are, like all the Maltese, more Italian than the Italians themselves. Before the bombardment the whole family left after having hastily entrusted the keys of the hotel to the forty Italian journalists who had elected to remain there (but who had reckoned without the Turks, who soon moved them on). I returned with one of the family, a son who had been living in Sfax, Tunisia, and who was the first of the House of Aquilina to put in an appearance on the scene. He found his hotel in possession of a number of people who were paying no rent. The key of the door had been lost, and the house was open day and night. Weary Willies who wanted rooms strolled in and selected a suite, after helping themselves to the choicest wines in the

cellars. There was no way of getting them out, for they were all armed to the teeth; and there was no way of "getting the law on them," for there was no law. Turkish rule had ceased, Italian civil rule had not yet been inaugurated, and the military authorities were too much afraid of being evicted themselves to bother about "moving on" impecunious lodgers who would not pay.

Consequently, Tripoli of Barbary became for the moment an ideal happy hunting-ground for sharks, unemployables, Tired Tims, and tramps of every possible variety. The great heart of Italy was moved by the news, and there was such an agitation in the Italian workhouses that the Government had to issue a notice stating that it would issue no passports to Tripoli until that country was settled. It also refused to let any Italians come to the new colony unless they proved to the satisfaction of the military authorities that they had great and important interests there. This order saved us from a deluge of "hobos," but the inundation has only been temporarily stayed. The place is bound to be flooded very soon with ex-bandits, Camorri, Carbonari, and officials of the Black Hand. Then we shall be told that Italy is introducing civilisation into the Dark Continent. Already she has introduced one barrel-organ which for stridency of tone and complete absence of harmony beats any hurdy-gurdy which I ever heard on the boulevards of Little Italy, New York. It is a money-making concern this barrel-organ, for there is nobody here so callous to the charms of music that his hand does not, as soon as he hears it, dive into his pockets to get either a revolver or a coin with which to make the organ-grinder get out of ear-shot.

For some days Chevalier Aquilina, junior, tried to



evolve order out of chaos. He developed photographs, blacked boots, cooked, made the beds, acted as waiter, porter, and in half a dozen other capacities. Then his parents and half a dozen of his brothers and sisters came, and the situation was saved. At least, it was possible to get a hard-boiled egg now and then. If ever this meets the eye of the Chevalier Aquilina, I trust he will not think that I am trying to be sarcastic at his expense. The old man had every right to bolt. He was not in business in order that an Italian shell should drop on top of him. And I admire the way in which he manages to run his little hotel, despite the fact that it contains ten times more guests than it was ever intended to accommodate, and that it is difficult to buy a piece of meat anywhere in town, and impossible to obtain such necessities of life as cigarettes, wine, and mineral water. I wish him every success under Italian auspices. Indifferent as his hostel is, he has got the start by a long way, and is pretty sure to keep it.

The leading nations are represented by good Consuls in Tripoli, but some of the smaller nations have got local men, principally Maltese, who seem to work not for money, but for glory. Some of these were in a state of collapse when the Italian ultimatum was issued. The bombardment, it will be remembered, began on October 3rd. The day before, the Spanish Vice-Consul was seized with the delusion that there was going to be a general massacre of Europeans that night.

Half-crazy with excitement, he summoned a meeting of his colleagues. It was a strange gathering. One Consul is described to me as staggering as if he were drunk and loudly asserting that he was "a moral wreck." There was no necessity for him to

insist on the point. It was perfectly clear to everybody who took the trouble to look at him.

The meeting had before it a communication from the Italian Admiral announcing that there would be a bombardment in twenty-four hours, and inviting everybody to take refuge on board the battleships. This order was one of the many wild things which the Italians have done since this Tripoli affair began. How would it be possible for the consuls to get several thousand foreigners on board the vessels of the fleet inside such a short space of time? Many of them were ill, many of them were women reduced to an hysterical condition through fright, many of them were children. It would need days to get all these people out of the town, and there were only a few Arab boats in which to take them. The Arab boatmen refused to help, and the Italian sailors stood serenely aloof. They had created chaos in the port, and they took no steps to save even their own countrymen from it. They denounced Turkish barbarism, but they calmly left thousands of European women and children to the mercy of the "barbarians." Events showed that they had sufficient transports to carry off the whole population, but those transports were in Italy being filled up with troops. The Italian Government should at least have chartered vessels for the conveyance of the refugees, but it did not like to spend the money. The Admiral simply confined himself to warning the Europeans that he would bombard the town next day. He seems to have fancied that there his duty ended.

To unspeakable Stamboul the Consuls—or such of them as remained sane—then proceeded to pay a very remarkable tribute. In a reply to the Admiral they refused to leave the town, and asserted that

they relied with confidence on the protection of the Turkish authorities. They felt sure that the Ottoman police would keep order. And as a matter of fact the Ottoman police did keep perfect order. They even remained behind in order that the Europeans should not be molested during the interregnum. Thus the Turks voluntarily deprived themselves of a valuable section of their military force. They did this for the sake of the Christians just at the moment when Italian shells were crashing through roofs and killing innocent women and children.

It was Mr. Wood, the American Consul, who drew up the reply to the Admiral, saying that the consuls and their nationals had sufficient confidence in the Turkish authorities, and would therefore remain. This document was dashed off by Mr. Wood in English. The French Vice-Consul translated it into French, and everybody signed. It was a wise document, for had the Consuls fled the Turks and Arabs would have felt themselves abandoned by Christianity. The natives would have looked on the war as one between Christianity and Islâm, and consequently they could hardly have been prevented from butchering, in their desperation, such of the poorer Christians as had not succeeded in getting away. The authoritative consular declaration made it clear to all, however, that the war was only between Italy and Turkey, not between the followers of Christ and the followers of Mohammed.

After this document was signed some of the consuls made their last call on the Turkish officials. One of them, the American Consul, afterwards described to me what happened. He directed his steps towards the military head-quarters, and found there Colonel Nesciat Bey, who commands the troops. The Colonel



is a powerfully-built, medium-sized man, in the prime of life, that is, between forty-two and forty-five years of age. He wears a black moustache, but is otherwise clean-shaven. He is a man of jovial disposition and very fond of children. On the present occasion he looked depressed. With him was General Munir Pasha.

The Defterdar, or Financial Agent, was present too. So was the Political Agent, a very well-dressed young Turkish diplomatist of the most polished Parisian school. All were silent, depressed, but very busy signing papers and issuing orders. The Political Agent, whose business it was to do with the foreign consuls and keep them in good humour, spoke first to the visitor, who expressed his sorrow at what had occurred and his hope that the difficulty would end in a manner satisfactory to all parties. The Political Agent complained bitterly of the Italian raid. Such a thing, he said, might have been all right five hundred years ago. In this, the twentieth century, it was certainly a surprising relic of primitive barbarism. It was curious thus to hear a Turk denouncing with crushing logic and in irreproachable French the piratical Christian nation wherein the Pope is a guest.

Finally, the Consul took his leave. He pressed the hand of the Political Agent. He pressed in silence the hand of Colonel Nesciat Bey and of the other functionaries and officers. Then he passed hastily out. Mr. Wood is a Christian, of course, but he admits that he could hardly repress tears as he took leave of these brave men, victims of a cruel and unjustifiable aggression, placed by circumstances in as unpleasant a position as men can find themselves in.



Next morning this same Consul walked through the town without being molested by anybody. He called again on some Turkish friends at ten o'clock in the morning. The bombardment began only six hours later, but there was no extraordinary excitement, and the Turkish officers whom he met saluted him punctiliously. They were worried, however, about the fate of their wives and daughters, whom they were forced to leave behind while they themselves retired into the desert. We are accustomed to think it an awful thing for Christian women to be left to the mercy of the Turk. On the present occasion there were hundreds of Christian women at his mercy, and not one of them was molested. On the other hand, the Turk knows from experience stretching back to the time of the Crusades that it is not quite safe to leave the women of his harem to the tender mercies of the Christian.

But when Nesciat Bey left Tripoli a great many Turkish ladies, wives of officers and functionaries, had thus to be abandoned.

From a military and an imperial point of view Turkey has lost by this Tripoli raid, but from a moral point of view she has gained. For the first time in history Christian women and children have been entrusted by European consuls to the keeping of her soldiers, and she has justified the trust reposed in her. From the beginning of these Tripoli negotiations Turkey's attitude has been remarkably correct and creditable. There have been no massacres. There has been no inhumanity. On the contrary, there have been mercy, forethought, restraint. The loss of Tripoli has been a dreadful experience to the Ottoman Empire, but it has proved that Turkey has at length become civilised. There are Italian mis-

sionaries scattered all over the Ottoman Empire, and in some cases these missionaries celebrated the attack on Tripoli with rejoicings. Ten years ago the Turks would have massacred them all. On the present occasion they confined themselves to lodging with the Papal Nuncio in Constantinople a most polite complaint written in the best French. That complaint was at once transmitted to the Pope, who immediately replied to it.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RETURN OF THE ROMANS<sup>1</sup>

HOTEL MINERVA, TRIPOLI,  
*October 13th.*

At Tripoli of Barbary the sun is going down,  
The shadows of a southern eve are falling on the town,  
The voice of the muezzin sounds from the minaret,  
The Faithful bend, below, in prayer : " Allah ! be with us yet !"  
The turban'd Berbers scowl upon the strangers in the forts,  
And women's prayers unceasingly rise from the lattic'd courts.  
But vain the curses, prayers and tears, the angry looks and black,  
In thunder speak yon battleships ! " The Romans have come  
back ! "

You marvelled at their cities a-buried in your sands,  
You laughed at men who said those works were built by human  
hands ;

Across your deserts, by the sea, still runs the Roman way,—  
The sons of those who made it are in your streets to-day !  
Before them, slowly back into the darkness whence they came,  
The Osmanli ride sullenly, never to come again.  
There's wailing on the Bosphorus, there's grief in Arabie,  
For Christian dogs have landed on the coast of Barbarie.

Aye, truly have they landed. Rome has come back again.  
Inland from the Spanish fort march twenty thousand men,

<sup>1</sup> This and the four following chapters appeared originally in the "Westminster Gazette." I reprint them here in order to show that instead of coming to Tripoli prejudiced against the Italians, I was actually prejudiced in their favour. I did not then know that this "proud appellation" of "Roman" which Gibbon regarded as having been "profaned by the successors of Constantine" is still more profaned by the present Brummagem Kingdom which pretends to carry on the tradition of the Cæsars.

Horse, foot, and artillery. Hark to the songs they sing !  
Libya wakes at the beating of the Roman Eagle's wing.  
Memorials of dead Cæsars emit mysterious light,  
Mars with a blood-red radiance hangs in the sky at night,  
Fallen Corinthian columns gleam in the sands like snow,  
White limbs of broken statues glow with a mystic glow.  
Columns of great proconsuls, graves of the Roman dead,  
Echo, after a thousand years, a Roman legion's tread.  
Tombs of the old Centurions 'mid the oasis grass  
Ring with hollow murmur as the Roman banners pass.  
Far down the coast at Leptis, fishermen 'mid the foam  
Whisper again to each other the mighty name of Rome.

I WAS drinking coffee in a little Turkish military club on the sea-front when the great news came. The garden of this club is filled with magnificent Roman statues dug up in various parts of Tripolitania, but all of them had, of course, been beheaded owing to Moslem prejudices on the subject of graven images. I was watching these statues closely. At the back of my mind was a sort of odd, superstitious expectation that they would raise their mutilated arms or make some other sign. Surely these marble captives will welcome their countrymen back !

For a thousand years and more the Romans were here. The Doric and Corinthian columns of their *fora* and of their villas, the splendid, square-cut stones of their temples, have furnished the parasitical Turk and Arab with plenty of material for their mosques, their citadels, their forts, even for their huts. I have seen splendid Roman capitals built into the corners of the most wretched lanes in Tripoli. You can hardly walk a hundred yards in any direction without finding a Roman column lying on the ground for Arabs to sit upon. Sometimes they are planted upright so as to enable camels to scratch themselves. Near the French Consulate is a magnificent arch of triumph, half buried in the ground and shockingly



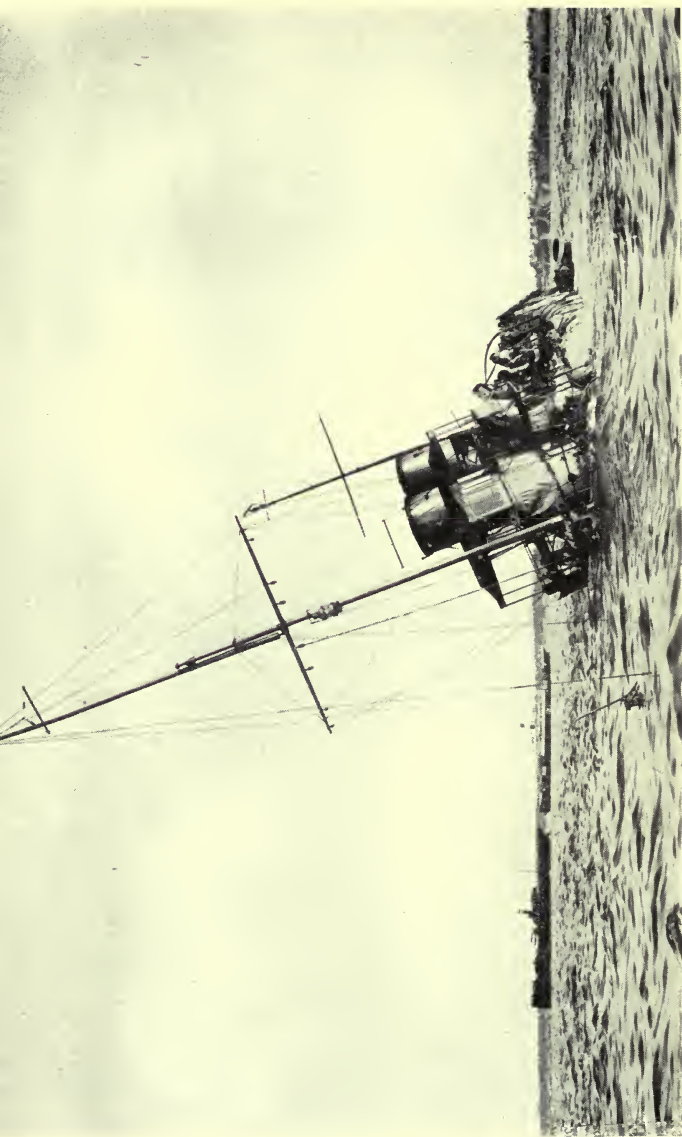
mutilated. Out of the four arcades of this edifice, three have been walled over. The interior has been converted into a tenth-rate cinematograph show, which has been for months past in a state of bankruptcy and suspended animation. Lemaire, who saw this arch in the time of Louis XIV, describes it as covered with medallions of Roman consuls, and ornamented in high relief with an Alexander, two Sphinxes and troops of slaves. All these artistic treasures have now disappeared.

Nevertheless, impressive even in its degradation, this old arch of Marcus Aurelius towers above the Arab hovels around it as blind Samson towered over the Philistines. It would be difficult even at Rome to find a triumphal arch composed of such gigantic blocks of marble, which are all the more striking because there exists in this country no quarry from which this stone could have been taken. Another very surprising thing about this arch is the fact that the stones are not bound together by any cement. Invisible bands of iron have for over eighteen hundred years kept this edifice intact. Inside, the spherical ceiling is bordered with delightful reliefs.

For over a thousand years Tripoli was the principal grain emporium of Rome. Magnificent roads, shaded all the way with trees, ran along the coast from city to city. Far beneath the waves at Lebda or Leptis, one can still see the broken private jetties opposite what once were the villas of Roman proconsuls. Just peeping above the sand in Leptis, Sabratha, and other places are parts of invaluable inscriptions which the Turks insolently refused to let any dog of an Unbeliever uncover, to the extent even of a finger's-breadth of sand, so that he could read the whole inscription. And meanwhile the archæologist

was maddened by the sight of Arabs freely carting away from the ruins masses of marble which they wanted to convert into lime or building material ! An exception was recently made in favour of an American mission working in Cyrenaica, but only on condition that any art treasures discovered must be handed over to the gentle keeping of the Turk. This meant, of course, that, moved by religious considerations, some Mohammedan fanatic was certain, sooner or later, to smash the nose of a beautiful Venus, or Diana, or Apollo. History and art have probably sustained irreparable losses during the reign of the Turk in Tripoli. What a pity that, in their ultimatum, the Roman Government did not insist on the impossibility of civilisation allowing such iconoclasts as the Osmanli to remain any longer in possession of a land so rich in buried historical treasures as is Tripolitania ! A long list of Turkish outrages on beautiful statues could have been added (I could have given some myself), and where, then, is the heart that would not have gone out to Italy in her new crusade ?





SUNKEN TURKISH TRANSPORT "DERNA."

*To face p. 69.*



## CHAPTER IV

### THE LANDING OF THE BERSAGLIERI

HOTEL MINERVA, TRIPOLI,  
*October 13th.*

I HURRY from the Turkish Club to see the Romans land. It is an historic sight. There are twenty Transatlantic and other Italian liners lying off the land, besides half a dozen men-o'-war and a number of torpedo-boats. This harbour, three weeks ago the most deserted of the great African ports, is now the busiest. The appearance in the roadstead of more than three or four steamers at a time was sufficient to excite astonishment. Now the horizon is hardly visible for the long line of shipping. Some of the Transatlantic liners bulk up as large almost as Cunarders. The sea is alive with small craft of all descriptions—pinnaces, gigs, motor launches, two Press steamers (one English, one American), row-boats, sailing-vessels. There are some dozens of picturesque fruit-vessels from Sicily. And through the midst of these smaller craft come, like huge sea-serpents, strings of boats crammed with soldiers and drawn along by powerful destroyers. Long, slender, sharp-nosed torpedo-boats, greyhounds of the sea, cut the water in all directions. The slate-coloured vessels of war, with their hard, fierce outline, are in strong contrast to the gay Sicilian sailing-ships and to the liners with their promenade decks, their light-

coloured funnels, and their general appeal to the comfort-loving tourist.

In the foreground, close in to the shore, lies the unhappy *Derna*, the steamer which brought the last consignment of ammunition to the Turks. It was sunk by the Turks themselves, and though it has a big list to starboard, it will soon, I am sure, be afloat again. Shattered also by a shell is the ludicrous little Turkish gunboat which bore the high-sounding name of *Hunter of the Sea*, and which now lies near the Custom-house pier, wrecked, rusty, half-full of water, despoiled of its guns and of everything portable. The masts of several other vessels are sticking up above the surface of the water, inside the reefs. They are evidently small sailing-vessels, and it is difficult to see why they should have all been sunk.

At night the illumination at sea makes the harbour look like Southampton as seen from the deck of an incoming South American, with this difference, however, that while in Southampton most of the lights are on land, in Tripoli they are nearly all on the sea. The oil-lamp and tallow-candle illumination ashore is nothing in comparison with the blaze of electricity and incandescent light on the water. The great liners are a dazzling mass of brilliancies. Light pours in floods from every port-hole, and is reflected upwards, brokenly, from the rolling, uneasy waves. The search-lights of the battleships swing backwards and forwards like the long, grey, luminous tentacles of monstrous sea-serpents. They brighten up the Sicilian schooners until they look like a fairy fleet in a Drury Lane pantomime. One battleship keeps its search-light fixed permanently, like a gigantic eye, on a dangerous point on the desert coast. Beneath its brilliant rays the white sand shines as at midday.





THE LANDING OF THE 4th AND 5th COMPANIES OF THE 11th BERSAGLIERI, AFTERWARDS CUT TO PIECES  
IN THE OASIS (OCTOBER 23rd).

*To face p. 71.*



But no dark figure crosses that luminous belt of sea-sand. It is apparently as uninhabited as a lunar mountain. The *Re Umberto* is signalling with flash-lights: "dot—dash—dot—dot—dot—dash (pause)—dash—dash—dash—dash—dot." Another war-ship is signalling by means of twinkling lights at the mast-heads. The sea-front is crowded until a late hour every night with petrified Arabs from the Desert. They gaze, thunder-stricken, while some invisible, gigantic hand writes with lightning rapidity those characters of fire on the vast, sombre wall of night, hastily blots them out, and as hastily re-writes them. "Allah! the Merciful, the Compassionate, what black magic is this? Does Satan in person hover over the dark thunder-fleet of his worshippers? Has Hell finally triumphed over the People of God? No! No! No! There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God!"

. . . . .

But I am anticipating. It is still daylight and the Bersaglieri are landing. Few of them are the dark, swarthy-faced people whom we are accustomed to regard, in England, as typical Italians. The majority are fair, square-built, healthy-looking young men. They come from Florence and Siena, and were never before, in most cases, outside their native village. The surprise in their wide-open eyes is the surprise of the Cockney schoolboy who has been suddenly caught up in Hyde Park by an aeroplane and landed in Timbuctoo. It is easy to see that the mosques, the Arab dresses, and the camels fill them with unspeakable astonishment. And their officers, up to the very War Office itself, are as ignorant of local conditions as they are. Cholera is raging in the town, nevertheless the officers eat over-ripe melons and

drink water from the street fountains. Both officers and men "fill up" on beer, a fatal drink in a hot climate—especially when the beer is bad. Nobody seems to have ever heard of such a thing as a cholera-belt. The water-bottle of the French soldier in Algiers always holds two litres. The water-bottle of the Italian soldier here does not hold half a litre. But the supreme, the crowning, the inexplicable blunder, is the dress of the officers and men. It is a thick, grey, heavy material, quite hot enough for St. Petersburg at this time of year, but absurdly, criminally, out of place here. It closely resembles the stuff used in Ulster for making heavy overcoats. Out at the front I have seen whole regiments digging trenches in the blazing sand. They still wore these clothes (the very sight of which made me perspire), and they had not evidently received permission to take off their coats. It was not in such a uniform that the old Romans conquered this country. Indeed, the present Arab dress is supposed to have been adapted from that of the Romans.

Up the main street, along the sea-front, march the Bersaglieri, their plumes dancing in the wind, their bands playing the Italian anthem, their regimental flags fluttering in the breeze. I watch them as they swing out of the Custom-house. Close by is a little mosque with a verse from the Koran engraven on a slab of marble over the door. Inside, an intense silence, a religious hush which contrasts vividly with the shouting of the captains outside, with the regular tramp, tramp, tramp of the heavily-laden marching men, with the shrill, ear-splitting, nerve-racking clamour of some Italian civilians talking all at the same time and all at the top of their voices about nothing in particular.

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THE BERSAGLIERI MARCHING FROM THE LANDING-JETTY.





The only worshipper in the temple is (with the possible exception of a dove perched inside the open window) an old, grey-bearded Arab. His motionlessness and his long, voluminous, snow-white draperies give him the air of a Roman statue. He is facing towards Mecca, and his set face is that of a man in an ecstasy. His lips move, but no sound is heard. When he kneels, prostrates himself, and touches the matted floor with his forehead, his movements are replete with calm, dignity, devotion—even with majesty. He looks like a Roman senator on the Capitol when the Gauls had taken the city and all was lost. Strangely enough, he reminds me more of Rome than do the Romans themselves outside. A Biblical Patriarch who had walked with God could not have worshipped with more solemnity and impressiveness. There is an unconscious grace and harmony in every movement.

For what is this benignant old man praying so fervently to Allah? Most probably for famine, pestilence, and universal war, for red ruin and the breaking-up of laws. Mild-looking and feeble as is this ancient, he represents the greatest danger against which the Italians have to guard. He is the incarnation of Moslem fanaticism, the most warlike fanaticism in the world, and nowhere so violent as here. He is the Sword of the Prophet and of Islâm.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CONQUERED TURK

TRIPOLI, *October 15th.*

THE procession of the Bersaglieri passes Turkish *cafés*. The *habitués* of these *cafés* used to sit on the sea-front, slowly sipping their Turkish coffee, smoking their Ottoman cigarettes, slowly enjoying the delicious sight of the blue sea and of the snow-white line of surf breaking against the base of the old Spanish fort, slowly enjoying the delicious coolness of the salt, Mediterranean breeze. There was little traffic in those days, and even if a dog of an Unbeliever did happen to come along in a carriage, the driver would think twice before he disturbed the Turkish coffee-drinkers. Now the narrow sea-front is crowded, and the Turks must sip their coffee at the corners of the side streets and narrow, arched lanes running upwards and inland. And they must sip their coffee without the accompaniment of Turkish cigarettes, for all the cigarettes of the *Régie* have been bought up by the invading hordes, and, of course, no more can be imported from Constantinople. They are all old men, these fezzed and bearded coffee-drinkers. Evidently they could not follow their younger countrymen into the desert. Their tottering limbs, their feeble steps, betray that fact when they get up to hobble off with the aid of a stick. In their moist

eyes there is infinite sadness ; but their manner is grave, dignified, and not in the least subservient. They must know that the glory of Islâm is gone forever, that the Turkish Empire is already doomed. They must know that the Crescent is now banished forever from the continent of Africa. The Sultan of Stamboul may continue to style himself master of the three Continents and the four Seas. Only a few centuries ago he had good reason to do so, for he was a power of the first magnitude in Europe, Asia, and Africa. His flag flew from Mecca to Algiers. His last league of African sea-coast is now gone, and the Carthaginians have as much chance of coming back to the coast-line of Tripoli as the Turks.

The rule of the Turk and the Karamanli Sultans has been an unbroken horror, nevertheless I cannot help pitying these sad, feeble, despairing old servants of the Sublime Porte, meet representatives of the crumbling Empire of the Ottomans. They have not even the physical strength to ride out into the desert and die there with arms in their hands. Theirs is the most wretched fate of all. They must drag out the tail-end of a miserable existence sitting in obscure *cafés*, watching the rough foreign soldiers march past, afraid to cross the street lest a transport-waggon or a field-battery suddenly tear round the corner. Curious, how close the resemblance between these weary old men and the dying Turkish Empire. It is so curious that I cannot help reverting to it. For all the young and active Turks, all the women and children, have gone away or do not show themselves. Only these decayed and impotent elders remain.

They are despised and contemned by the Jews and negroes who fawned on them only a short month ago.

Yesterday I saw two Europeans signal a passing carriage which they had supposed to be empty, but which really contained an old Turkish gentleman in a fez. The young Arab driver stopped immediately, ejected his decrepit co-religionist, and bowed the Europeans in. The old Turk then produced a little red cloth bag evidently containing a few *mejidieh* and feebly began, in a quavering treble, to haggle about the fare, after the immemorial custom of the East. With palsied fingers he finally deposited a few piastres in the outstretched palm of the impatient Arab. But the latter was now accustomed to have ten times as much tossed to him by Italian officers, and with a quick, contemptuous motion of his arm he jerked the few, pathetic coppers into the old Turk's palms and drove recklessly on with his load of Infidels.

Meanwhile the Turks are being scurvily treated by the victors. Turkish officials who had house property in the town have been forced to sell their houses, which went for one-sixth of their value. It was bad business for those ill-paid officials, but it was good business for the Banco di Roma.

Past the Pasha's Palace the Bersaglieri march, their brazen trumpets echoing and re-echoing in the archways of Charles the Fifth's crumbling citadel. They encounter long strings of disdainful camels with sad, pendulous under-lips like those of old women in a huff, and one ear moving briskly to keep off the flies. The hide of some of these beasts is so frayed and worn that it is hard to distinguish it from the pile of rags and sacking which seems to form the usual burden of this melancholy ruminant. On top of this bag of rags sits sometimes a half-naked Arab boy regarding events with Buddhistic im-



mobility, sometimes a veiled Mohammedan woman. Out of this perambulating rag-bag issues, in front, a long tubular neck looking like a boa-constrictor with a sheep's head. The camels and the great majority of the natives regard the proceedings of the Italians with an eye of philosophic calm. Wrapped in their sole garment, a piece of sacking which had evidently contained fodder, some natives are actually sleeping on the roadside. As a rule, they are the Bedouins, the gypsies of the desert. A few dates and a drink of water suffice for them. Their idea of the simple life is probably more comprehensive than that of ex-President Roosevelt. The fall of empires does not matter much to them. They keep out of politics.

What a mixture of races ! Berbers, Jews, negroes, Maltese, Italians, Turks are mingled together in the crowds which watch the Italians pass. A little apart stand two Touaregs with veiled faces. The black eyes of these untamable desert tribesmen are alone visible. They glitter with something of that fixed, phosphorescent glitter which one sees in the eye of a wild beast watching its prey. They are watching the Italians, the happy, ingenuous, open-faced soldier-lads from Florence. Even to one another they make no remark. They are silent as their own camels, now squatted on the ground close by, soon perhaps to be crossing the desert on their way to the Turkish camp. It was as a masked Touareg, they say, that Fethi Bey succeeded in crossing the Tunisian frontier, and in joining the army which he now commands. May not some of these veiled men be Turkish officers ?

Of all races of men these Touaregs, these hardy and desperate marauders of the Sahara, are the most

untamable and fierce. Even in paying friendly visits they are as reluctant to part with their arms as a very short-sighted man would be to part with his glasses. A number of them once called on the British Consul here to solicit some favour, but it took the consular staff a full half-hour to persuade the visitors to leave their arms behind in an ante-chamber. The Touaregs finally gave way on condition that one of them should remain behind to watch over the rifles of his companions !

Nearly as wild and lawless as the Touaregs are the Ir'reh, or Wandering Arabs who left Tunisia at the time of the French conquest sooner than submit to foreign rule. They look like tigers brought to bay. And they are brought to bay. The hated foreigner has tracked them to their last lair.

Onward thunders the triumphal procession of the Bersaglieri. Smooth-faced black eunuchs look timidly at the rough soldiers. Women peep fearfully at them through barred windows. The street children enjoy the show with all their hearts. Little brown, dusty Arabs run, almost naked, after the soldiers and cut wild, fantastic capers in the air when they hear the band. They beg for coppers, they black boots. Already they have picked up a few words of Italian. They race after carriages and hang on to the rear like monkeys. It is clear that they have no cares of State on their minds. They imagine that for some reason or other an unusually large number of Cook's tourists have come ashore. That is all. As yet they do not understand. They wonder vaguely at the sad faces of the old Turks sipping coffee on the side-paths.

Rub-a-dub-dub go the drums. They echo uncannily in the empty houses, for not one house in

forty is occupied and open. The streets are still a long line of shuttered shops and padlocked doors.

Rub-a-dub-dub go the drums through the Jewish quarter. The Jews are all there, not one of them is absent. They stand in no fear of the Italians. They started to plunder the citadel as soon as the warships began to bombard the town. In the Italian language they hail the soldiers with friendly, patronising cries. For some reason or other the Tripolitan Jews regard this expedition as *their* "show." The local Italian newspaper is edited by a Hebrew, and the Italian occupation of Tripoli will result in the creation of about a score of Tripolitan Jewish millionaires, just as the French occupation of Morocco will surely result in the creation of a score of Morocco Jewish millionaires. In Tripoli, as in Morocco, the wily Jew will be sure to benefit by the change of masters, no matter who loses. If the Italians want to improve the harbour and the town they must do business with the Jews, and, despite their high-pressure patriotism, the Jews are not likely to let them off cheap.

The Ottoman Greeks are indifferent. It is all the same to them. *They* won't starve, no matter who comes. The woolly, shining negroes take the whole thing with the greatest good humour. Their good-natured faces are wreathed in perpetual smiles. Their long, flexible, india-rubber lips, resembling in the matter of size a pair of bicycle tyres, are stretched in a pleasant, inoffensive, perpetual grin which reaches from ear to ear. The bronzed and bony Berber draws his faded baracan closer around him as he looks. It is as if the invaders from the north brought with them an icy, Alpine blast. The Arab, lighter in hue, is a miracle of picturesqueness in his gracious, ample, flowing robes of snowy white. The



effeminate city Arabs leave half-open their transparent *burnous*, so that their embroidered vests and their silk pantaloons may be better seen. If the trousers are very ample and the turban green, the wearer is a wealthy Jew. If not, he is the descendant of one of the eleventh-century conquerors.

Amid the crowd are travellers from regions of the Dark Continent as far apart as London and Tripoli. The slim negroes whom you see squatting over there on the ground come from the Niger. These massive and heavy tribesmen are from the Nile. You can recognise the Fezzanis by their powerful frames and well-developed muscles. The shoulder attains in some of them a formidable development, fitting them to pose for statues of Hercules or to enter the ring against Johnson the boxer. These peoples from widely separated parts of Africa have no more chance of understanding one another's language than Japanese and Patagonian peasants would have if they happened to meet in a Wapping boarding-house.

In some of the streets the shopkeepers used, under the old *régime*, to be so fanatical that they slammed their doors whenever they saw a Christian dog approach. To-day there is no such sign of religious intolerance. A European could enter a mosque if he had a mind to do so. Before, it would have meant death. The Italians will, however, safeguard the sanctity of the mosques as the French did in Tunis. But they may make one exception. There is a mosque here, the Pasha's mosque, which was once an old Spanish church. It was converted by the Karamanli Sultans, first into a necropolis and then into a mosque. The wooden doors are richly carved. The roof is made up of a number of little cupolas



resting on wooden columns taken from the timbers of a captured Christian ship. Under Italian auspices this mosque may again be used for purposes of Christian worship. But it would be a wiser policy to leave it alone.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SIEGE OF THE DESERT

MINERVA HOTEL, TRIPOLI,  
*October 16th.*

THE first step in the Tripoli adventure was a bombardment. The second is a siege. The Italians are besieging the desert. They have sat down before it and called upon it to surrender. The desolate wail of the Saharan night-wind, the nightly crackle of Turkish rifles far out among the sand-hills, are, so far, the only reply they have received.

The lines of the besiegers begin only half an hour's walk from the place where they landed. What a difference from the state of things in Manchuria, where the base was always a good day's journey on horseback from the positions! Here the war-correspondent can reach the Italian firing-line on the edge of the desert in a quarter of an hour by carriage.

In Manchuria the gaps between one army corps and another were so great that one could not see across them even with field-glasses; and in the intervals between the armies on either side, one felt sometimes as if he were in some unexplored, unoccupied part of China! And yet no attempt was ever made to rush these treacherous open spaces. If Kuroki had suddenly dashed between Rennen-kampf and Linievitch, those Russian generals would

have closed on him like a pair of gigantic pincers. If Mischenko and his Cossacks had ridden in between Nogi and Oku they would never have ridden back again.

But in Tripoli it is different. The town of Tripoli is situated on a little peninsula. The Italians hold that little peninsula and practically nothing more. Their troops stand shoulder-to-shoulder in trenches from one side of this peninsula almost to the other, in a semicircle round the town. This arrangement is prehistoric. It belongs to the Stone Age. I wonder if Caneva adopted it because he knew the timidity of his soldiers, because he knew that he could not trust them to hold various strong positions out in the desert, far away from the town. In the present age generals defending towns hold various strong positions round about them and keep a large reserve somewhere in the centre. If an English general were holding London against an invader advancing from the south, he would have a powerful entrenched force at Caterham, where, as a matter of fact, the last Conservative Government did buy land with a view to constructing forts on it. He would not entrench himself at Streatham, and thus leave the enemy free to drop shells in Trafalgar Square and on Buckingham Palace. In Tripoli, however, the Italians are massed together like policemen at the end of a street. They have practically no scouts and no outposts. The Turks ride up and pepper them regularly. The Italians have to rely on the humanity of the Ottoman to spare Tripoli the terrors of a bombardment. With his field artillery Nesciat Bey could drop shells on the citadel as often as he liked, for, so far, there is no artillery on land that could prevent him. When the rôles were re-

versed, and the town was Turkish, the Italians had no compunction in shelling the town and killing many innocent people. But what is the good of being Christian unless you enjoy a certain privilege in these matters? When the Turk does them there is, naturally, a roar.

I have never in war seen anything more striking than this Tripolitan battle-front. The oasis ends abruptly like a green carpet spread upon sand. On one side vegetation, date-palms, gardens, wells, houses, life. On the other, sand, aridity, the desert, death. At a certain well-defined line the oasis ends and there begins another element, almost as different from the arable land as is the sea itself. It is the blindingly white, sandy, thirsty, illimitable waste. Search it as you will with field-glasses, you find it endless, boundless, uninhabited, uninhabitable, everywhere the same. Looking at it is like looking at the ocean for the first time. It is an event in one's life. And the desert is even more impressive than the ocean, for it moves not, it supports no life, animal or vegetable. It is dead. With its innumerable dunes, it looks like a stormy ocean suddenly turned to sand. There are ripples in it. There are billows. There are very high waves from whose sharp curved crests the fine white sand is blown like foam. But, unlike the ocean, it reflects not the moon nor the stars. Its face shines in the starlight with something of that dull, grey pallor which you see on the face of a corpse in the dark. Stray dogs, howling at a great distance, fill it with a mournful baying like the wail of lost souls.

The Italians are besieging the desert. They are constructing trenches in front of it. They have encompassed it round about with a mud-wall. They



have loop-holed and crenellated this mud-wall. They sleep behind it. They have pointed batteries of mountain-guns, machine-guns, naval guns at that inscrutable, grim, grey, Sphinx-like face which has seen so many empires pass. All day long the soldiers gaze into that Saharan furnace. Sand, sand, nothing but sand! A withered fig-tree! A land condemned by Allah to eternal desolation yet tinged by the mysterious sanctity attaching to things afflicted by the Hand of God!

About half a mile out in this sea of sand, just south of Bumeliana, is a hillock with a sharp edge on top and with very steep sides, a hillock exactly resembling a wave about to break. On top of that hillock is an outpost consisting of six or seven soldiers. This is the ultimate Italian outpost. There is nothing between it and the enemy's outpost of 500 Turks in the little oasis of Senit Beni-Adam ("Garden of Sons of Men"). The men converse with me affably. One of them was a barber in New York, another a fruit-seller in Whitechapel: both speak English of sorts. They do not seem to be particularly fond of war and are sorry, I dare say, that they did not take out English or American papers when they were abroad.

No soldiers whom I ever encountered cared for war, and least enthusiastic of all were the fierce, legendary Cossacks of the Tsar with whom I lived in Manchuria. I am beginning to suspect that the only warlike classes in any country are the ferocious folk who spout from jingo platforms and write in blood-and-thunder newspapers. These dull Italian peasants, barbers, and ice-cream vendors, shade their eyes from the sun as they peer into the mysterious, the inscrutable desert into which, as into a safe fortress, their unseen enemy has fled. They do

not even know the name of the people with whom they are fighting. The word "Turk" being evidently unknown to them, they surmount the difficulty by means of a circumlocution. They speak of the enemy as "the people of this country with whom we are at war," just as the Russian soldier always speaks of the enemy as *Ony*—"they."

On my way back from the outpost on the sand-hill and before I reach the Italian lines, I pass over the site of a Turkish encampment. It had evidently been occupied by a few hundred men, and is littered with old tin cans, broken bottles, Turkish documents, and empty Turkish cartridges of which I collect scores. Close by is an unloaded shell from an Italian warship, which shows that the bombarding fleet was well informed as to the position of the enemy and had got the range very accurately. The pots and pans and odds and ends which the Turks left behind show that their equipment is very primitive, and that their tents will hardly keep out the rain. They seem to be well supplied with ammunition, however, for they left several hundred boxes of machine-gun cartridges behind them in the cavalry barrack which now forms the Italian left flank.

On returning to the lines, I meet the first captured Turkish spy. He is a spare, medium-sized, black-bearded, very sunburnt man dressed in a dirty Arab costume, but though he evidently wears this dress for purposes of disguise, there is no possibility of disguising the strong, resolute face and drilled figure of the trained soldier. He came in from the desert, but was stopped by an Italian sentry and searched. That search brought to light a large Mauser pistol, wooden frame and all complete. One of the half-dozen armed soldiers who accompany him carries this damning

piece of evidence, which must have been hung over the prisoner's shoulder inside his *djellaba* by means of a twisted band of linen cloth.

. . . . .

At night the curse which lies upon this void seems to exhale from the ground, and wander to and fro in the shape of demons. Sentinels in lonely places almost go mad with fright. After peering for hours into the grey, mysterious "ghoud," their wits sometimes wander. They see dark, moving shapes which are not of this earth. They fire and rouse the whole weary camp. Sometimes donkeys, mules, dogs, and other animals lost or abandoned by the Turks are guided by instinct towards the oasis where their appearance, in the night-time, frequently gives rise to false alarms, to furious firing. The strain of these nightly frights is beginning to tell on the nerves of these young and inexperienced officers and men. It is a pleasure to them when the attack is real. In such cases the story is always the same. "The Turks attacked at between one and two o'clock in the morning. They had horsemen with them. They approached to within a distance of three hundred yards, firing very heavily. In the morning the corpses of two Turkish soldiers were found out in the Meshya."

. . . . .

Rp-rp-rp-rp-rp-rp-rp-rp-rp-rp! go the Italian rifles. It is two in the morning and the desert lies grey and corpse-like beneath the brilliant stars. Another alarm, a real alarm this time. Red rockets soar into the air from half a dozen different points along the Italian line. The battleships sweep the desert with their search-lights.

Yes, it is a real alarm, for there is an answering



volley and the dead, sombre void leaps suddenly to vicious life and brilliancy with vivid flashes out among the sand-hills two miles away. With rifle-bullets, with shell from mountain batteries the Italians sweep the cruel, treacherous waste, no longer silent, no longer dead. They all face the Enemy, the desert. Ten-inch shells from the battle-ships burst amid the dunes with vivid flashes and clouds of sand twenty feet high. The Turks are invisible. The search-lights do not betray their presence. They are hidden somewhere in the hollows. . . . And lo ! while the Italians are concentrating all their attention on the desert, I fancy that I see a gigantic figure rise suddenly from the dark town behind and grin at them with fleshless, skeleton jaws. Another enemy has appeared upon the scene, an enemy more formidable than the Turks, more terrible than the desert—Cholera !

. . . . .

As I write these lines I am almost deafened by the funeral shrieks of a Jewish family on the other side of the narrow lane. By leaning out of my window I could almost touch the house of death with my hand. A member of the family has been carried off by cholera. It is the second death in that house inside of a week. Two Mohammedan cholera victims were carried past my window yesterday. In the first three days there were thirty deaths. So far the number of victims has been exactly doubled each day. The officials are now becoming reticent, however, and the merchants are combining with them to hush up the appalling truth, for fear of injury to commercial and military interests. An Arab died at one of the outposts last night. They say (officially)



THE  
COLUMBIAN



THE ONLY SURVIVOR.  
A street stricken by Cholera.

that he died of hunger. Thousands of people *are* starving. The dining-room window of the Hotel Minerva, at which I am staying, is on the ground floor and opens out on the street. At meal-time every day a frightful procession passes in front of it, and presses emaciated faces, white sightless eyeballs, horribly distorted limbs against the window-bars, a foot from the jovial dining-room table. Objects which would in England have been mercifully hidden away in some Home for Incurables parade here in the full light of day. Half a dozen diseases from typhoid to incipient cholera hold on to the window-bars. They would fall back into the street if they did not do so. Their pallid hands are clutched in a corpse-like clutch on the iron railings.

. . . . .

Italy has got a nice handful. Like Dead Sea fruit, Tripoli has turned to dust and ashes in her grasp. She wanted to annex territory. She has annexed sand, poverty, rags, misery, cholera, and corruption.

Was it necessary for her to go abroad? Has she not got enough of these commodities at home?

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW THE TURKS LEFT TRIPOLI

“Night clos’d around the conqueror’s way,  
And lightnings show’d the distant hill,  
Where those who lost that dreadful day,  
Stood few and faint, but fearless still.”

LET us say a good word for the conquered ! Let us tell the true story of how the Turks left Tripoli ! It is not meet that an Irishman should join in this chorus of contempt and ridicule that is being addressed by all the world to brave men who failed through no fault of their own.

I was talking to-day to a young officer at the front who twice made a painfully bad impression on me. First he showed me a number of religious medals which his mother had given him : a medal of the Immaculate Conception, a medal of St. Joseph, a medal of St. Aloysius de Gonzaga, a medal of St. Anthony of Padua, a medal of St. Francis of Assisi. Then he openly scoffed at them and alluded jeeringly to the weak-mindedness of women on religious matters. I did not honour him any the more for scoffing at his mother’s humble gifts or for laughing at his religion. Even if he were a Mohammedan I would esteem him more for believing in the religion which he professed than for jeering at it. I changed the subject. I talked about the Turks. This young officer loudly asserted that the Turks had fled like madmen when



they heard the big guns of the warships. This remark stung me, and I could see that it grated unpleasantly on my companion, Herr von Gottberg, who is a German officer of a very Chauvinist sort, but who never in my hearing spoke of the French army or of any other brave opponents save in terms of high and courtly praise. I almost felt inclined to remind my young Italian officer that on a hundred battle-fields the Turks have shown the world that no troops in Europe fear the roar of big guns as little as they. No Austrian, no Russian, no nation which ever measured swords with the Turk on fair field of battle would ever speak of them like this. The remark was a glaring breach of military etiquette. It was unchivalrous and it was untrue. Moreover, it came with rather an ill grace from the one and only European army which ever showed twenty thousand clean pairs of heels to niggers.

But ignoring my companion's impatience and my own silence, the young officer rattled on. He showed me Italian newspapers in which it was clearly demonstrated that "the legend of Turkish valour is now destroyed." One writer declared that the Tripoli forts could easily have made a more stubborn defence. This writer had visited the Sultanié Fort, and he dwelt long on the damage which it might have inflicted on a hostile fleet had it only been in proper hands—he meant, I presume, in Italian hands.

At this point my patience gave way, and I pointed out that this was ridiculous. The forts were worse than useless. They were death-traps. All the foreign military men who had ever seen them admitted it.

But my Italian officer would not agree to this. He showed me another article in which the Turks were roundly accused of cowardice. This writer

proved at great length and to his own satisfaction that Constitutionalism had had a dissolvent effect on the religious fanaticism, and consequently on the fighting capacity of the Turk.

That the Turks retreated, practically without firing a shot, is due, not to their inefficiency, but to their humanity. This statement may seem incredible, but I have it on the best authority. Like a Byronic hero, the Tripolitan Turk has left a Corsair's name to other times, linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes. The one virtue came at the last moment, but it was nevertheless a virtue. Two of the Consuls—the German Consul, Dr. Alfred Tilger, who is also Dean of the Consular Corps, and the French Vice-Consul, M. Theuillet, arranged that in the dead of night a dozen of the leading Turkish officers and functionaries should assemble secretly in the German Consulate.

This house is situated outside the town, in the oasis, and is surrounded by palm gardens and by the villas of the Turkish military leaders. These two Consuls were acting without the knowledge of their colleagues, for if they had waited till the others approved of the step they wished to take they would be waiting still. For, as frequently happens in very much out-of-the-way places abroad, the Consular body in Tripoli was torn by internal jealousies and dissensions. You find the same pleasant state of things prevailing in some Persian, Siamese, Anatolian, Moroccan, and Chinese towns. There are little, forgotten places in India where there are not a dozen Europeans, yet where every one of that dozen is at daggers drawn with all the rest. Isolation, accompanied by extreme heat or extreme cold, and aggravated by the-same-old-faces-

every-day grievance, leads to the bitterest enmities it is possible to imagine. I am told that the most poisonous hatreds are engendered in Polar expeditions where a number of men are confined for six months to the one ice-house. Moreover, in the present instance the Italian Consul would have had the right to take part in any general representation made by the Consular Corps, while some of the Consuls representing the smaller nations were quite capable of selling the Turkish plans to the Italians.

Among the Turkish officers and functionaries who came was the Defterdar; General Munir Pasha; the Political Agent; and Colonel Nesciat Bey. The faces of the Ottoman leaders wore a strangely grim and determined expression. It was clear that they had just arrived at some desperate decision. And, in fact, it was because they had heard of that desperate decision that the two Consuls had summoned this extraordinary meeting. As no time was to be lost, the Consuls plunged at once into the subject which was uppermost in the minds of all by begging Nesciat Bey to leave quietly for the sake of the women and children, and thus spare the town the horrors of a prolonged bombardment. The Ottoman general was grimly determined, however, to dispute every inch of ground and to perish with his men beneath the ruins of Tripoli. In this desperate resolve he was supported by all his officers, eleven of whom were present at this conference. Any one who knows the Turkish soldier, any one who has read the heroic story of Plevna and Silistria, will readily admit that Osmanli soldiers were quite capable of this heroism. The Consuls recognised with horror that they stood in the presence of men who had already passed through the terrors which guard the gate of death



and keep most of us as far as we can get from that awful portal. They begged the Ottoman leader to change his mind. They pointed out how thousands of innocent lives would inevitably be sacrificed if he did not do so. They argued, begged, implored, but it was all in vain. The Turks remained firm. And their plan was not a bad one. Not more than a thousand sailors could land. The sea was not smooth, and they could be picked off as they came ashore by the Turkish sharpshooters. Now, the battleships could not shell these riflemen, for a projectile from a vessel four miles off cannot be guided to the eighth of an inch, and there would be extreme danger of the explosives falling among the Italian sailors. That danger would be worse in case the bluejackets got into the town and there was hand-to-hand fighting in the streets. The battleships would not know where to fire. And in the excessively narrow and tortuous lanes of the town the Turks would have a splendid chance of polishing off one landing-party after another until Italy had got tired of having her blue-jackets thus disposed of piecemeal.

What put it in the power of the Turks to carry out some incredibly desperate *coup*, to strike some blow which would astonish the world, was the fact that there were stored in the town very large supplies of powder and projectiles of every kind. "Besides the full powder-magazines," says an Italian writer, "there were in the forts two great stores of powder which might have lasted throughout a long war."

In the chapter headed "Caneva's Neglect to disarm the Arabs" the reader will find a more complete account of the amount of explosives which the Turks left behind in Tripoli.

Since they could not take these explosives away



with them, why should they not utilise them for mines? Why should they not blow up the soldiers when they installed themselves in the barracks, blow up Admiral Borea-Ricci as soon as he had made himself at home in the Palace? The mysterious old dungeons of that building are known to few. The most sequestered of them could easily have been filled to the door with most powerful explosives, and hundreds of Arabs would have been glad to be entrusted with the duty of crouching in the gloom until they got the signal that the time had come to apply the fatal spark.

Even at this time there were three thousand well-armed Arabs with the Turks, and nothing would have pleased those Arabs better than to be thus let loose, not only on the hated giaour, but also on an illimitable quantity of loot. The two greatest passions of the Arab would be appealed to—his passion for blood and his passion for money. The advantage which the natives enjoyed later, during the fighting in the oasis, was as nothing to the advantage they would have enjoyed in that labyrinth of streets and blind alleys. As the lanes are joined overhead by very many arches, after the usual Oriental bazaar style, Arabs driven out of one house could take refuge in the houses on the opposite side of the street. Without burning down the town and sacrificing many thousands of innocent lives it would have been impossible for the Italians to have driven them out. In fact, Captain Cagni could not have driven them out. His repulse and the loss of perhaps all of his men would have been practically certain, and Admiral Faravelli would have had to wait seven days more for the transports.

Even if the Turks and Arabs were driven out of

the town, they could in the environs find excellent cover every dozen yards or so behind walls and houses and clumps of earth and palm trees. After the Italians had been studying the ground for a fortnight the Arabs, as General Caneva admits, derived infinite advantage from their superior knowledge of it. How vastly greater would not this advantage be if the Italians had been attacked while entering the oasis for the first time !

This scheme of defence could only end in one way—in the recall to the ships of such bluejackets as managed to remain alive and in a prolonged and dreadful bombardment of the town by the Italian fleet, in a rain of fire and iron which would not leave a house intact or an inhabitant alive. This the two Consuls saw clearly, and hence their anxiety that the Turks should leave without a fight.

The Consuls were not, of course, thinking of themselves alone. They were thinking of the Europeans, men, women, and children, who had been unable to leave Tripoli, not because they had elected to remain, but because the Arab boatmen had refused to take them out to the fleet. Those boatmen had families of their own, and they knew that if all the Europeans left, the Italians would have no compunction in smashing the town to powder, with everybody in it. They also suspected that the Consuls would not be so very particular about whether the town was bombarded or not, if there were no foreigners left in it to be injured by the bombardment.

The Turkish plan was therefore a good one, but a most desperate one. It was worthy of the Turk ! They preferred to die in the Tripolitan metropolis, to die bravely with arms in their hands, rather than

starve gradually, like stray mules, out in the waterless steppes.

The two Consuls found it very hard to shake the Turkish officers in their resolve. They dwelt again and again on the inevitable loss of innocent life, on the certain destruction of the women and children. In the name of humanity, they urged the Osmanli leaders to abandon their insane, their desperate project.

“Humanity!” commented a Turkish officer bitterly. “You are fond of using the word humanity when you wish to save Christian life. You never mention it when Turkish lives are in peril.”

Munir Pasha had been much impressed, however, by the insinuation that he was sheltering himself behind women and children; and finally he gave way, and induced his companions to do the same. There were bitter tears in the eyes of some. One of them, Reschid Effendi, said: “We shall leave after a few shots from the batteries, after little more than a formal protest against the Italian landing. But we know,” he bitterly added, “that the Italians will misrepresent our action and impute it to cowardice.”

As I have already shown, this is exactly what the chivalrous Italians have done.

When I heard this story I thought of the young Italian officer at Bumeliana, the officer who had dismissed the Turks with a contemptuous wave of his hand and said that they had run away like madmen on hearing the roar of the Italian guns.

Having now regarded with amazement and contempt for the last six months the almost incredible timidity and incapacity of the enemy, Colonel Nesciat Bey and his friends are more than ever

convinced that they made a mistake in yielding to Consular entreaties and leaving Tripoli without striking a blow. But like Ottoman gentlemen of the best type, they throw no blame on the Consuls, and have consistently refrained from saying a word about that midnight conference just before the bombardment. The Italians, on the other hand, have described their "conquest" of Tripoli in the wildest strain of boastfulness. As a matter of fact, they took Tripoli and most of the other places which they have occupied on the coast, not because the Turks could not hold them, but because the Turks did not want to expose the Christian populations of those places to bombardment.



## CHAPTER VIII

### BEFORE THE ARMY CAME

“WHAT the Italian navy did in Tripoli from October 5th to October 11th,” says Signor Bevione, “has no precedent in history, and should fill us with pride. It disembarked seventeen hundred men in a city which had in its barracks, a week before, four thousand soldiers, a city armed with rifles and ammunition landed from the *Derna*, a Mussulman city whose sentiments towards us were not precisely known and which might, out of veneration for the Khalifa and out of hate for the Infidel, have sided with the Turks and begun a Holy War. It landed, it occupied and pacified the city.

“Now that all this is past history, and that all has ended happily, it must be said, however, that the navy attempted a diabolically audacious stroke, but attempted it with such superb *aplomb* that all the probabilities were for success. It was a gigantic bluff.”

But it was also a gigantic folly. It exposed the peaceful inhabitants of Tripoli to terrible things. If, only a fortnight later, the Turks broke the Italian line twice, forced Caneva and his twenty thousand to retreat despite their trenches, their bomb-proofs, their artillery, their barbed wire and their aeroplanes, and spread panic among the Italian soldiers, what earthly chance would Cagni and his seventeen

hundred have had, were the Turks to attack before the expedition landed ?

The Italian policy throughout all this campaign has been a mixture of excessive fool-hardiness and excessive caution. There has never been any medium. Now, this occupation of the town by a handful of marines was a case of excessive fool-hardiness. The weakest spot in all the line, the oasis, was not guarded at all. I landed soon after the bombardment, and went into the oasis the same night with two English colleagues, Mr. Percival Phillips and Mr. Thomas E. Grant. We walked eastward till we were tired, but found no Italian guards between us and the Turks. We reached the spot where the Bersaglieri were afterwards cut to pieces. It seemed foredoomed to be the scene of some great disaster. The dogs were barking in the profundity of the oasis. The vivid white flash of the naval search-lights made the palm trees throw jet-black shadows. There was a deep impression of solitude.

As it seemed dangerous to go any further, we retraced our steps and went towards Bumeliana, the famous well which furnishes Tripoli with water, and which is situated on the border of the desert, three kilometres from the city, on the great Gharian road. At a gendarmerie guard-house, still occupied by armed Turkish *zaptié* or policemen whose services the invaders had foolishly accepted, we had our first experience of that liability to panic on the part of the Italians which afterwards led to such terrible excesses in this very oasis. We were walking in the shadow of the guard-house, and in front of us was an open square all flooded with moonlight. All around were latticed Turkish houses, silent as tombs. Suddenly, from the darkness beyond, in the direction

of Bumeliana, rushed a group of Italian civilians armed to the teeth, but in the most abject state of terror. One of them had a military rifle, and as he had his finger on the trigger and kept the weapon pointed our way I must admit that I was seriously alarmed. All the others had revolvers which they flourished over their heads, their fingers also on the triggers. Some special Providence (or perhaps it was the sight of Mr. Phillips' typical American outfit) saved all three of us from being shot as we suddenly emerged out of the shadow into the moonlight and confronted this terror-stricken gang.

After much laborious effort we managed to calm them, and then they explained to us that they had been out in the oasis and had seen scores of Turkish soldiers creeping along amid the palm trees.

Their story may have been true or it may not. I must say, however, that many people assured me at this time that groups of Turkish soldiers did enter the oasis every night far in the rear of the Italians. I suppose they made little purchases of coffee and tobacco, visited friends, had tea with them, learned the latest news, and then went out into the desert again.

What I do know to be true is that at the dangerous point in the oasis which I first visited there was not even a sentinel. Now, as I shall show later, a great number of Arabs managed to slip through the Italian lines at this part of the oasis on October 22nd, when there was a large number of soldiers there. Could they not have slipped past still more easily when there were no soldiers? And if they had slipped past, entered the town, and taken in the rear the handful of sleepy and exhausted bluejackets, who were supposed to be "holding" Bumeliana, what



resistance could those bluejackets have offered? And what would have been the fate of the city? The Turkish commander could not have restrained his wild Arab levies from murdering, plundering, and burning, and the fleet would have probably added to the horrors of the scene by doing what an Italian field battery actually did on the 26th—shell-ing friend and foe alike.

The Italians themselves did not realise the full seriousness of the situation, but the foreign merchants in town did. Early in October I spoke to some of the most responsible of them on this subject, and they made no secret of their conviction that the Italians were acting like madmen.

“Were Ibrahim Pasha now in command of the Turks,” said a local banker to me, “the town would have been blazing over our heads last night and not one of the bluejackets at Bumeliana would ever again sail upon the sea.”

He was referring to Ibrahim Pasha, the strong and capable Vali whose recall the Italian Consul had brought about a short time previous (so that the command of the Turkish forces should be, as it was, in the very feeble hands of old Munir Pasha, when the *coup* was made).

The Italians landed when they did, long before the expedition was ready, because there is jealousy between the army and the navy, and the latter wished to win all the laurels. But the army soon had its revenge. Captain Cagni discovered, too late, that he had done a foolish thing. His bluejackets knew as little about scouting and other details of land warfare as a camel knows about the Higher Criticism. The sailors had no time for sleep, and the night attacks



The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagonal unit cell with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $j$ . The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with some vertices highlighted in black and others in white, illustrating a specific configuration of interest.

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THE LANDING OF THE ARMY.

of the Turks, futile and unsystematic as they were, worried them beyond endurance. When relieved by the troops, some of them had had no sleep for three days and were hardly able to walk through fatigue. All of them were very close to the breaking-point, and no one realised better than Commandant Cagni that if the Turks had conducted their attacks with any system or advanced in earnest, he would have had to retreat to his ships.

On October 8th, Admiral Faravelli wired to Rome representing how desperate his situation was and asking that troops should be sent at once. "Do not wait," he implored, "till the whole expedition is ready. Send even a few regiments." Meanwhile he himself despatched a cruiser northward under full steam in order to hurry up any transports that might be lying in the Sicilian ports or lagging on the way. At the same time two swift ocean liners were immediately despatched from Naples with troops, which were disembarked on the morning of the 11th and at once hurried to the front. On October 12th, the rest of the Armada appeared and the danger ceased to be acute.

Then, and not till then, did the Italians admit the recklessness of their proceedings. Admit it? Nay, they gloried in it. But all this had its effect on the Turks and Arabs later, and that effect was not to the advantage of the "Army of Occupation."

While the danger lasted, no news of it was, of course, permitted to leave the country, for on whatever matters the Italians have shown laxity and carelessness, they have always been very careful about the Press, the telegraphs, and even the post office. The Italian commanders became desperately afraid that any tidings regarding their condition

should reach the Turks through Press cablegrams from Tripoli published in the European newspapers, transmitted to Constantinople, and thence forwarded via Tunisia to the Turkish commander in the Tripolitan hinterland. An order consequently went forth to the effect that all telegrams, Press or private, must go to Rome for a second dose of censorship. This meant, of course, that they would be "held up" indefinitely, that they would reach their destination some time after the end of the war. But as several patient and optimistic correspondents continued to correspond, even under these circumstances, the telegraph line was entirely taken over by the Italian authorities, under the pretext that it was wanted for official business. Even commerical houses were not allowed to wire about anything in code or in plain language, lest they should convey circuitously to the Turkish leader in the interior the news of the desperate position in which the Italian landing-party found itself.

On the first night after the landing the Italians contented themselves with guarding the old walls of the town, but next day they found it necessary to extend their line to Bumeliana, owing to the fact that at Bumeliana was the well from which the town was supplied with drinking-water. To prevent the Turks from cutting the water-supply and causing a water-famine in Tripoli the bluejackets had to be sent to garrison Bumeliana.

And now we come to the mistakes of the Turks. During this critical period their attacks were always directed against Bumeliana. It is hard to explain why they did not attack through the oasis as they did, so successfully, later.

Probably the reasons are as follows. They had



not at this time many Arabs with them. They did not know what poor soldiers the Italians are. They attributed to the Italian leaders far greater military skill than those gentlemen actually possessed ; in other words, they feared that some trap would be sprung on them if they attacked under cover and not out in the open desert where they could see for many miles on every side of them. They also attributed too much importance to the fire of the battleships lying off Sharashett. They feared that if they attacked via Sharashett the *Sicilia* would blow them to smithereens. Perhaps they also feared that landing-parties from the ships, acting in conjunction with the Bumeliana detachment, would cut off their retreat if they attacked Sharashett, or would catch them between Sharashett and the sea. And it would not be difficult for an efficient invader to do so, as, east of Sharashett, there are marshes which might constitute disastrous impediments in the retreat of a Turkish force which had been beaten back in an attack on the city.

On the other hand, Bumeliana, being almost due south, was further removed from the action of the Italian fleet than any other part of the Italian line. Besides, being open desert, it gave the invaders less opportunity to cut off the Turks when they approached.

It is easy, of course, to be wise after the event, but there can be no doubt that the Turks lost a great chance at this time by keeping pegging away night after night at Bumeliana when, by turning the Italian flank through the oasis, they might easily have captured all Commander Cagni's garrison and inflicted on the Italians a blow from which they would never have recovered. The reason why Nesciat

Bey did not take advantage of this unequalled opportunity is probably this. He had not yet succeeded in rousing the Arabs. Orientals are notoriously apathetic and slow, and it was a week at least before the Turkish commander was able to convince the Arab chiefs that the Italians were in the country and intended to stay there. This also accounts for his failure to make any considerable number of the Arabs rally round him before the bombardment. They had seen those naval demonstrations of the Italians before and knew that nothing had ever come of them. They believed that this one would be like the others. Moreover, Nesciat Bey himself was badly served by Constantinople. Without instructions from the Sublime Porte, he could not arm the natives on October 2nd, and the telegrams from his Government were very much delayed. The cable announcing that war was declared and giving him a free hand arrived only six hours before the bombardment.

I shall not say that the Turks made a mistake in not arranging that the outer attack and the revolt in the town on October 23rd should both take place at night and at the same moment. For, as I shall show later, there was no revolt in the town, though there was a panic there. But I think Nesciat Bey should have provoked a panic on a very large scale in Tripoli city, say, at midnight on October 22nd, and should have at the same instant attacked Shara-shett. If the Turkish leader had been really bent on making Tripoli city quake, he had all the materials for doing so ready to his hand. He had scores of Arab fanatics who were positively clamouring for a chance of throwing away their lives on some desperate venture. Nesciat Bey might have sent some of these men to fire shots into the powder-

magazines, others to set fire to the city in a hundred different places, others to entrench themselves with good Mausers and plenty of ammunition in corner-houses, and thus convert every narrow lane into an Oriental Sidney Street. But I am anticipating.

I have blamed Nesciat Bey for his persistency in attacking only Bumeliana. On the other hand, this very persistency led, in turn, to the Italians committing the blunder of devoting all their attention to Bumeliana and practically leaving the oasis line to take care of itself. General Caneva had evidently set it down as an axiom that, owing to the presence of the cruisers at the extremities of his right and left flanks, the Turks would never attack those flanks, but would confine themselves to an attempt to carry Bumeliana by a *coup de main*. He reckoned without the incredible fearlessness of the Arab, who is not scared even by the aeroplane, and whose contempt for the battleship is so great that he actually attacks it with his rifle! At Azilat the Arab villagers, poor devils! rushed up to their waists in the sea to get a nearer shot at an Italian man-o'-war which was shelling that unprotected little village. And towards the end of November there was quite a fusillade from beyond Fort Hamidié at the *Dardo*, the *Partenope*, and the *Carlo Alberto*. The search-light of the latter vessel was smashed by a rifle-ball, a gunner on the same vessel was wounded, and a bullet passed through the clothes of the captain of the corvette *Cacace*. And, as we shall soon see, it was exactly on their extreme left, where they thought themselves most secure, that the Italians were first to learn the meaning of that phrase which had not at Sharashett quite the same flippant meaning which is sometimes attached to it at St Stephen's—a rush of Dervishes.



On October 12th, therefore, the situation was saved and the whole Italian Press gave one great sigh of relief. With the landing of the Bersaglieri, wired Luigi Barzini, "the most critical period of the occupation of Tripoli must be regarded as at an end. For seven days and seven most long nights (*sette giorni e sette lunghissime notti*) eighteen hundred marines audaciously held the city. . . . Those days of glory and of anxiety are passed."

At Bumeliana, during those days of glory, there were only two companies of bluejackets, one company from the *Brin* under Captain Bonelli, one from the *Sardegna* under First-lieutenant Pertusio—two hundred men in all. There was an attack on Bumeliana the night after I landed, and all the newspaper men in the city were there or at some other part of the front. The non-Italians who were present could hardly persuade themselves that the proceedings at which they were assisting constituted real war, and not comic opera or some Christmas pantomime of an excruciatingly funny sort.

Here was an invading army supposed to be in possession of a city, yet with the enemy turning up punctually every night at 10.30, and spitting on them, so to speak, as they lay hidden behind a little mud-wall, afraid to look over it (I speak of the common seamen) lest they should see something dreadful.

Five Italian journalists were up a tree, which palpitated visibly with their anxiety. Something dark, dread, and menacing advanced out of the desert. The bluejackets blazed away at it for all they were worth, but as they were afraid to look over the wall and take aim, their shots went far too high. Finally, with shambling tread a superannuated donkey made its appearance, solemn and uninjured. It had prob-



ably been left behind by the Turks, and some instinct had guided it back over the sand to the oasis. It began to nibble hungrily at the grass, the bluejackets meanwhile watching it with obvious suspicion. They were not sure about the brute at all.

The next fright came in the shape of a dismal moaning and wailing at the rear. The voice was that of an old native woman. "Surely to heavens," said an Irish spectator to himself, "surely to heavens she cannot be a *banshee*—seeing that she wails and laments in Arabic." A diligent search led to the discovery that the old woman was not a *banshee*, but merely a resident of a lazarette for the famine-stricken which the Turks had established at Bume-liana. She had come outside and was sitting on the ground. Probably she had not had anything to eat since the Turks left.

Another pause, and at length the officers declared that they could see something which looked like a dense mass of men on the edge of a sand-hill. And, sure enough, there was a sudden dot of flame away out in the waste, a shot rang out, and a bullet whistled through the fronds of a palm tree overhead.

Immediately there was dreadful confusion. Rockets went up asking the fleet to help. The *Filiberto* and the *Sardegna* bombarded the desert with every variety of shell they had on board—shrapnel, percussion shell, twelve-inch, and all the others. The uproar continued for half-an-hour. The search-lights of the *Sardegna* swept the desert, but no enemy was to be seen. Some officers with their ears to the ground declared that they could hear the distant galloping of cavalry.

Meanwhile reinforcements were sent for. Those

reinforcements numbered exactly one hundred marines and that one hundred constituted the entire reserve in the town.

"*Ma che importa?*" says an Italian, who probably felt some excuse to be due for the appalling paucity of the reserves. "*I nostri uomini si sentono capaci di qualunque audacia.*" ("What does it matter? Our men feel themselves equal to any audacity.")

[Very true, my excited journalistic friend, but you must remember that this is not a huge joke which you are perpetrating. You are responsible not only for the lives of your sailors ashore, but also for the lives of some forty thousand peaceful people, most of them women and children. If you have come here only in order to overturn the Government which has kept some sort of order and then to run out again, leaving the place in a state of chaos, I do think that you might have postponed your visit until you were ready to come with a sufficiently strong force.]

In the morning four Turks were found lying in the desert. Three were dead, one wounded. They had all been struck down by rifle-bullets, so that the terrific bombardment by the ships had been entirely useless. The donkey was also dead, but as it was not considered necessary to hold a *post-mortem*, it will never perhaps be known whether it was killed by a stray Turkish bullet or assassinated by some of the sailors.

Next day the Italian correspondents spent hundreds of pounds cabling home word-pictures of this sanguinary engagement. Signor Barzini called it "our baptism of fire." The number of the Turks was given at various figures from five hundred to five thousand. I cannot say what number is right, but Mr. Reginald Kahn, a well-known French war-

correspondent, assures me that the number was—fifteen !

I have already pointed out that the Italians took the whole adventure pretty lightly. They said that the Turks were in desperate want of drinking-water, and that it was the pangs of thirst which had forced them to attack the Bumeliana well. Mr. Barzini wired to the "Corriere della Sera" a cordial invitation to the Turks to come in with a white flag, assuring them at the same time that Commander Cagni would let them have as much water and as much food as they wished for.

It was apparently a generous offer, but, if accepted, it would probably have been followed by an act of treachery on the part of the Italians. For never has one army behaved so scurvily towards a brave enemy as the Italian army has behaved towards the Turks in Tripoli. On October 18th, a Turkish doctor with a Red Crescent Badge on his arm presented himself at Bumeliana under a flag of truce and begged for some lint and antiseptics for the wounded. He was immediately arrested, carried in great triumph through the city, and finally conducted to the General Staff, where he was questioned for hours about the state of the Turkish army, the positions which they occupied and the attitude of the Arabs.

Then he was sent, still under arrest, to the Hotel Minerva, in order that he might be further "pumped" by the Italian journalists resident there. But he certainly hoodwinked those correspondents badly, for he persuaded them that the Turks lacked food, could not obtain ammunition, and had failed to find any Arab allies owing to the scarcity of the date crop the previous year. This, it will be remembered, was four days before the great Turko-Arab attack



of October 23rd. This doctor was afterwards sent as a prisoner to Syracuse. In almost every case subsequently in which the Arabs tried to communicate with General Caneva under cover of a flag of truce, the Italians indignantly arrested the messenger and sent him as a prisoner of war to Syracuse. The only occasion on which a Turkish messenger escaped was on the morning of the 26th, when an Ottoman officer rode in and asked Colonel Fara to deliver up the city within twenty-four hours. The Colonel was so aghast at the proposition that the man escaped.

General Caneva is reported to have said : " These are only brigands. I cannot respect their white flags." On this principle he consistently acted. It was an insult, in his opinion, for any Turk to regard himself as entitled to treat on equal terms with Lieutenant-General Carlo Caneva, Governor of Tripoli and Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Army of Occupation. His attitude in this respect reminded me of that of my friend Colonel Artemieff, the editor of the official " *Novi Krai* " in Port Arthur, on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War.

When asked by Reuter's correspondent in my presence if it was true that Japan had sent an ultimatum, the Colonel swelled visibly, drew himself up, and replied that so great an Empire as Russia could not receive an ultimatum from a little nation like Japan. If Japan did send what *she* regarded as an ultimatum, well, Russia would simply smile, and say : " Take it away now, and be sensible." In Colonel Artemieff's opinion the case was very much like that of an elephant being attacked by an angry frog. There could not, in the nature of things, be a contest. It was out of the question.

General Caneva consequently felt himself entitled



to disregard all the rules of war, and to shoot all prisoners taken, whether Turkish or Arabic. Signor G. De Felice Giuffrida tells in the "Secolo" (October 31st) how, after the battle of the 26th, he saw a Turkish soldier (*un soldato turco*) lying bound in a hole in the ground. "He is awaiting perhaps his last hour," remarked the Italian lightly, and passed on.

The whole quotation is as follows :

"In una buca profonda trovasi un soldato turco prigioniero, legato, impossibilitato a scappare. Attende forse la sua ultima ora con quella rassegnazione fanatica rasentante la incoscienza, che spinge le turbe arabe nel fanatismo contro gli infedeli."

Now, why should Signor Giuffrida expect this Turkish soldier to be butchered unless it was the rule with the Italians to butcher all the prisoners whom they made, whether they were Turkish prisoners in uniform or Arab prisoners in native dress, whether they had been captured in the oasis or out in the desert, whether they had fallen into the hands of the enemy through lack of ammunition or through fatigue induced by over-exertion or by loss of blood ?

In Gharian there were at the end of last year five Italian soldiers who had been captured in November during a disastrous attempt (of which the Italians took good care, by the way, not to let the world know anything) made by the 93rd Regiment to land east of Tripoli. These men are well fed and well treated. They are allowed to write to their friends in Italy, and even to wire to them at the expense of the Ottoman Administration. Nearly one hundred Italian prisoners had previously been despatched

under escort to Fezzan, which is still further south ; and many more captures have probably been made since.

So much for the manner in which the unmentionable Turk treats his captives. We have already seen the manner in which civilised Italy treats hers. At Syracuse and in various parts of Sicily she has many Turkish prisoners, but not one of them was taken in battle. They are all included in the following categories : (1) Arrested in Turkish merchant steamers at sea ; (2) soldiers who had been left behind sick in the hospital at Tripoli, but whom the Italians declared to be shamming and arrested ; (3) messengers who came in under a flag of truce, but who were immediately seized and bound at the instance of General Caneva, who refused to treat the enemy as regular combatants and insisted on regarding them as burglars.

The Turks and Arabs have been consistently treated in this war as brave men caught at a disadvantage are generally treated by cowards, as a brave Goth or Celt made prisoner by some act of treachery would be treated by the last decadent Potentates of Imperial Rome. Shortly after the Italians landed, all the Turkish soldiers in the hospitals were made prisoners, placed on board a vessel, and sent to Italy, where, doubtless, they were afterwards paraded in public as men who had been captured in battle. An Austrian correspondent happened to be on the same vessel (see Hermann Wendel's "Tripoli-Raub und Weltkrieg"), and he tells what was done to them :

"Every evening, at six o'clock, all the prisoners were put in irons. Each of these sick, broken

soldiers phlegmatically held out his left arm and left leg, which were chained together. From six o'clock in the evening till six o'clock next morning we heard the frightful music of the iron fetters clanking continuously as the men turned in their sleep."

Suitable music, indeed, for the "civilisation" which Italy has brought to Africa !





**PART III**  
**THE BATTLES**



## CHAPTER I

### THE BATTLE OF SHARASHETT: HOW THE ARABS BROKE THE ITALIAN LINE

THE fighting around Tripoli city towards the end of last year was really all one long battle, lasting from October 6th till December 4th, when the Italians reached Ain Zara, or, properly speaking, until the present day, for the invaders are still besieged in Tripoli. This battle should be known as the battle of Tripoli. Sharashett and Sidi Messri were merely prominent episodes of that conflict, critical moments when the Arab attack was pressed home with more than usual energy and success.

I shall confine myself, however, to a description of Sharashett and Sidi Messri, as the other attacks were similar, but more uninteresting and on a smaller scale.

In order to understand these battles as well as the terrible repressive measures by which they were followed, it is necessary to realise the position of General Caneva's forces in Tripoli at the middle of October. At that time the Italian line was drawn like a semicircle round the landward side of Tripoli city. The city was in the centre, the radius, measuring from the old Castello in which the Commander-in-chief resided, was about three miles. The semicircle terminated right and left on the sea, on the right or west at Gargaresh, on the left or east at Sharashett. To the south was Bumeliana. Between Bumeliana

and Sharashett were the Cavalry Barracks, the Marabout or Saint's tomb of Sidi Messri, Fort Messri, and Henni. All these places will be mentioned very frequently in my account of the fighting.

And here it would be well again to remind the reader of the geographical features of the district, since they are of great importance from a military point of view. Tripoli and its oasis resemble a comet and its tail. Tripoli is the head of the comet; the tail runs eastward down the coast and close to the sea for some six or seven miles.

This oasis or strip of moisture-retentive soil had an average depth of about a mile and was one immense palm grove, filled not only with date-palms, but also with cacti, fig trees, and olive trees. All through the oasis swarmed the little flat-roofed, mud-walled villages of the Arabs. Each villager had his own patch of garden, enclosed by walls of reddish mud, and by bewildering labyrinths of cactus hedge. Among the villages were Moslem graveyards also surrounded by mud-walls, so as to save them from the streams formed during the torrential rains of the winter.

The Italians did not occupy all of the Tripoli oasis. Evidently they did not consider themselves strong enough to do so. Accordingly, from Fort Messri to Sharashett their line cut through the oasis, and as the Bersaglieri did not (save at one point, Henni,) entrench themselves here, did not cut down the palm trees and cacti, did not level the innumerable mud-walls and mud-cabins, it is easy to understand why the Turko-Arab force delivered its greatest attacks and gained its greatest successes at this part of the line. Along the Fort Messri-Sharashett line the Italians had in front of them houses, palms, olives,



clay walls, and impenetrable thickets. They did not clear a fire-zone in front of their rifles, so that when the Arabs appeared in this quarter before dawn on October 23rd they were near enough to shake hands with the Bersaglieri if they had been disposed to do so. Save at Henni, as I have already pointed out, there were no trenches, no cannon, no serious defensive works.

It was different in the other part of the line, from Henni west to Gargaresh, though here no elaborate defences were needed, since the Turks would have had to advance over the bare desert, while the Italians entrenched on the edge of the oasis could easily shoot them down without once exposing themselves to the enemy's fire. But all the way from Fort Messri to Gargaresh ran deep trenches in which the Italians must have been quite invisible to the enemy. In front of these trenches stood, sometimes, loop-holed mud-walls, barbed wire fences, and pits with spikes at the bottom. At Gargaresh, Bumeliana, and the Cavalry Barracks were mountain and field batteries of the best kind. Bumeliana was especially well defended for two reasons. In the first place, being well to the south it was further removed than any other part of the line from the protective influence of the guns on the battleships. In the second place, up to this time the Turks had always made their night attacks at Bumeliana, and thus given the Italians the idea that they would always continue to attack there and would endeavour to carry this place by storm.

I shall now proceed to describe the battle.

The battle of Sharashett, on October 23rd, was the first serious fight of the Turko-Italian War, and the first conflict in which the Arabs fought side by side

with the Turks, thus dissipating very rudely all Italian illusions on the subject of an Arab Alliance. The previous attacks of the enemy had been confined to one portion of the Italian line, namely Bumeliana, and showed little military skill and little common sense. On October 23rd the attack embraced the whole Italian line from the seashore at Gargaresh to Bumeliana, from Bumeliana to the Cavalry Barracks, from the Cavalry Barracks to Fort Messri, from Fort Messri to Henni, from Henni to Sharashett, on the sea-coast east of Tripoli. From Sharashett the battle takes its name owing to the fact that at this point the Italian line was broken and the 4th and 5th companies of the 11th Bersaglieri were almost cut to pieces. But perhaps the most striking feature of this battle was the Arab attack on the rear of the Bersaglieri at Sharashett.

I rose early in the morning of this day and climbed to the flat roof of the Hotel Minerva. The darkness of night was struggling with the on-coming day. The stars were still burning brightly in the west ; the street lamps were still alight in the streets below ; and in the east a pale, cold, mystic light bathed the grey, corpse-like face of the desert. The unwearied search-lights of the *Sicilia* and the *Carlo Alberto* lit up the white shore of Gargaresh, swung backwards and forwards, caressing the beach, like the long white tentacles of some gigantic monster of the sea. A strange humming noise overhead attracted my attention. It came from a monster of the air, from the motor of Captain Piazza's "Blériot."

Perfectly even, perfectly under control, the aeroplane glided gracefully aloft like a gigantic dragon-fly. It was soon joined by the "Neuport" machine of Captain Moizo. Up to that time the wonderful aerial

invention, which is bound to revolutionise war, had a bad start in Tripoli. Essentially the weapon of the swift aggressor, it was here at the disposal of a cautious general who was in command of a timid army. Moreover, it could not have been tried on a worse field of operations, for, as a rule, the bombs discharged from it bury themselves harmlessly in the sand. The Arabs have no barracks or permanent works which can be injured ; and as they now scatter whenever they see an aeroplane approaching, practically no loss is ever inflicted on them by the grenades. The women and children in the villages are practically the only victims, and this fact excites the anger of the Arabs, who are unaware, of course, that while the Hague Convention frowns on their occasional use of Dum-dum bullets, it does not prohibit the throwing of aerial bombs whose jagged pieces cause most terrible wounds.

In a European war the aeroplane would, of course, play a far more important rôle. The movements of the enemy could be watched, while battleships, powder-magazines, forts, and all kinds of permanent works could be injured.

The Italians imagined that the aeroplanes would have on the Arabs the same effect as Pizarro's cavalry had on the Incas, that mollah, dervish, sheikh, and marabout would unanimously fall down and worship. Consequently one always found the intensely self-conscious Italians putting themselves mentally in the benighted native's place and marvelling at the power of the god-like stranger. "*La commozione degli indigeni è intensa*" (the commotion among the natives is intense), says one observer, who also talks of the roar of the multitude "thunder-struck by the prodigy."



But, as a matter of fact, the Arabs of Tripoli, like the Moors of Morocco, are very little scared by the sight of an aeroplane. They look up in astonishment and praise Allah for all his wondrous works, but their respect for the European is not in the least heightened.

At first the Italian aeroplanes were employed, not in scouting, but in petrifying the natives of the city. The machines confined themselves entirely to the air directly above Tripoli and its suburbs. On the present occasion I thought that I was going to see nothing but the usual flight over the tops of the houses, but in this I was mistaken, for, after a few turns over the city and the shipping, the aeroplanes sailed south towards Bumeliana. They passed Bumeliana, passed the first sand-dunes, and, after hovering about there for a time, flew still further south until they became mere specks in the sky. In less than half-an-hour they returned and alighted gracefully near the military hangar outside the walls. One would not have suspected that they had had time to see much, but they reported to the General Staff that they had seen four Turkish encampments, the nearest of them three miles from the Italian outposts, the furthest, five or six miles. In the largest of the encampments, which was situated in a small oasis or group of palm trees called Agedzia, there was a huge tent, evidently that of a general or colonel.

To an enterprising commander, such information would have been invaluable, but, for all the use he made of it, General Caneva might as well have been without aeroplanes at all. He made no effort to attack the Arabs in detail before they had joined forces, and the disposition of his troops remained the same. The Italian soldiers were still standing



shoulder to shoulder in a semicircle south of the town, and no one portion could be strengthened to any appreciable extent in case of danger, because there were practically no reserves in the city.

It must be admitted, moreover, that the aeroplanes did not afterwards keep very well in touch with these Arabs as cavalry would have done ; for in the course of the morning the bulk of the enemy seems to have worked round to the oasis on the east without being perceived.

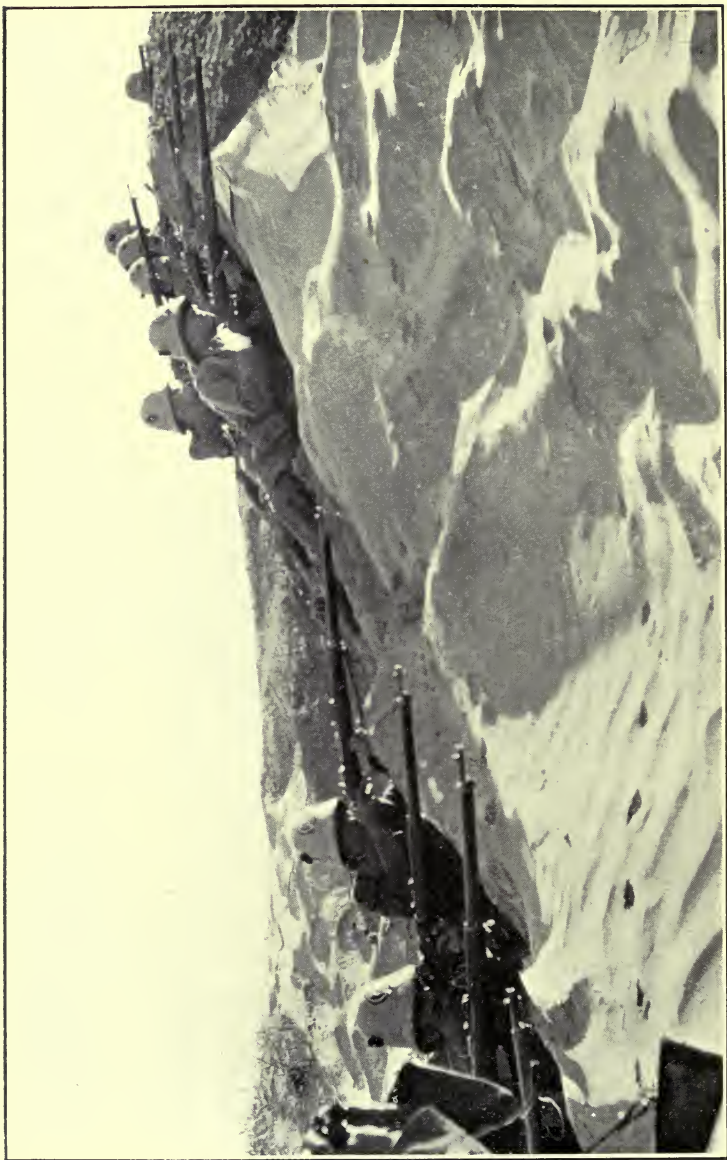
In any case the aeroplanes could not have observed the approach of the Turkish main body which entered the eastern end of the oasis and marched in the shade of the palm trees all the way to Sharashett. I am therefore at a loss to see in what consists the brilliancy of the *brillante esplorazione* by the aeroplanes whereof the Italians boasted so much on this occasion. At all events the practical utility of the reconnaissance is very hard to see.

First, the Turks and Arabs made demonstrations along the whole front of the Italian line, beginning at the western extremity. In the desert just south of the Sultanié battery and a few miles distant from the Italian lines is the oasis of Gurgi, where a German subject called Von Lochow had a concession and a house. The house, over which floated the German flag, was truculently new ; and the more one looked at it the more was one surprised to see such a fine modern edifice—it looked like the bungalow of a well-to-do Indian planter—standing intact and even self-satisfied in the dangerous no-man's land between two hostile armies. Still stranger was the fact that the young farming expert, Von Lochow, continued to live in it. Von Lochow was violently anti-Italian. Before the bombardment he had had rows with Vice-

Consul Galli, and with the Italian correspondents, and, after the bombardment, he was believed to hold nightly conferences in his house with agents of the enemy. It was certainly a fact that, before the Italian occupation, Von Lochow had been on the friendliest terms with the Turkish military authorities. It was also a fact that his house was full of food and drink, that it had been stocked as if for a siege; yet though, according to Italian accounts, the Turks were in a desperate state for want of eatables, they never entered Von Lochow's open door or disturbed the concessionaire of Gurgi at his biological researches. I do not believe that this young German was a spy; but his enemies were confirmed in their worst suspicions when, about 8 o'clock on the morning of October 23rd, they saw the Arabs appear in the vicinity of his bungalow, which they evidently used as a base of operations. They had reached it from Senit Beni-Adam on the south, having crawled northwards within shelter of the sand-dunes and the dried-up beds of torrents. Soon they showed themselves clearly on the edges of the hills. In front rode horsemen; behind marched a large body of infantry. The ample turbans and white flowing robes of the horsemen and of many of the infantrymen showed that the Arabs had at length joined the Turks. For there were many Turks present also in their dark-blue European uniform. It was a strange and ominous combination of East and West—Eastern fanaticism led by Western science. The infantrymen were carrying something which sharp-eyed people with good telescopes recognised as the Turkish flag.

The Arab horsemen in front advanced fearlessly, brandishing their rifles and firing on the gallop. One of them carried a flag. They came to within five

THE  
COLUMBIAN



REPELLING TURKISH DEMONSTRATION AT GARGARESH.



hundred yards of the Italian trenches. White puffs of sand were raised by the hoofs of their horses. Suddenly there was a distant report and overhead appeared a white puff of cloud with an aluminium flash in the middle of it. It was the bursting shrapnel shell of an Italian mountain battery. At the same instant the 40th Italian Regiment began to fire from the safe shelter of their trenches. The dry, incessant hiccough of the mitrailleuse was heard; the mountain battery (which had been hurriedly summoned from Fort Sultanié) came barking into action; and finally the *Sicilia's* big guns drowned all other noises. Tons of earth seemed to be thrown into the air each time a ten-inch shell from the battleship struck the sand.

In face of all this stormy protest the Arabs did not insist. As a matter of fact they had never intended to insist: the whole advance was a demonstration meant to prevent Caneva from sending reinforcements from his right wing to his extreme left, where the Turks did mean business.

Where the Arab cavaliers had been there was now a white figure left lying on the ground. Close by was a wounded horse trying ineffectually to rise. Further off was a dark heap which may have been a Turk. Still further south was a flying crowd of horsemen and infantry disappearing behind a sand-hill. For some time the enemy continued firing at the Italian trenches, where two soldiers were hit.

Later on, the officers on board the *Sicilia* saw some of the Turks retiring along the Zanzur road, and fired about half-a-dozen shells to speed the parting guest. Once again the great ten-inch guns uplifted a tremendous voice, and the exploding missiles raised enormous black clouds of smoke, like Japanese Shimosé.

A Jewish boy on his way home from Zanzur to

Tripoli was caught between the two fires and nearly driven mad with fright. First he lay down flat in a hollow of the ground, the best thing he could have done under the circumstances, then he got up again and ran wildly towards the Italians. He dropped exhausted near the Italian trenches, but was picked up and given some refreshments. When questioned as to the Arab losses he said that they were very heavy, but obviously his testimony could not be relied upon. The Turko-Arabs probably lost no more than a dozen men killed and wounded and several horses killed. Now, as always, the Italian shooting was very bad. At 9.30 the Turks slipped away, and at 10.15 the Italian firing ceased. At 11 o'clock two companies of the 84th advanced very cautiously in skirmishing order. A large number of them entered Von Lochow's house after crawling slowly towards it with extreme deliberation, for they evidently feared an ambush. I watched to see if they would haul down the German flag, but they did not do so.

Other soldiers returned laden with *spolia opima*, to wit, item one Turkish cavalry saddle—the stirrups dripping with blood, perhaps the horse's blood—ditto one bit, ditto one pair riding-reins (much the worse for wear), ditto one blood-stained suit of uniform—the uniform of a Turkish private, ditto one sword, ditto three or four carabines, and ditto about half-a-dozen fezzes. A wounded horse was also brought in, a very ill-fed and sorry-looking beast indeed. The magnificent Lodi cavalry should have been able to trample such horses like mud beneath their hoofs. But the reputation of the Arab for desperate valour protected him like a charm. It was worth ten *sotnya* of Cossacks to him. The perspiring cavalymen of Lodi kept a most respectful distance.

So did the small parties of Italian infantry which now crawled in fear and trembling towards the crests of the nearest sand-hills, and remained there as out-posts. Everywhere, at a distance of some three or four miles, they saw mounted vedettes of the enemy, sitting erect in their saddles on the edge of other sand-hills, immobile, on the watch. But the invaders refrained very carefully from disturbing those fierce nomads.

The Italians thought that the enemy had had enough of it and was retreating to Suni Ben-Adam. But, behind that veil of silent, desert horsemen, the Turks were circling round towards Bumeliana and Shara-shett. For, as I have already pointed out, it was at Sharashett that Nesciat Bey meant to strike in earnest. His plan showed masterly skill. When, three days afterwards, the nature of this plan began to dawn on the Italians the "Giornale d' Italia" denounced it as *diabolico*, and reproached the Turks for having prepared it *con raffinata scaltrezza* (with extreme cunning) "several days earlier, perhaps even before the arrival of the Italian soldiers." Perhaps the "Giornale" referred exclusively, however, to what it fancied to be the treacherous rear attack of the "friendlies."

The attack on Bumeliana, which was now the Quartier-Général, was almost an exact replica of that on Gargaresh. First a number of Arab horsemen appeared on the edge of a sand-dune and galloped towards the well. They wheeled round and round, their long garments streaming behind them. Without ever stopping, they fired repeatedly from the saddle, but nobody was ever hit. It was the same picturesque display of horsemanship of which the Arabs in Tripoli are as fond as are their cousins in



Morocco. It was certainly a very dangerous amusement so far as the Arabs were concerned, for Bumeliana was the most strongly fortified part of the Italian line : it literally bristled with rifles and cannon.

The soldiers of the 84th Regiment lined the trenches and with them were some sailors from the *Carlo Alberto*, for, despite their enormous numerical superiority over their opponents, the Italians continually landed bluejackets and sent them to critical points. They used the fleet as a military reserve, and it was their sole support, for there were no reserves in town. The danger of this policy was twofold. If the sea were rough all communication with the vessels in harbour might be cut off, as it sometimes is for a whole week at a time. And, secondly, it was somewhat of a risk to leave a newly occupied city almost entirely under the control of Arab policemen who had been in the Turkish service only a month before.

Captain Savino had charge of the naval battery at Bumeliana, and he opened fire on the Arab cavaliers as soon as the latter had come to within five hundred yards of the trenches. On the right of the Bumeliana well was the 40th Regiment with several field and mountain batteries. On the left were other field batteries, as well as machine-gun sections.

An irresistible fire was soon brought to bear on the Arab horsemen, who were entirely unsupported by infantry ; and finally they turned and disappeared behind the nearest sand-hill. They carried off some wounded with them, but their losses seemed to be astonishingly small. After their disappearance two squadrons of Italian cavalry rode up to Bumeliana. They had been telephoned for, but, fearing an ambush, they did not follow the Arabs into the desert.

The next attack took place at the Cavalry Barracks.



It was carried out, as at Gargaresh, by white-robed Arab riders and foot soldiers mingled with khaki-clad Turkish infantrymen. Here, as elsewhere, the assailants were driven back by artillery fire, but, though invisible behind the sand-hills, they continued firing for a long time.

At ten o'clock all was calm again at the cavalry barracks ; but meanwhile a terrible fight, the only real fight of the day, was going on in the oasis. The oasis line from the Cavalry Barracks to Sharashett was held by the 11th Bersaglieri. The 5th company was on the seashore at the extreme left, and next to it was the 4th company. Manillo Giovanni was at the head of one half of the 5th company on the extreme left between the road which runs along the sea and the caravan road to Tagiura. To his right was the other half of the same company under the command of Captain Punzio. The force holding the oasis—the weakest part of the whole Italian line—was too small, not entrenched, unprovided with artillery, and not in touch with the rest of the army.

Evangelista Salvatore, a Sicilian soldier from Ravanusa, and one of the few Bersaglieri who escaped from Sharashett, told next day a very graphic story of the attack.

He was awakened just before dawn by the furious barking of the native dogs throughout all that part of the oasis and especially outside the Italian line. The animals had probably been disturbed by the stealthy approach of a great mass of armed men. The sentinels who were supposed to be on the look-out seem to have been aroused from their slumbers by the same sinister sounds, which I can declare from personal experience to be the most doleful, uncanny,

and unnerving noises that one can possibly hear in the Tripoli oasis at night.

But neither the sentinels nor the soldiers profited by the warning, and they were all alike unprepared when, a few moments later, the *Saraceni* (Saracens), as Evangelista called them, poured in a murderous fire.

The assailants were largely Arabs stiffened by the 8th Turkish Infantry Regiment. They had entered the oasis at its eastern extremity, and the umbrageous crests of the date-palms had shielded them from observation by the aeroplanes. Moreover, the Bersaglieri had thrown out no scouts, and had even, as I have already pointed out, neglected the elementary precaution of clearing a fire-zone in front of their line.

The 4th and 5th companies never recovered from this surprise, and, to add to their difficulties, Arabs who had previously slipped through the Italian lines began to attack them in the rear. "The *Saraceni* seemed to rise out of the earth on every side of us," said Evangelista.

At 8 o'clock Captain Punzio found that he had lost touch with the 4th company on his right. That company had, in fact, been isolated and surrounded on three sides. In other words the Italian line was broken. Captain Brucchi took refuge with a handful of men in a native house. He then attempted a bayonet charge, but was overwhelmed by numbers and killed. Only one or two of his men escaped. The survivors of the four hundred men composing the 4th and 5th companies of the boasted Bersaglieri ran like deer.

Through the breach poured a flood of fanatical Arabs and of hardly less fanatical Turks. Some of

the Bersaglieri who seem to have learned a little Arabic, threw themselves on their knees and yelled out the phrase which constitutes acceptance of the Mohammedan creed, "La ilaha illa-llahu Mohammed rasulu 'llah" (There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God). But the Arabs did not happen to be in the missionary line just then. They were "out" for vengeance and for loot, not for converts; and the apostates died with the renunciation of Christianity on their lips.

Truly, truly the Italians have disgraced us. Not only have they lowered the military prestige of Europe in the eyes of Africa, they have soiled the name of Christianity in the presence of Islâm. One, at least, of the Italian prisoners in Gharian amuses his Turkish captors by the most lurid denunciation of King Victor, the Pope, Christianity, and even the Banco di Roma itself!

The Turks wheeled to the left in order to attack the white castle of the Kaïmakan at Henni, where Colonel Fara of the 11th Bersaglieri was well entrenched and fortified. Henni was the only strong position on the Messri-Sharashett line—between Henni and the sea at Sharashett there were no trenches—and it saved the situation, for the Turks were unable to take it.

This was not only on account of its strength, but also on account of the numerical weakness of the enemy. The whole Turko-Arab force was much too weak, in any case, to march on Tripoli and cut off the Italian forces at Bumeliana and Gargaresh; but it became too weak even to take Henni owing to the fact that, as soon as Fara's line was broken, the Arab section of the joint force scattered through the oasis on the hunt for loot. They hunted singly or in small

groups. Some of them proceeded to strip the corpses of the Italian dead, to seize the rifles and ammunition of the fallen, to plunder the regimental stores. Some of them penetrated nearly as far as the town. Some of them climbed trees and houses from which they "sniped" at every Italian soldier who passed. It took the invaders several days to shoot down these intruders, whom General Caneva described as "rebels," because he regarded them, mistakenly, as natives of the Italian oasis who had "treacherously" risen in his rear.

About a hundred natives of the Italian oasis did rise just as, even yet, some Francophile natives of Alsace-Lorraine might rise if, in the event of a Franco-German war, they found victorious French troops amongst them. But the majority of the alleged rebels whose "treachery" led to the subsequent massacre of many innocent oasis Arabs were either Arabs who had come through the gap at Sharashett, or Arabs who had slipped through the Italian lines at an earlier date. In both cases they were fighting Arabs from the desert and they owed no sort of allegiance to King Victor Emmanuel of Savoy.

This fact is now admitted by every Italian writer of authority who has dealt with this subject, but in view of its importance in connection with the lamentable "purging" of the oasis which followed, I shall deal with it at greater length in a later chapter.

Any explanation of this point must necessarily be long and thorough, and a long explanation at this juncture would interfere with the course of my narrative.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN-HUNT IN THE OASIS

I DESCRIBED in my last chapter how the 4th and 5th companies of the 11th Bersaglieri were scattered. They threw down their arms and fled in all directions. Some fled towards the sea and escaped. Some surrendered and were taken prisoners to Amruss, where they were afterwards put to death, however, on their captors' learning of the slaughter of innocent Arabs which the Italians had carried out in their portion of the oasis. Some committed suicide. Basilio Derin, a corporal of the Bersaglieri, tells how a captain of his regiment, on finding himself almost alone, nearly all his men having been killed or wounded, blew his own brains out.

The 6th company of the Bersaglieri had been stationed as a reserve at a house called the Maltese Inn (Osteria Maltese), at some distance behind the 4th and 5th companies, but when the fight began it came to the assistance of the well-entrenched troops at Henni and left the 4th and 5th to their fate. Out of the 400 men in these two companies, only 57 were left at nightfall. General Caneva knew exactly the loss he had sustained, but in his official report he said that "the losses (of the Bersaglieri) are not yet accurately known." Next day he announced that he could not ascertain the number of casualties owing to the fact that the troops were engaged in

disarming the natives. I do not know if he has yet owned up to the loss the Italians sustained on this day. But I do know that he was very prompt in expelling Italian correspondents who did own up. The representative of the "Giornale di Sicilia" put the number of casualties at 600, I think, whereupon General Caneva ordered his expulsion within twenty-four hours.

On the other hand the "New York Herald" correspondent, an Italian whose eulogies of his own army were reproduced in all the Italian papers as the transports of an intelligent and impartial foreigner, and whose practical denial of the oasis massacres was afterwards regarded even in England as the denial of an unbiased American correspondent, wired his paper on this occasion that the total Italian loss was—five men killed!<sup>1</sup>

The defence of Colonel Fara at Henni is regarded by the Italians as one of the greatest feats of military history. Colonel Fara has been decorated and dined and belauded. But as a matter of fact he held on to Henni because he could not let go. He was surrounded, and had he ventured out into the oasis he would have lost his own life and the lives of all his men.

What this fight at Henni and Sharashett brought out in a particularly vivid light was the newness and amateurishness of the Italian army, the inability of its different parts to work harmoniously together, and the failure of the Commander-in-chief to keep in touch with all sections of his force. Considering the compactness of the expeditionary army and the fact that one could ride round the whole line in a few

<sup>1</sup> Giolitti afterwards telegraphed to General Caneva expressing his satisfaction with "the serene and impartial news service of the 'New York Herald' and with its sympathetic attitude towards Italy."

hours, this state of things is almost inexplicable. When the Bersaglieri were being cut to pieces at Sharashett, nobody at Bumeliana or at the General Head-quarters in Tripoli seemed to know anything about it. They heard furious firing from the direction of the oasis, but there was also furious firing from Gargaresh and the Cavalry Barracks; and heavy firing at a handful of evanescent, jack-in-the-box Arabs on the sky-line had for weeks been a pleasing and familiar feature of Tripolitan life.

It is not surprising that when, a month and a half later, the authorities began giving out the truth in small doses to the poor, censored, spoon-fed people of Italy, inquisitive folk began to ask inconvenient questions about this affair of October 23rd. According to a telephone message from Rome, which appeared on December 8th in a Milanese paper :

“ We are only now beginning to know the truth about the terrible day of October 23rd, and there are violent complaints made with regard to General Caneva. Though General Caneva had under his command on that day about 20,000 men, he allowed the Arabs to surround and cut to pieces (two companies of) the battalion of Bersaglieri, not only without taking precautions to prevent this being done, but also without making a counter-attack, which might, after the first most disgraceful surprise, have prevented the slow and barbarous martyrdom which the Arabs inflicted on the Bersaglieri who remained in their hands on the Henni positions.

“ There are people who maintain that the story of the oasis revolt is doubtful, as the greater number of the Arabs who fought in the oasis had previously

forced our lines. But it has been remarked at the Ministry that, even admitting the unexpectedness of the Arab revolt in the interior of the oasis, nothing can excuse the inaction of the Commander-in-chief all day long, inaction which made possible the permanent occupation by the enemy's troops of positions which had been held up to that moment by the Italians."

It is anticipating a little, but I might here say that, according to the same message, it was then decided in the Ministry of War at Rome not to "have recourse to the extreme step of recalling General Caneva"—that would look too much like giving way to the agitation in foreign newspapers, and would amount practically to a confirmation of the massacre charges—but "to surround him by such influences as would remove all fear of his remaining inactive under similar circumstances in future." The "influences" in question were presumably General Frugoni and the other military leaders who were hastily despatched to Tripoli early in November.

While the fighting at Henni was still going on, a single company of the 82nd Infantry wandered out in a casual sort of way to the assistance of Colonel Fara, who, having then been fighting without a break for eight hours, presumably had had enough of it. Whoever sent such a small force on such a serious mission must have been mad. The English officer who describes this action in "Blackwood's Magazine" (December) remarks very sarcastically that "some one suggested to the Colonel" in command of the 82nd that he should act. As for General Caneva, we do not hear of him at all at this critical juncture.



He had had his benevolent period. He was soon to have his vindictive period. But this was evidently his dormant period. At all events one company of the 82nd did move, but it was stopped on the way by the Arab "snipers," who now swarmed in the oasis. It was stopped at the Feshlum mosque, from the summit of which an Arab displayed a Turkish flag. He was at once shot down, but the fighting around the mosque went on till evening. By that time the rest of the 82nd had come up, and, after having had one company cut to pieces, the rest of the regiment was able to join Colonel Fara at Henni, owing to the fact that the enemy had retired.

Meanwhile the Arabs who had invaded the oasis had kept up a continual fire on the rear of the Italian line, and on every body of Italian troops which moved through the palm groves. They fired from behind the large uprights of wells, from the tops of palm trees, from the roofs and windows of houses, from behind cacti and olives. General Caneva explains that they knew the ground so much better than the Bersaglieri, but surely the latter ought, after twelve days, to have known thoroughly every date-palm in the exiguous piece of oasis which they had occupied. Most of the Arabs, moreover, were strangers to those parts, having come from Tagiura and still more distant places.

General Caneva has declared that all these Arabs who invaded the oasis were armed with "good Mauser rifles." As a matter of fact some of their fire-arms were antiques, nearly useless in open fight against the Italian rifles. I afterwards found the ground littered with powder-flasks which would have been considered out of date at the battle of Vinegar

Hill, and which showed that some of the Arabs used muzzle-loaders. On these flasks I found printed the familiar word "London" below the name of an English firm which flourished in Fleet Street probably in the time of Dr. Johnson.<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder that under these circumstances the ammunition of the Arabs was soon exhausted. Then it became quite easy for the Italians to perform those "prodigies of valour" about which General Caneva makes such frequent mention. The men in the palm trees were first of all shot down. The great clusters of golden-brown dates were reddened with their blood before they fell heavily to the ground.

Quarter was never of course given nor asked for. And the Italians did not clear the oasis without paying for it heavily. For the enemy were amazingly mobile. Crushed in one place, they immediately appeared in another. The bare-footed Bedouins bounded, in their light attire, like deer; or, lying flat on the ground, they glided through the under-wood "like snakes"—to use an Italian comparison.

A group of Arabs was concealed in a Moslem cemetery. From behind the gravestones they kept up an uninterrupted fire on the Italians. Other Arabs fired from behind a small, domed Saint's tomb. The Italians advanced against them in loose skirmishing order and gradually succeeded in dislodging them. The better rifles and the heavier fire told and soon silenced the fire of the Arabs. From behind walls, tree-trunks, tombstones and houses the Moham-medans ran, some throwing away their weapons,

<sup>1</sup> It is a common error to suppose that the Arabs were all armed with good Mausers. Enver Bey says in one of his letters: "It made me feel proud that though armed with old rifles of various makes, we had repelled in a nine-hour fight the attack of an enemy overwhelmingly superior to us in numbers and in equipment."

some being caught with smoking rifles in their hands. Two old men and a youth had been firing on the Bersaglieri from behind a mud-wall. Their shooting was bad, they took a long time to load, and, being in a fairly open position, they were soon surrounded. The youth threw away his rifle as half-a-dozen Italian soldiers jumped on top of him. In an instant all three were dragged forward and tied together by the hands. The old men, one of whom was wounded, offered their wrists in silence to be bound. The youth resisted, more through terror than through obstinacy, but a big Italian soldier kicked him brutally in the stomach, while two other soldiers seized his hands and bound them tightly to those of his aged companions. The Colonel was on horse-back behind a wall. His sentence was brief and to the point: "Shoot them!" The prisoners were given a few moments' grace, however, in order to prepare for death, and they all three sat down on a sandy knoll, while soldiers surrounded them with fixed bayonets. The old men looked out towards the desert with a perfectly calm and unwavering glance and their lips did not move. The young man hung his head and mumbled something rapidly all the time. When the moment came for them to rise, a sergeant kicked the youth in the back so brutally that the Arab suddenly sprang to his feet, but suddenly fell back again owing to the fact that his hands were tied to those of his companions. The soldiers then took all three by the arms and helped them to their feet. It was now seen that there was a pool of blood on the ground where the wounded man had sat, and that he had become very pale. Evidently his life was ebbing fast, and a tingle of pain must have shot through him as he stood up,



for he made a sudden involuntary grimace and then smiled grimly with white, drawn lips. The soldiers hustled the group along towards the desert and the old men instantly obeyed, the unwounded supporting the wounded man, whose steps had become tottering and over whose eyes a glazy film was gathering fast. The youth alone held back and begged piteously for life. By way of reply one of the soldiers struck him a frightful blow in the face. The unfortunate Arab could not protect himself, for his hands were tied. Blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and as he walked forward with his companions he spat out several teeth. The soldiers laughed, and one of them was preparing to bestow another buffet on the prisoner, when an officer interfered, driving the soldier off and rating him in violent language.

The Turkish fire had by this time ceased and the enemy had disappeared. The Desert was absolutely a Desert. In it there was not a single living thing. Twelve soldiers took their places in the trenches and leant their rifles on the sand-bags. A group of other soldiers hustled the three doomed men out into the waste. A sergeant gave them a final rude shove, and said "Barra!" "Barra" is a vulgar Arab word meaning something like "Go to h——l!" or "Go and be d——d to you!" and it is generally the first native expression which a European learns on coming to Tripoli. I must admit, however, that he often learns it in self-defence against the hordes of beggars who pester him.

The two old men walked steadily into the Desert, their eyes fixed on the distant sky-line. The wounded man was now near his last gasp. His steps were marked with blood, but there was a triumphant smile on his face. The youth alone turned his eyes



towards his enemies. He still begged for mercy, but he could not turn his body right round on account of his hands being bound to those of his companions. The soldiers hurled rough jokes and taunts after him as he looked over his shoulder at them. Suddenly their flippant clamour was broken in upon by a stern, abrupt, staccato order, as curt, menacing, and hard as the fall of an iron bar. "Fuoco!" It was the order to fire. The condemned men were now about a dozen feet off. The twelve soldiers had them covered beyond all possibility of escape. Twelve shots rang out, and instantly all three prisoners fell in a heap together on the sand. Their limbs twitched, but not a moan escaped them. A European photographer walked over to them and, finding that the youth was still alive, though unconscious and dreadfully wounded, he told the Italians. Then a soldier approached the blood-stained heap on the ground, put his rifle to the youth's temple, and blew out his brains. Portions of grey matter, flesh, bone, and fragments of skin with the hair still attached were scattered over the legs of the soldier's trousers. He looked like a butcher. Meanwhile, the red blood gushed out of the open head as out of a fountain. The white sand drank it eagerly up. The thirsty Desert likewise drank the blood of the two old men, one of whom lay on his back, staring straight up, the smile of triumph still on his lips, and in his eyes the glad look of a Moslem martyr who sees at last the Glory of the Prophet of God. The other old man lay, face downwards, underneath his companion.

The Desert whence they came had drunk their life-blood. The Desert, their great mother, will avenge them.

The repulse of the Arabs was followed by the awakening of a frightful blood-lust among the Italians, who were convinced that the natives who had given them such trouble in the oasis were, all of them, "friendlies" who had been living close to the town, and on good terms with them up to this time.

Signor Giuseppe Bevione wrote in the "Stampa" that "there was a violent reaction among our men, once they were convinced that there had been treachery. They fired without pity on all Arabs who approached them in a suspicious manner."

This meant, of course, that they fired on all Arabs whatsoever: on small shopkeepers coming back from Tripoli, on local muleteers, gardeners, and workmen; all of whom were dressed exactly as the fighting Arabs had been dressed. But this mistake was natural, and I could excuse it if it had not gone on for days without the slightest effort being made by General Caneva to put a stop to it, until, three days after, it attained monstrous dimensions.

There is no cry which an army that has sustained a reverse through its own fault, is so apt to take up as the cry of "treachery!" And probably a Latin army is liable to take up that cry with greater conviction than any other. In the present instance the Italian soldiers were convinced that they had been betrayed. General Caneva, who certainly should have known better, did not enlighten them, did not make the slightest effort to save the peaceful Arabs from the consequences of that terrible cry. The Nationalist firebrands themselves, now (April, 1912) accuse Caneva of "senility," and demand his recall. Senility is, I suppose, the most charitable explanation of the Italian commander's apathy on this occasion.

The clearing of the suburban part of the oasis after the Italian line had closed again was not very difficult, and it was then that *gli episodi di valore* (to use the phrase of an Italian who describes the scene) on the Italian side, *furono innumerevoli*. Captains and colonels and men-at-arms burst with the greatest bravery into peaceful Arab houses where the harmless and unarmed inhabitants were cooking their humble *koosh-koosh* for the evening, and, flourishing sabres and revolvers, yelled "*Arrendetevi!* (Surrender!) *Viva l'Italia!*" Doors were battered down. Shots were fired. Bearded officers frowned and snorted and stamped up and down like despots in melodrama. The old Arab women were naturally terrified by these manifestations, and the little brown naked children began to cry. It is probably to this part of the battle that General Caneva refers when he praises the coolness, the bravery, and the spirit of initiative displayed by his men.

As a rule the officers and men were unnecessarily cruel towards the Arabs whom they had condemned to death. The soldiers continually beat their prisoners about the face, and Mr. Magee of the "Daily Mirror" tells me that he saw an officer prodding a prisoner furiously in the groin with his scabbard. And all the time there poured from the lips of the executioners a torrent of invective; which I presume, however, the condemned men did not understand.

It was the same next day. It has been the same ever since. This ill-treatment of natives, guilty and innocent, is as much a feature of Tripolitan street-life as the brutal ill-treatment of horses is a feature of Neapolitan street-life.

In the city of Tripoli I have seen soldiers dash to the ground a humble tray of matches and sweet-



meats which an Arab child was carrying around in order to earn a few pence by peddling its little wares to the frequenters of the cafés. I heard that child cry as if his heart would break on seeing all his little capital gone; but one thing I have never seen, I have never seen an officer, or a civilian, take a child's part. On the Italian steamer by which I left Tripoli a Turkish family also left, and a Moslem man-servant carried their trunks aboard. Some officious little Neapolitan clerk or counter-jumper who happened to be a passenger took a sudden violent dislike to this man-servant, raised a terrific hullabaloo about him, had him arrested there and then, had him dragged into the smoking-saloon, stripped, and searched. If a knife had been found on that unfortunate Turk he would have been sent ashore and shot, but luckily nothing was found and he was dismissed without any apology being offered him for the disgraceful treatment to which he had been subjected. And yet the Italians wonder why the Arabs do not love them!

All the houses were searched and wrecked, the inhabitants being collected together in batches and sent into the city. More wretched aggregations of humanity I have seldom seen, the men being in rags, and their hands tied behind their backs. In some of their houses old muzzle-loaders, or cartridges, or antiquated revolvers had been found, but, as I shall afterwards show, this was no proof of their owners' guilt. Many Arabs were seized because they had knives, or razors, or empty cartridges in their possession, and against a great number there was no charge save that they were Arabs. I shall deal, however, with this question later on.

One house where arms were found was a tavern.







PRISONERS BROUGHT IN TO BE SHOT.

The words "Vino e Liquori" were carved on a stone over the lintel of the door, and from a little balcony hung an Italian flag. Another Italian flag flew from the roof of the house. The carabinieri seized a good deal of money in this house and sequestered it. They also found, or pretended to find, arms. Two Arabs inside were arrested. The Italian flag was taken from the balcony and jokingly offered to the younger of the Arabs that he might kiss it. Instead of kissing it, he bit it, and attempted to tear it with his teeth. That action led, of course, to his immediate imprisonment. What happened to him afterwards I do not know, but I would not care to bet much on the probability of his being still in the flesh.

Every man had his hands tied behind his back. The pure Arab type predominated in the crowd, but there were also full-blooded negroes and a variety of gradations between those two extremes. Quite a number of young Arab boys marched among the prisoners, and were afterwards put to death with them. Each gang was guarded by Italian soldiers with fixed bayonets.

. . . . .

In the evening the Arabs who had fallen in the oasis were denounced in café and barrack and public place by frothy Italian orators as "rebels" and "traitors."

That is one view of the matter, but I must say that it is not my view. On the evening of the 23rd, I sat down and wrote what I thought on this subject. I wrote it for a respectable American newspaper which had sent me to Tripoli in order, I suspect, that I might send it pleasing pen-pictures of the

Italian operations ; articles (illustrated, of course) such as would gratify the Italian colony in New York, a colony whose advertisements and subscriptions are not to be despised even by the managers of colossal American dailies (the Bedouin of the Desert does not advertise, and is therefore a negligible quantity from the managerial point of view).

What I wrote did not appear, but I give it now. I said :

“The Italians denounce as ‘traitors’ all the Arabs who attacked them to-day. Now, I would not apply that term even to the peaceful oasis Arabs who took down their rifles from the thatch and boldly fired on the Bersaglieri. I regard them, on the contrary, as heroes, heroes as great as Brescia, or Mazzini, or Garibaldi, or Washington, or William Tell. They had a perfect right to shoot down the Italians from behind hedges, or mud-walls, or tombstones, or palm trees, or anything else that took their fancy. The Italians did not come here as their guests. The Arabs violated no law of their traditional hospitality by shooting down the land-grabbers as they would shoot down rabid dogs.”

I shall anticipate a little in order to tell how some of the Arab survivors of this battle were treated. Fourteen Arab soldiers who had broken into the oasis and been wounded there, managed to crawl into town and take refuge in a *fondak* or native inn. A treacherous Jew who happened to hear about them promptly sold them to the Italians, whereupon they were arrested, tried, and hanged in the open as “spies and rebels.” The sentence was carried out with every circumstance of pomp, and a Franciscan



friar was provided with a chair in a prominent position—why, it is not easy to say. Pinned to the breast of each corpse was a statement to the effect that he had been put to death for firing treacherously on the Italian rear on October 23rd, though this point had never been proved, and though the men were undoubtedly Arab soldiers from the desert who had broken through the Italian line.

The sentence was so unjust that it disgusted even some jingo Italians. Nobody, for instance, supported the war in the beginning with more enthusiasm than the Sicilian deputy De Felice, but, after seeing this hanging and examining the evidence on which the death-sentence was based, that gentleman wrote to the following effect in the "Secolo" of Milan:<sup>1</sup>

"I supported the war because I thought it was a work of civilisation. But I now see that this work is carried on by means of the gallows. The sentence which handed over those fourteen persons to the hangman violated the fundamental regulations of our penal code, which does not permit of the death penalty. Even if, in time of war, that code does allow the death penalty to be inflicted in extreme cases, it does not allow hanging. Moreover, the sentences to which I object are grounded on a blind prejudice which makes those condemned men answerable for the cruelties of October 23rd. I have studied the protocols of the trial, and convinced myself that no sure and positive grounds for this assertion have been stated.

"The most important witness for the prosecution was Lieutenant Altina, who, according to his own

<sup>1</sup> I condense his remarks, not directly from the Italian, but indirectly from a German summary given in the "Vossische Zeitung" of December 12, 1911.

account, has lived among the Arabs for seventeen years, and possesses an intimate knowledge of the Arab character. Lieutenant Altina thought these Arabs were guilty because of their manner of answering his questions, and because of their demeanour, which was sometimes stupid, sometimes crafty. 'Furthermore,' said this officer, 'when a Moslem swears on the Koran, he does not tremble if he is innocent. If he trembles, he is certainly guilty.'

"So much for the evidence of Lieutenant Altina. I intend to write very soon a full account of this unfortunate day's work, and to make clear that the responsibility for the blood spilt on this occasion is on the heads of higher personages than Lieutenant Altina. I desire for conquered peoples the observance of the laws of nations and not the wrath of the conquerors. . . . If Italy has gone to Tripoli in the name of civilisation, she must be the messenger of justice. If she is not, if she busies herself with erecting gibbets and not with extending the realms of justice, then I would not hesitate for a moment to declare that Italy only does harm to the cause for which we have fought, and that the zeal for the advancement of civilisation by which the Government professes to be animated is nothing but a most disgraceful and unrighteous lie."

The Italian Government tried to make its own soldiers believe that the Tripoli adventure was a Crusade, that the mission of General Caneva was to plant the Cross in a heathen land. Instead of that he is busily planting brothels and grog-shops, gibbets and jails. And the triumphal music of the con-

querors is the clank of chains, not the chains of prisoners captured in fair fight, but the chains of sick Turkish soldiers dragged from the Tripolitan hospitals and sent to Italy "to make a Roman holiday."

## CHAPTER III

### THE GREAT PANIC

It was towards midday on October 23rd ; and, after a morning's hard work signing official documents, General Caneva was comfortably drawing his legs under his well-provided table at the Castello, in happy ignorance that anything out of the ordinary had taken place at Sharashett. But in some mysterious way the native population of Tripoli had learned that the Italian line was broken and that the Turks were in the oasis. There was consequently an outburst of panic in the midst of which the Italian officers, soldiers, and camp-followers completely lost their heads. I shall describe the whole tragi-comedy somewhat in detail, as it has a direct bearing on the massacres which followed. It shows how liable to foolish panic is the Italian army. And it was in a fit of foolish panic that the "purging" of the oasis was carried out.

At about one o'clock on that day, I was sitting down to lunch in the Hotel Minerva when there was a wild rush down the street. First a carriage tore past. Then a soldier was carried by with his face bleeding.

Now, both the carriage and the soldier had disappeared before we could question them ; but from some mysterious source—probably from one of our waiters who had just been conversing with the cook



—an astounding explanation proceeded, propagated itself, and was accepted. It was to the effect that (1) the carriage was full of Arabs who were firing right and left; and (2) the soldier had been fired upon out of a window close by. In other words the city had revolted. “The town Arabs have risen! There is an insurrection in the city! They are potting Europeans from the windows!” Such was the refreshing piece of news which somebody in the corridor conveyed to us at the top of his voice.

Immediately the crowded dining-room rose like one man and made for the door. In fact, I might say without exaggeration that the guests scattered as if a bomb had fallen amongst them.

My German friend and I, the only two non-Italians present, remained seated; partly because we had witnessed those alarums and excursions among the Italians before, partly because we were very hungry.

Meanwhile there was a wild helter-skelter of terror-stricken people past the street window. Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat went a magazine pistol just outside. Inside the hotel, officers tore upstairs for something and tumbled downstairs again, clutching revolvers which they flourished so wildly that I began to get seriously alarmed about my personal safety. The officers tore out into the street, and I tried to get a bit of dinner. I might as well have tried to raise the dead, for the Maltese waiters were all outside gesticulating furiously. At a table opposite me had sat an Italian civilian—a newspaper proprietor, I think—with an impassive face and a monocle. He suddenly vanished, and when I looked through the window out into the street I saw him in the midst of a dense crowd of Italians, bounding like a bear on hot irons. He must have jumped three feet

high each time. His arms and legs were circulating like windmills—and the monocle was still in his eye ! Close by, the arms of the hotel proprietor were beating the air like flails.

Bang ! bang ! bang ! Were these infernal machines going off, or merely pistol shots ?

They were neither. They were simply doors and windows shutting all down the street. Some shopkeepers not only locked their doors, but also nailed them up so that they had afterwards to open them with crowbars. Wild-faced Maltese women shut their bedroom windows and piled up the furniture against the doors. One could hear them dragging beds, sofas, and other heavy objects about their rooms.

The average Italian is not at any time a gentle-voiced person. In Tripoli, at least, he seemed to have been provided by nature with a voice like a fog-horn. On distant ships at sea those voices might be useful if not melodious ; but when a score of them shriek all together in a small dining-room the effect is apt to be overpowering. On the present occasion the uproar was so terrific that I had to put my fingers in my ears, and even then I could hear the shrill wild-Indian whoop of the Christian damsels barricading themselves in their bedrooms. “ The Turk ! The Turk ! The Turk ! ” This was the dreadful cry that resounded on all sides, and in every gradation of tone, from the thin wail of the infant to the hoarse bass of the man. The impression evidently was that the Osmanli had broken the Italian line and entered the city, while their Arab allies were lending a hand by shooting from their roof-tops and their windows. What a terror the Turk must have been in his time when, even in his decay, his very

name can excite such a panic ! As a wooer of Christian maidens his manner must, indeed, have been somewhat peremptory.

Having reluctantly given up all attempts to get a little soup, I bagged some bread and cheese and sallied into the street. But I was almost carried off my feet by an insane rush of people past the hotel door. The street was a wild welter of Levantine humanity amid which I could distinguish fezzes, solar helmets, turbans, straw hats, and fistfuls of hair ! The space in front of the hotel seemed to be inhabited by a collection of the most violent lunatics in existence. Such gesticulating, roaring, and prancing I never saw in my life before.

A crowd of men, women, and children were collected in front of the French Consulate hammering wildly at the door and imploring admittance. Among them were Maltese, Italians, French subjects from Tunis and Algeria, Turks, Arabs, but especially Jews. Hundreds had already swarmed into the Consulate through the windows, over the neighbouring roofs, and from adjacent balconies.

Suddenly the door of the Consulate was thrown open, and M. Séon, a spare, white-haired old gentleman, appeared on the threshold. The crowd drew back not only because he was the Consul, but also because he carried a revolver in his hand.

“What do you want ?” he asked.

“Refuge ! Refuge ! Refuge ! The Turks ! The Turks !” was the universal cry. The Consul turned to his gorgeously dressed Arab cavass. “Open the inner doors,” said he, “and give shelter to all these people. When you have done that, hoist the flag on the flag-staff.”

This hoisting of the flag is, I need hardly say,



carried out by all Consulates and Legations in times of dire emergency, as, for example, when a city is stormed by an invading and infuriated army. The cavass wore the French livery. Nevertheless, as soon as he appeared on the roof in order to hoist the tricolour he was fired on by a group of soldiers on top of the Italian school close by. Those soldiers, amongst whom were some Franciscan friars, had evidently supposed that the cavass was a wild Arab who had come out on the roof for the purpose of potting people passing in the streets below. This incident is characteristic of the happy-go-lucky way in which the Italian soldiers used their rifles, and prepares us for their wholesale murder of innocent Arabs on the 26th.

The cavass escaped without injury, but the Consul complained to General Caneva; whereupon the latter apologised and promised that this sort of thing should not occur again. And here I might say that the French Government has shown, throughout all this war, extraordinary forbearance with the Italians. Few French journalists spoke at all of the massacres of October 23rd-27th. Some of the French correspondents in Tripoli not only closed their eyes to what was going on, but denied that it was going on. It was evident from the first that Paris was doing its best to make all Frenchmen Italophile, so that its policy of detaching Italy from the Triplice might be successful.

With one or two exceptions, the Frenchmen in Tripoli did not care a straw for murdered Arabs. They thought only of Alsace-Lorraine; and the anti-Italian movement among the Germans made them rub their hands with joy and declare themselves more pro-Italian than ever. Why, under the circum-



stances, the Italians should have afterwards held up French steamers is incomprehensible save on the ground that, as Rome has blundered and muddled ever since this war began, so it blundered and muddled here. For the French could easily have avenged themselves by conniving at the importation by the Turks across the Tunisian frontier of ammunition, arms, and recruits. They did not do so, however. On the contrary, they held up even food supplies while allowing shiploads of food to go from Tunis to Tripoli city, and while even manufacturing aeroplanes for the Italian Government.

The English Consulate was filled with even more refugees than the French Consulate, and in the Jewish quarter around it there was terrible excitement. In the narrow bazaars opposite the Citadel the street-firing by the Italians was heaviest. The roof of the Castello and the roofs of the adjoining houses were lined with troops. There was a terrible stampede for refuge into the mosques, synagogues, and Christian churches, and even into the boats in the harbour. Meanwhile, a machine-gun rattled persistently down in the large market by the sea-shore, and there was firing in other parts of the city. All this fusillade was caused by panic-stricken Italians. Orderlies and hospital guards, soldiers working at the wharves and soldiers stationed in the various public buildings, rushed into the streets, unslung their rifles, and in some cases fired right and left without having the faintest idea of what had happened or why they themselves had thus run *amok*.

Their bandaged heads dripping with blood, Sicilian Bersaglieri staggered through the streets saying that they had been treacherously fired on at the front,

and imploring their fellow-islanders to take *vendetta* for them on the Arabs. Whereupon their comrades from Syracuse and Palermo would snatch up their arms with many a "Sacramento!" and rush out to kill some native. The war had suddenly become transformed into a huge Sicilian blood-feud. General Caneva was not "in" the thing at all. He might as well have been with Captain Scott in the South Polar regions, so far as any indication of his existence went. His dormant period had not yet come to an end.

The streets were filled with a disordered crowd of Italians, Arabs, Armenians, and Jews, each in his national costume. The Jews, who are very pro-Italian, were especially terrified at the prospect of the Turks coming back. Thinking that I was an Italian, some of the Jewish women threw themselves at my feet to beg my protection, and, trying hard to look as patriarchal as possible, I did my best to reassure them. Meanwhile, some of them set upon and beat an innocent Arab boy employed by my colleague, Colonel Pavloff, of the "Novoe Vremya." Armed soldiers tore past in all directions, and it was impossible to stop them or to get any information out of them.

To still further augment the confusion, a number of camel-drivers employed by the Italians drove their animals from the Market Square into the narrow alleys of the city, with the result that in many places the streets were completely blocked, and the panic increased tenfold.

A battalion of infantry marched down to the bread-market, which was filled with the usual impassive crowd of Arabs, some asleep on the ground, some eating. This tale is told by the Italian deputy De

Felice in the "Messaggero" of Rome, October 28th; and, as the legislator in question was then strongly in favour of the war, I presume that his story is true.

The Italian Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of the party ordered his men to take aim at the Arabs. His first impulse had probably been to massacre every Arab on the spot. But he was somewhat taken aback by the utter indifference of the natives to their danger. "*La morte non interessa gli Arabi*" (Death does not interest the Arabs), concluded the Honourable De Felice, who goes on to tell us that "a young Arab seated on his hunkers at the edge of a fountain still continued smiling, while an old man who had been dozing on the sand at the youth's feet still continued to doze."

Astonished at this indifference to death, the Italian commander made his men lower their rifles, and sent some soldiers to tell the natives that they must leave the market-place at once. The Arabs went off slowly into a blind alley near by; whereupon, seized by another happy inspiration, the Lieutenant-Colonel placed a sentinel on guard at the entrance to the alley, with orders to let none of the Arabs out again. I am not sure what was afterwards done to those poor people. They may have been exiled, and it is even possible that, during the delirium of the next three days, they may have all been taken out and butchered. But there was absolutely no charge against them. They had been simply buying and selling there as they had always been accustomed to do, and they were unarmed.

When some degree of calm had been restored in the city, the Italian soldiers advanced into the bazaars as into an enemy's country. Then began



the work of surrounding and searching suspected houses.

The soldiers suddenly suspected a house, situated in a narrow blind alley near the British Consulate, of harbouring rebels, and in an instant they had closed the street and surrounded the building. Some men went inside with revolvers in their hands. Others prepared to shoot down anybody who showed himself on the roof. In this particular instance I do not believe that there was any loss of life, for the house contained no rebel; but elsewhere throughout the city loss of innocent life did, I am afraid, take place.

All this disorder in the streets could have been prevented if the Commander-in-chief had taken care to police the city after his arrival. But he placed all his men in the firing line and had no reserves in the city at all. I often walked for hours in the streets without once seeing an Italian soldier. The only armed men about were Turkish *zaptié*, or policemen, whom the invaders had foolishly taken into their service. General Caneva used to gratify his vanity by making half-a-dozen of these wild fellows always ride after his carriage whenever he drove in state through the streets. He must have imagined himself a Roman conqueror on a sort of triumphal procession followed by conquered enemies. But on October 23rd, the General heard *una notizia gravissima* (a most serious piece of news), which froze the marrow in his bones. It was to the effect that two of his native escort were plotting to kill him. He was never afterwards seen with his procession of equestrian *zaptié*.

During the greater part of the 23rd, however, these renegade policemen of the Sultan were entrusted with the guard of most parts of the city, and



I met them frequently sitting in the narrow lanes, their rifles between their knees. If the Moslems had gained the ascendancy, there would be very little doubt as to the side on which these policemen would fight.

This extraordinary panic might very easily have had grave consequences, especially if the demoralised troops on the Italian left had got the idea that the city in their rear had also revolted and was in the hands of the enemy. It is not pleasant to think of what would almost certainly have taken place had it occurred at night, and in conjunction with a desperate attack from the outside.

Speaking about this "*momento d' allarme in città*," General Caneva says that it would have become more serious had it not been for "*il sangue freddo dei nostri*."

But I have already shown that it was the Italians who lost their heads most of all. General Caneva's own residence and the roofs of all the neighbouring houses were covered with soldiers, who lay down flat with their rifles pointed at the street below and their fingers on the triggers. Every doorway and gateway in or near the castle was blocked with sand-bags behind which soldiers lay, as if they were in the firing-line. This was hardly an exhibition of "*sangue freddo*" (cold blood); an American would have been disposed to call it, rather, an exhibition of "cold feet." It certainly had a deplorable effect on the city. And yet, in his official telegram describing this panic, General Caneva says that it all arose out of the following ridiculous incident :

"A doctor who was bringing a wounded officer into town ordered the soldier who accompanied him to drive back the Arab sight-seers who were crowd-

ing around the carriage. The orderly executed the command, and the crowd in falling back gave rise to confusion, and hence to a universal flight."<sup>1</sup>

I traversed the town during the panic, and could nowhere find evidence that the urban Arabs had fired a shot. Some shots from the front had reached the market-place; some soldiers wounded in the oasis had been carried into the city; the story of the rising of a few "friendlies" had been narrated in the bazaars—and had become more and more fantastic as it passed from mouth to mouth. These and similar trifles had caused the whole scare, and created a state of mind which made the massacres in the oasis possible a few days later.

I repeat that I went through the town on this day and out into the oasis, and it is my firm conviction that the oasis Arabs, generally speaking, did not rise at all. The firing, which was supposed to come from the "friendly" Arabs, came really from hostile fighting Arabs, who had, as I have already pointed out, slipped through the lines. I have also admitted that a hundred oasis Arabs at the very most had joined themselves on to these. My opinion is confirmed by the statement of Mr. Magee, a London correspondent, who was a private in the South African War. Mr. Magee was with the Italians on the south-east when they were fired on, but he regarded the matter as trifling. Nobody was hit. The

<sup>1</sup> This was Caneva's story for the Italian Press. He had an absolutely contradictory story for England. In an interview with Mr. Bennet Burleigh, which probably appeared anonymously in the "Daily Telegraph," but which I find signed in the "Roma" of November 6th and in all the Italian papers, he spoke of "a deliberate revolt in the city" and declared that "the green flag of the Prophet was displayed in the streets; our soldiers were fired on from the roofs and the windows. They were assailed and stabbed in the houses and in the middle of the streets."

Arabs in the rear were quickly captured and shot. Mr. Magee came into town with his photographs. Now, he could not have come through the oasis if it was, as the Italians represent it to have been, swept in all directions by rebel bullets. In short, there was no general rising in the oasis, and great numbers of the oasis Arabs were butchered from this day onwards, not because they had rebelled, but simply because General Caneva did not like to have in his rear a large body of men who might possibly rebel. The rules of war give very wide latitude to a General, but I do not believe that they allow him to go as far as this.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME LESSONS OF THE GREAT PANIC

THE worst feature of this great panic was, in my opinion, the apathy and uselessness of the Italian leaders. On similar occasions the Turks had behaved much better. Ever since the beginning of the war, indeed, it was "unspeakable Stamboul" which had been prudent, careful of life, merciful; it was Holy and Royal Rome which had been addle-headed and inhumane.

Towards the end of September last it was confidently predicted in the English Press that the Turks would poison the wells along their line of retreat, and thus make it impossible for the Italians to follow them. They did no such thing. They did not even cut the water-supply at Bumeliana nor burn the town behind them, though they might very easily have done both. Seldom, indeed, in modern times has a retreating army shown so much consideration for the civilian population, and even for the enemy, as the army of Nesciat Bey exhibited on its evacuation of Tripoli in October last.

I have already said something on this subject, but I shall here, at the risk of repeating myself, refer to it again, so as to contrast Turkish efficiency in moments of crisis with Italian inefficiency.

Before the bombardment on October 3rd and 4th, Nesciat Bey and Munir Pasha had kept order most



admirably in town. The Englishmen who lived in Tripoli during these critical days assure me that the Turkish authorities behaved on that occasion with a self-possession, an energy, and a capacity which surpass all praise. A general massacre of Europeans was feared, whereupon the acting Vali issued an edict prescribing the punishment of death for any one who even "drew blood from the nose" of a European. The foreign consulates, houses, and churches were well guarded. The large community of Maltese British subjects had to be looked after by the Turks, owing to the fact that the Italians had not kept their promise to the British Consul of providing two transports on which to carry off all British refugees. During those days of alarm not a single Maltese was killed. Since the Italians have taken charge seven or eight Maltese have been shot, owing to their not having given the password or for some other reason. Many Italian subjects had also to be protected, for Italy had left her nationals strewn all over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. She had done so in the hope, perhaps, that some of the missionaries, at least, would have had the enterprise to get massacred, and thus give her some sort of *casus belli*.

If so, the wish was father to the thought, for at the beginning of the war the Italian papers were continually reporting massacres of Italians by the Turks in Tripoli—probably in the wild hope that some of these massacres would really come off. First, we had the massacre of some Franciscans at Benghazi. It was announced and deplored—but it did not happen. Then we heard of the massacre of an Italian "scientific" mission, which had been probably spying out the land in the interior. With a deplorable lack of patriotism this mission also failed to get

massacred. Then the Italian Consul at Derna was in difficulties. The Arabs wanted to murder him and all the rest of the local Italian colony, but the Turks prevented a single life being lost, and eventually, after guarding them for four days, handed the Consul and his party over to the commander of an Italian gunboat. Naturally, on reaching Augusta, the Consul used the vilest language about the very Turks who had saved his life, and left it to be understood that he had terrorised the whole Derna garrison with his revolver.

During the bombardment of Tripoli, on October 3rd and 4th, some Franciscan friars, some nuns, and a number of sick people in the hospital remained behind in the town. The Turks did not molest the sick people, nor the Franciscans, nor the nuns ; they did not even put foot in the church. When their turn came to show mercy, the Italians burned Arab villages, butchered the strong, and threw out the sick people to die like dogs in the street. They seemed to imagine that nothing was to be permitted to the Turks and everything to "the third Italy," to the race which has, in the words of the latest threatening letter which I have received from an Italian, "*detto per tre volte civiltà al Mondo*" (thrice civilised the world).

This conviction, that there should be one scale of treatment for the Italians and another and different scale for the Turks, seems to be deeply implanted in the Italian mind. When the Turks asked the Italians to leave Tripoli, just before the bombardment, so that they should not run the risk of being massacred, one of the journalists declined to "move on," defied the Ottoman authorities, and said that he would not leave unless between two "janissaries."

He wanted to see the bombardment from the town itself, and though I must admit that he was brave and even reckless, I must also say that his behaviour on that occasion was like that of a naughty child which is being sent to bed. How would the Italians have behaved towards a Turkish journalist who acted in the same way and refused, for instance, to leave the oasis on October 23rd ? That question can be easily answered. Whenever Turkish spies were killed by the Italians, it was only just. Whenever an Italian spy was killed by the Arabs, the Peninsular papers declared that he had been *barbaramente trucidato* (barbarously butchered).

The highest tribute has been paid by all the Italian correspondents to the manner in which Munir Pasha kept Tripoli quiet and prevented an anti-Italian outburst on October 2nd. And on that occasion the difficulties of the Turks were enormous. They had had no orders from Stamboul, and could not get any answer to their telegrams. They had to attend to (1) the unloading of the *Derna* ; (2) the calling up of the reserves ; (3) the organisation of caravans laden with arms and provisions ; (4) the evacuation of the town ; and (5) the protection of the Christian population.

How they were able to accomplish the two last-mentioned tasks at one and the same time is somewhat of a mystery, for if they evacuated the town they could not very well leave there enough troops to maintain order. But they succeeded. With all his faults, the Turk is born to rule. He has the incommunicable faculty of commanding men, and keeping some rough sort of law and order among the most variegated and insubordinate populations that can be found in the world. This habit of command comes



naturally to the Ottoman, just as it comes naturally to the English soldier or administrator in wild parts of the earth.

The Turkish commandant at Zouara is Major Mahomed Moussa Bey, and when a terrible panic broke out among the townspeople on the occasion of the first Italian bombardment he drew his revolver and shot the two chief panic-mongers dead, with the result that the scare suddenly ceased. If General Caneva or any of his officers had had an equal capacity for controlling men and meeting emergencies, the great Tripoli panic of the 23rd would not have lasted half-an-hour, and the subsequent oasis massacres would have come to an abrupt conclusion with the public execution of the first soldier caught shooting innocent natives.

On the other hand, it must be confessed that not only were General Caneva and his officers unaccustomed to deal with subject races; the soldiers under their command were also unaccustomed to do so. The Italian army is very young, raw, and inexperienced. Being composed mostly of Southern Italians, the Tripolitan Expeditionary Force was peculiarly liable to sudden blasts of panic. Its leader's aloofness, absence, and want of energy made it still more liable.

The Expeditionary Army in Tripolitania is only a casual collection of people in uniform; it cannot, properly speaking, be called an army at all. The English, Russian, German, French, and Japanese armies are on quite a different plane. It is like a motor-car which has been put together by amateurs and which, though it looks all right from the outside, cannot move of itself, owing to a defective co-ordination of the parts inside, and must be drawn



by horses. The officers are very brave, and have nearly all been affected by the jingo propaganda of the Nationalists; but the soldiers have not the faintest interest in the war and not the faintest desire to fight.<sup>1</sup>

During battle many of them do not look over the trenches, for fear of exposing their faces to a possible bullet. Hence the infinitesimal losses of the enemy during all their demonstrations before Bumeliana and Gargaresh. Hence the fact that, contrary to the usual custom in war, a large proportion of the casualties among the Turks is due to artillery fire, a comparatively small proportion to rifle fire.

A peculiarity of this war is, on the one hand, the extremely violent and sanguinary language of the officers and the journalists and, on the other hand, the very modest results accomplished by the army. Some of us may have noticed this same peculiarity not many years ago in the case of another Eastern European race, the Greeks. In Athens we had also, before the Græco-Turkish war, a tremendous outburst of Chauvinism. Every house was to be a fortress. Ancient Greece had come to life again. There were frequent demonstrations in front of the

<sup>1</sup> The real explanation of the Italian inactivity for over half a year, despite the fact that there are no less than twenty-four Italian generals in Tripolitania, is this—the Italian soldier is a poltroon. When not a poltroon he is an Anarchist or a mutineer. In November last two Anarchist soldiers ran *amok*, took refuge in the French Consulate, and fired out of the windows at their comrades. There are now five houses in Tripoli filled with soldiers charged with mutiny. Guarino, the Tripoli correspondent of the "Avanti" (quoted by the "Neue Freie Presse" of April 10th) tells an ominous story of the discontent among the time-expired men and of their anxiety to get home again. To every palm-tree they affixed notices saying that "The 1888-year soldiers want to go home." When the 23rd and 37th regiments and the engineers were ordered to march to an unknown destination on the sea-coast in order to take part in a military operation, those soldiers were "in a state of indescribable excitement. They wept, they sang outrageous songs, and their officers had to put up with it all." "With such soldiers," adds Guarino, "a war is impossible."

palace, and it was clear that the King must either declare war or vacate his throne. The inflated language of the Athenian newspapers was exactly like the inflated language of the Roman newspapers to-day.

The extreme impatience of the Greek Chauvinists with the mildest and most judicious criticism has its exact counterpart in the extreme impatience of any criticism which is now manifested by the Italian Chauvinists. In both cases any one who counselled prudence was denounced as cowardly, anti-patriotic, sold to the enemy. In the first case the result was—Larissa. The result in the second case is already bad enough, and may possibly be worse.

I had not been a week among the Italian soldiers before I began to notice what an extraordinary resemblance there was between them and the modern Greeks. And, as a matter of fact, the Sicilian and Southern Italian is, on the whole, indistinguishable almost from the Greek. In both you find the same excitability, the same readiness with the knife, the same recklessness in the individual, the same uselessness of the mass for military purposes requiring steady courage, patience, and staying power.

The same similarity has struck almost every foreign observer who has seen the Italian Expeditionary Army in Tripoli. It has particularly struck the Turkish Commander-in-chief, Fethi Bey. In a conversation with a correspondent of the *Vossische Zeitung* some weeks ago, that Ottoman officer said that, taking everything into consideration, he regarded General Caneva's soldiers as inferior to the Greek soldiers whom he had fought at Larissa. And he went on to tell how readily whole regiments of Italians throw away rifles, knapsacks, everything

—and bolt for it. If the Italians had to face the entire Turkish army as the Greeks had to do, the Cross of Savoy would undoubtedly have gone down ere now before the Crescent of Stamboul.

Like the adventure out of which the Greeks emerged with such a sorry mien, this Italian adventure is an unreal, literary, poetical, journalistic, archæological production. This war is “run” by crazy Futurists and Impressionists. In his “*Bataille de Tripoli*,” Signor F. T. Marinetti boasts that the Italian Government is “*devenu futuriste*,” that the artillerymen are “*truly Futurists*,” that the aviators are also “*Futurists*.” God help them all! Enthusiastic Greek journalists clamoured for war because they had read of Salamis and Marathon. Enthusiastic Italian journalists clamoured for war because they had read of Julius Cæsar.

In both cases “pets” of Europe had broken loose and become excited by the idea that they could emulate the exploits of their forbears. Italy would not be a united kingdom, and Greece would not be independent at all, were it not for England, France, and Prussia. But now, if any criticism comes from the countries which set modern Italy on her feet and started her in business, so to speak, there is a violent response to the effect that it was Italy which made us. In the minatory and denunciatory Italian letters of which I now possess a collection I am always reminded that Italy has “*thrice civilised the world*.”

At the risk of receiving more of those communications, I must repeat (for it is necessary to thoroughly grasp this fact in order to understand what follows) that the Italian army in Tripoli is extremely raw and inexperienced.



Even "Punch," which is fond of poking fun at our own Territorials, would regard some of the things done by the Italian officers as too much even for caricature. About the middle of October I visited the positions west of the town along with the American Consul and two English correspondents. We saw through our glasses a suspicious-looking column of smoke rising from a part of the desert which we believed to be unoccupied, but none of the officers noticed it until we drew their attention to it. Later on, the whole line fell back when some camels and natives appeared on the edge of the horizon, and we heard an officer asking his men how much ammunition they had got!

The Italian army, then, is very raw indeed. Moreover, being a conscript army, it is not at all as fitted to operate abroad as the British army or the French colonial troops. These things had their effect in producing the panic of October 23rd and the slaughter that followed. Some importance must also be attached to the fact that, like General Caneva, the majority of the higher officers seem much too old and fatigued; while, on the other hand, the soldiers are, as a rule, very young. During the killing of the natives on October 26th and on the following day I never saw any officer of higher rank than lieutenant in charge of the parties of soldiers who carried out this work. Once I saw an Italian civilian leading one of these squads. Sometimes I saw private soldiers out hunting for Arabs on their own account. All this was to some extent due to the absence of supervision, to the rawness and inexperience of the army, and to the advanced age of the senior officers. Some killing of innocent people is undoubtedly indulged in by the French, German, Russian, and even English



armies when they are engaged in savage warfare, but in such warfare the higher officers keep a particularly tight rein, not only on their soldiers, but on the subordinate officers as well. During the march on Peking at the time of the Boxer troubles the Russian soldiers frequently got out of hand, but on some occasions their own officers placed unruly men against a wall and had them shot. That is what General Caneva should have done with the soldiers who began butchering innocent Arabs on October 26th, supposing, of course, that it was not General Caneva himself who ordered the butchery.<sup>1</sup>

I have already pointed out how very excitable and "panicky" is the Expeditionary Army in Tripolitania. This may have been partly due to inexperience and partly to a vague feeling that things were not all right at the top. For as a horse soon knows what kind of a rider he has on his back, so an army, down to the youngest drummer-boy, soon

<sup>1</sup> A point that must not be overlooked in this connection is Italy's colossal pre-eminence in assassination as compared with other countries. Her murders average 81·2 for every million inhabitants, while the corresponding figure for England is only 3·1. The greatest international assassins of our time have been Italians—Santo, Golli, Luccheni, Sipido, Orsini, Bresci.

Another point is the mysterious, violent emotion, almost akin to drunkenness, which the sight of blood causes in all men, and more especially in Southern Europeans. Undoubtedly the tiger sleeps in most of us, and nothing awakes that wild beast so surely and so quickly as the sight of human blood spurting from hundreds of arteries cut by bullets or by bayonets. On this point the reader should see my chapters on "The Burning of the Bedouin Village" and "The 'Purging' of the Oasis." First there is a disagreeable sensation, then exquisite shudderings, then a fascination, finally a distinct and horrible pleasure in witnessing pain. All history, and especially the histories of the Roman emperors and of the Turkish sultans, bears witness to the awful and humiliating fact that we have within us a blood-lust which probably comes from savage, perhaps even from cannibal, ancestors, and which soon masters us if allowed a little indulgence. Every one who has read of the Roman amphitheatre, or who has witnessed even a Spanish bull-fight, will understand what I mean. This horrible and mysterious weakness of mankind has been recently touched upon by Sir E. Ray Lankester, K.C.B., F.R.S.

knows what kind of a Commander-in-chief it has got. But this "panicky" feeling was principally due to temperament, the greater proportion of the troops being drawn from the excitable population of Sicily and Southern Italy. Here, again, you have another cause contributing to a state of things which made the sad events of October 26th possible. To give you an idea of how "jumpy" the Italian soldiers are, I need only mention the fact that there is an alarm every night along the fringe of the Desert. Sentinels fire at dogs, at bats, and at wholly imaginary objects until they rouse the whole camp, and firing goes on for hours. Once, when a number of Italian officers went out into the Desert towards nightfall, their men blazed away at them under the impression that they were Arabs; and the officers had to remain out in the Desert all night, lying flat on the sand. In order to prevent this incessant waste of ammunition and this deprivation of sleep for the soldiers, the Italians had to place powerful naval search-lights along the edge of the Desert. Each light is kept swinging backwards and forwards, and if it is kept too long at any one point the sentinels at some other point which is left in darkness are sure to begin firing at some bogey or other. Then the light is swung round to the threatened point, and the sentinels there are as happy as a nervous child, frightened of the dark, when, in order to still its shrieking, mother brings a lighted candle into the room. This nervousness is sometimes a more serious matter. On October 26th I saw one party of soldiers who were marching along the Bumeliana road, fire on another party of Italian soldiers who were hunting for Arabs in a palm-garden far inside the lines, and whom the party on the road mistook for the enemy. The firing con-

tinued for a long time ; there were no officers of higher rank than lieutenant on the spot, and I feared very much that the men at the front, thinking the enemy had got in their rear, would rush back into the town and that an awful catastrophe would occur.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EXECUTION OF THE GERMAN CAVASS

DURING the height of the panic on October 23rd, a soldier of the 5th Artillery was attacked near the German Consulate by a group of Arabs. He fell beneath their blows and, while he lay on the ground somebody stabbed him. The news soon spread, and two carabinieri who happened to be in the vicinity rushed to the spot. They made inquiries of the Arabs in the square, and some time afterwards they arrested a young Arab called Hussein, second cavass of the German Consul, Dr. von Tilger. Hussein was a Fezzani and as the Fezzanis are Mussulmans of a peculiarly fierce breed, this fact told against him from the outset.

First the Italian authorities had the Consulate surrounded by troops. On learning that Dr. Tilger, the Consul, was not at home but on board a German ship leaving with Turkish refugees, mostly women, for Constantinople, the officer in charge of the party applied to Signor Galli, formerly Italian Vice-Consul in Tripoli, now head of the Civil Government. Signor Galli informed Dr. Tilger of what had occurred, whereupon the Consul came ashore and, after a hurried investigation, handed over Hussein to the Italian authorities. Dr. Tilger and Consul Galli had long been enemies and the Italian, who knew how deeply attached his colleague was to all his servants,



remarked with a bitter laugh as he left the Consulate :  
 "To-morrow, doctor, I shall send you a death certificate."

The principal witnesses against the cavass were—

(1) His own brother, who had seen him in the crowd when the artillery-man was struck down ;

(2) A native child who had seen him bending over the prostrate body of the soldier ; and

(3) A dagger which was found concealed in the coal-cellar. There was no blood on the dagger. The cavass said that it belonged to him, but stoutly maintained his innocence. No blood was found on the cavass's clothes.

Some German correspondents have publicly accused their Consul of feebleness in this matter and declared that the trial was a farce. They say that the judgment of the Italians was unbalanced owing to their panic and their thirst for blood, that the Consul should have tried the case himself. As to Hussein's innocence or guilt, I cannot venture to express an opinion. Nor can I say whether the Consul could, during the prevalence of martial law, have insisted on exercising his extraterritorial rights.

Owing, however, to the fact that Hussein had been an employee of the German Empire and had worn the German Eagle on his fez, the Italians made his trial a very imposing affair. It was held in the public street on October 24th, and was conducted with the utmost pomp and circumstance. The Italian photographers took many photographs of it, and I have since seen those photographs reproduced in the notorious "New York American" as proof that there was no massacre of Arabs in Tripoli, that all the Arabs were tried with the greatest care. As a matter of fact, this was almost the only case in

which there was any serious pretence at a regular trial. Probably, the millionaire proprietor of the "American" has an eye on getting the Italian vote when he next stands for the Governorship of New York. In any case, the Bedouins of the Desert do not advertise in the "American" and do not even subscribe to it, while the Italian Colony in New York does both.

To return, however, to the case of Hussein. At half-past four in the afternoon he was brought before a military court which sat in the public street between the Gendarmery Office and the old citadel of Charles the Fifth, close to the sea. A table and two chairs had been placed in the street. On the table were an inkpot, pens, and large sheets of legal-looking paper, partly written over and with wide margins on the left. On the chairs sat two high officers, elderly men with grey moustaches and well-fitting uniforms covered with brilliant lace. Small bars of blue, yellow, and green cloth, sewn horizontally to the breasts of their tunics on the left-hand side, indicated that they were entitled, if they pleased, to wear various decorations. They wore their hats and swords as they sat; they also wore the calmly assured and superior air of persons who represent civilisation, human society, the established order of things here below, not to speak of a Higher Power above. One would never have suspected from the dignified and deliberate movements of those cultured, well-preserved, highly respectable old gentlemen that *they* were the murderers, the buccaneers, that there on the sands of Northern Africa they represented nothing but the gin-shop, the brothel, the gambling-hell, and the devil.

Around them stood a battalion of the 1st Regiment

of Engineers. Those soldiers formed a hollow square, and in the centre of that square were the prisoners, each standing between two armed men. They were six or seven in all, and foremost among them was Hussein. He was a beardless youth of eighteen years of age, dark-complexioned as befitted a Fezzani Arab, but with a pleasing and almost handsome face. His features were regular and perfectly European, his eye very bright and dark. Unlike the majority of the Fezzani Arabs, he was only about five feet five in height and as slimly built as a girl. He was draped from head to foot in a snow-white *djellaba*. The hood went over his head, concealing his red fez and his hair.

The young man looked his "judges" in the face with a perfectly composed and fearless air, and he made no confession and no comment on the judicial proceedings that went on before him. Once or twice he even smiled, and the smile disclosed two rows of small, even teeth, very white.

The evidence against him was translated piecemeal by the interpreter. Hussein listened, and always replied: "I have understood, but it is not so."

The *atto d'istruzione* was read and the declarations of the witnesses. Then the accused was questioned. He said that he had only left the Consulate out of curiosity in order to see what the tumult was about.

In short, he denied everything, "but," says an unfriendly writer who describes the scene, "he denied without protesting, in few phrases, and with a collected, almost dignified bearing."

Then the witnesses were called. One of them was an Arab girl of thirteen years old. After that, Captain Chiappioli, the advocate for the Prosecution, said a few words. Captain Senator Carafa d' Andria,



the advocate for the defence, also made a few banal remarks.

The prisoner had now been standing erect before his judges for a full hour. He had stood all that time without a muscle twitching in his face, without his betraying any symptom of fatigue, of fear, or even of interest. When the sentence was read to him he said, "I have understood, but it is not just."

The judge was sparing of words.

"Death! Remove the prisoner!"

To the surprise of the Italians, the condemned man did not seem in the least concerned. Even when the translator told him that he would be at once shot he failed to exhibit the least alarm.

"Death! Remove the prisoners!" Behind Hussein stood the other prisoners, five of whom were slim young Arabs like himself. Their heads also were carefully covered. Their clothes, however, were mean and ragged. They were poor, town Arabs. The sixth was an Arab from the Desert, a powerfully built old man, six feet in height and with an extraordinarily striking face. It was the face of a rebel, of a free, defiant man. The jaw was strong and firm; the eye unwavering; the mouth and the deep lines around it denoted unusual determination. The head was bare, and all the hair and beard seemed to me to have been clipped off, prison-fashion, so as to make the old man look ridiculous. It had the opposite effect, for it disclosed a nobly shaped cranium and a lower face which might have belonged to an old Cromwellian trooper.

Hussein was executed within half-an-hour after sentence was pronounced. The place of execution was an open space by the sea, in front of the Gen-darmery Office and between the old citadel and the



military club, formerly Turkish. It was less than a hundred feet from the spot where sentence had been pronounced. Right under the lofty, grey walls of the ancient Spanish castle is a semi-secluded corner used by the Italian soldiery as a latrine. It is filled with filth and excrement. One cannot put one's foot in a clean spot. In the midst of this stinking refuse-heap was placed a bale of compressed hay. Seated on this bale Hussein afterwards met his doom. When he fell off he rolled in the foul-smelling impurities with which the ground was polluted.

After sentence was pronounced the soldiers led the condemned man into the Gendarmery building. Meanwhile a file of eight men of the engineers were drawn up within twenty paces of the aforesaid bale of hay. They were under the command of Lieutenant Vercelli, at whose order they loaded their weapons and stood ready, facing the citadel wall, and at right angles to another line of soldiers parallel to the sea. Behind this latter line surged a crowd of correspondents and officers. Most of the correspondents and some of the officers had their cameras levelled. All of them had cigarettes in their mouths. There was a big cinematograph installed in a prominent position. There were laughing and light-hearted joking. The officer in charge of the proceedings was a large, soft, goose-like man with moustaches turned up and toes turned in. He went about twirling a cane and looking like a musical conductor. He knew that the cinematograph was just about to make a "hero" of him, and that there would be uproarious applause from all patriots and right-minded men whenever his figure was thrown on the screen anywhere from Syracuse to Chiasso.

Suddenly a movement was observed in the crowd. It was the prisoner Hussein and his guards coming through. Hussein was paraded about so that his fate might inspire terror. But, unfortunately, though all this parade of justice took place in the open street, for the exclusive benefit of the Arabs, not a single Arab spectator attended the trial or the execution. The only natives present were local Jews.

If any Touaregs, Fezzanis, or other desert Arabs had been present, I am afraid that the fearless and proud bearing of this youth would have had a hardening effect on them rather than anything else. For even the Italians were impressed by this exhibition of splendid fearlessness. They were amazed that the condemned man *cammina tranquillo* (walks calmly), that he did not lose his self-possession, not even in the last moment—*neanche nel momento estremo*.

Hussein was led towards the bale of hay. He turned back once and looked towards the soldiers who composed the firing-party. "*Guarda freddamente,*" says an Italian writer who describes the scene, "*i soldati che gli sono vicini con le armi già pronte.*" (He coldly regards the soldiers who are near him with their rifles already loaded.)

He may by this time have recognised them all again in the other world. The Fezzanis who are fighting out in the desert under Nesciat Bey could have been trusted to see to that.

Even at this last moment, this *momento estremo*, there was not a tear in his dark Arab eye, not a quiver on his beardless lip. If there had been a tear, dozens of jubilant Italian correspondents would have gloried in it, dozens of hungry, uplifted cameras would have seized upon it. There were two soldiers on each side of the condemned man. Sicilians, and

therefore superstitious, they handled him carefully, even gently, as if he had been an infant or a high-born *signora*. The mystery of Death had already enveloped him. Their hate had been swallowed up in awe. They timidly and reverently indicated that he should sit down on the hay with his face turned towards the wall and his back towards his executioners and the general public. It had been ordered thus inasmuch as to be shot in the back is, by Italian military law, the punishment of a *traditore* (traitor). How it had come to pass that this free Fezzani was a traitor to the King of Italy has not, however, been explained.

It was a weird, ghostly figure which sat there, shrouded entirely in white, the lower limbs invisible, the head still covered by the pointed hood. The figure was perfectly erect, and as motionless as one of the Roman statues in the ex-Turkish Club close by.

There were two soldiers on each side of him. They suddenly drew down the white hood or *baraccano* so that it entirely concealed his red fez and his face. The figure seated on the bale of hay was now hardly human. The eyes, the face, the hands, nothing could be seen. As soon as the soldiers had drawn down the hood they fled swiftly away, a pair to the right, a pair to the left. They fled with fearsome haste as if from an already disembodied spirit.

A sharp order from the Lieutenant, and the soldiers levelled their rifles. Another sharp order—*Fuoco!*—and eight shots rang out as one. The white figure remained perfectly motionless and erect. *Every shot had missed.* And at twenty paces!

Did some thought of escape not occur to the Arab at this moment? Out beyond lay an unequalled panorama of sunlit sea and land, inviting to freedom



and pleasure and lusty life. In the wind from the desert the fronds of the palm-trees waved like the plumes of cavalry. Yonder, in the green oasis, many of his friends were hidden. On the white sea-shore of Sharashett the glorious free sea broke. Midway it danced in a thousand dimples. Nay, within a few feet of where the condemned man sat, the Mediterranean lapped the low embankment.

Between him and that heaving, deep blue sea there was absolutely no obstacle. "Up! Run! Throw yourself into the waves! Swim for it! There is yet a chance!"

There can be nothing in telepathy, for though these words beat violently against the walls of my brain like imprisoned eagles beating against window-bars, the condemned man sat as still as death. His legs were free, but his hands were tied behind his back, and he could not withdraw the *baraccano* which covered his face down to the chin. But what an effect it would have had on the Arabs if he had even risen to his feet and died with his face to the firing-party and on his lips the terrible war-cry of Islâm: "*La ilaha illa-llahu Mohammed rasulu 'llah*" ("There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God!"), the war-cry which his race had carried from their home in the Arabian desert, along the coast of Northern Africa to Tangier, through Spain from Gibraltar to the Pyrenees, into the heart of France as far as Poitiers.

*Fuoco!* Another order. Another volley. The white figure fell over slowly, gently—fell to the ground on its left side.

"He died like a young martyr," says one Italian author who describes the scene, "and yet he died with a lie on his lips."



Who but God can say that ? He may have been innocent. The Italians have made many mistakes since they came to Tripoli. This also may very well have been one. I would not have liked, had I been an Arab, to have been tried for my life by men as panic-stricken, as mad with racial hate, as were the Italian leaders in Tripoli on October 24th.

But if he is innocent, practically the whole world is banded together to maintain his guilt. The Italians naturally contend that he is a murderer. So do most of the foreigners, as otherwise it would be rather awkward for Dr. Tilger. One of the Consuls—not Dr. Tilger—assured me that Hussein had confessed, but I afterwards found that this was not the case.

The white, ghostly figure tumbled over without a moan, without a cry, without a syllable. There was absolute silence. One leg twitched feebly. A man in a black uniform, a military doctor, advanced hastily, bent over the prostrate body, raised his hand, said something in Italian, and stepped briskly back. Then an odd thing occurred. The first cavass of the German Consulate and another Arab of the same institution were present, and had brought with them the prisoner's dog. It was a ludicrous, effusive retriever, with black curly hair which had been closely clipped everywhere save around the neck and at the tip of the tail. Somebody had evidently tried to make the poor animal look like a lion, but had only succeeded in making it look ridiculous.

As soon as the second volley had been fired, this foolish, exuberant dog rushed forward and began jumping around the corpse, sniffing at it and then bounding suddenly back, frisking around, wagging its tail and contorting its body. But it never barked

once, and it never actually touched the recumbent figure.

The soldiers did not want to kill this dog. They whistled at it and tried to coax it away. But it would not desert its master, and, despite its presence, the soldiers finally began an indiscriminate fire at the prostrate mummy-like figure on the ground. Happily the dog was not hit. The executioners took special pains to avoid it. It was the man they were aiming at. Thirty shots in all were fired, counting the two volleys. After a few minutes of the indiscriminate firing, the man in the black uniform advanced again along with several others in the same garb. They were policemen or gendarmes. One of them had a red-cross badge on his arm. This man felt the pulse of the figure on the ground, afterwards letting the lifeless arm fall back limply. Then the leading policeman put a revolver to the head and fired two shots.

At the same instant there rang out what seemed to be a distant, gigantic echo of the pistol-shots. Another! Another! Another! All eyes were turned towards the blue sea and the sunlit strip of yellowish, sandy coast eastward of the Sharashett fort.

In the water lay the war-vessel *Sicilia*. Inland from the fort four fleecy, brown clouds of shrapnel hung over the land at a point from which came a crackling of rifle-fire. Hussein's friends had already begun to take their revenge.

The execution of Hussein was not the first execution which had taken place that day. Six men had been shot at eight o'clock that morning at the School of Arts, while other prisoners—300 in number—had been forced to assist at the ceremony. The condemned

men were placed against a wall in the court-yard and a file of soldiers was drawn up in front of them. There was a profound silence, while an interpreter read the sentence of death from a rostrum. He cried out in a loud voice and in the Arabic language. When he came to the name of the King of Italy at the end of the document the Italians present applauded, and so did one of the condemned men. This man raised his manacled hands and beat one palm against the other while he pronounced in a guttural voice the name of King Victor Emmanuel.

He may have lost his senses or he may have ingenuously supposed that this demonstration would save him. It did not, of course. He was shot, a moment afterwards, with the other five.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OASIS OF DEATH

ON the night of October 23rd Tripoli was more nervous, speechless, and panic-stricken than Port Arthur on the eve of Togo's first onslaught, or Constantinople the night before Mahmud Shefket Pasha stormed that city.

Being convinced that every Arab was an enemy, and being dreadfully alarmed at the risk they had run of losing the city, the Italians sent around Arab criers to cry out warnings and death-penalties enough to make one's blood run cold. Each crier wore a special native costume of some ceremonial significance, and was accompanied by an Italian official and two armed soldiers. The criers stopped every hundred yards or so and shouted out the proclamation at the top of their voices in some irregular kind of chant.

"*Chi non consegna subito tutte le armi e le munizioni alle autorità sarà fucilato.*" (Whoever does not at once surrender to the authorities any arms and ammunition which he may have in his possession will be shot.)

The natives were also told that they must be indoors before sunset, and must not appear on the street during the night on pain of being shot. Any one who did not halt when a sentinel said "*Chi va là?*" (Who goes there?) would be instantly fired on. All lights were to be extinguished.



I strolled out, after supper, on the Marina, or sea-front street, and found the city like a cemetery. Not a native was in sight save a number of boot-blacks, street-sweepers, beggars, and other homeless wanderers who slept inside some railings in front of the houses. Wrapped in their white garments and packed closely together, they looked like shrouded corpses awaiting burial. Whether asleep or not, they were certainly as still as dead men. They were afraid even to move. Patrols of soldiers and sailors swung along the street every few minutes. My old friend, the Censor, was accompanied by a soldier with a rifle. Two officers who passed me were accompanied by armed soldiers; and, in addition to that, they themselves had revolvers in their hands and had their fingers on the triggers. Every officer was accompanied at this time by an armed soldier, probably because a story had reached the Headquarters staff that an attempt would be made to suddenly assassinate all the Italian officers in the city.

For the next few days no Italian, military or civil, passed a native in the bazaar or the street, even in broad daylight, without putting his hand on a concealed weapon and preparing against the eventuality of the other springing on him with a knife. There was absolutely no reason for all these precautions against the peaceful town Arabs; but the plain fact remained that the Italians were working themselves into a condition almost of insanity on the subject of the natives.

There was not a light on shore. Cafés, shops, hotels had all been closed. But the sea-front was illuminated every few moments by the sinister flash of the search-lights on the battle-ships. Far away,

along the sea-shore burned huge fires—the straw and thatch and wood-work of native houses which had been wrecked and then set ablaze.

There was intense stillness, broken occasionally by revolver or rifle shots, sometimes close by, sometimes in the heart of the town, sometimes out in the oasis. Occasionally there was a hoarse cry, then perfect silence as before. If the town was thus intolerable, the palm-gardens outside were a horror, for they were black as the grave and littered with corpses. It was not safe for any one, friend or foe, to approach any of the innumerable sentinels who now studded the oasis. Every hundred yards or so, a sharp, strained "*Chi va là?*" or "*Chi sono, signori?*" (if a group of officers approached), would bring one up with a jerk.

Even for an Italian civilian, a promenade in the oasis on this particular night was fraught with danger. Despite his enthusiasm for the war and for the army, the Honourable De Felice, an Italian deputy, had the muzzle of a sentry's rifle pressed against his stomach when he went, this night, to visit Sharashett.

"Easy, easy!" he shrieked. "Lower your rifle! Don't you see that we are not Turks?"

"Our men were assassinated to-day by civilians," was the frenzied reply, "*Indietro, dunque, o noi facciamo fuoco!*" (Back, then, or we shall fire!)

And certainly the sentinels could be excused for feeling nervous. The smell of war filled the air. Horses bringing officers through the oasis stopped frequently with snorts of fear. The stoppage was always caused by corpses. In all attitudes of agony, Arabs lay dead in the sand. Sometimes their white robes were stained with blotches of red. Sometimes

their heads rested in a pool of blood. Sometimes the horses caught sight of snow-white bodies lying motionless in a thicket—the naked bodies of Italian soldiers not yet collected by the ambulances. Sometimes one came across groups of five or six Arabs bound together and about to be shot. In all probability they had been burned out of their houses, and had hidden in the thicket. But the thicket happened to be in the rear of the Italian line. “Caught under suspicious circumstances, in close proximity to our line,” is the charge. “*Fuoco!*” (Fire!) shouts the Lieutenant dryly, and all is over.

Crouched together in the trenches, the Italian soldiers horrified one another and exchanged the most blood-curdling, “camp-gup” stories about African campaigns. The word Africa has certainly an ominous sound in Italian ears. The shame and the disgrace of Adowa has never been fully set forth in print and is never likely to be, but the conscripts of Italy know all about, and perhaps even exaggerate, its horrors. As is but natural, the stories told of it around Italian camp-fires grow more thrilling and more gruesome every year. The shadow of that great shame hung over the present expedition like a ghost. The very exuberance of the Press, and the *gridi d' entusiasmo* (“cries of enthusiasm”) of the people were merely the forced gaiety of frightened children trying to reassure themselves while entering a dark room which exhaled tragedy.

*Viva l' Italia!*

*Viva Tripoli italiana!*

*Viva la marina!*

*Viva l' esercito!*

*Viva il Re!*

*Viva la flotta italiana!*



Whenever one hears this litany—and one hears it pretty often in Italy and in Tripoli—one can almost fancy he hears after every exclamation a *miserere nobis*.

For the Italians are groping in the haunted house like helpless children. It is pitch dark there and the corpse of an Arab woman lies upstairs with its throat cut ; while, from time to time, a gibbering, malignant spirit curdles their blood by shrieking the one word “ Adowa ! ”

With the Italian Press it is the same. The harping on “ *il valore italiano*,” “ *la magnifica condotta delle truppe* ” (the magnificent conduct of the troops), is so constant that it only betrays anxiety.

In the same manner the intense desire of the Press to cull good notices of the Italian army and navy from foreigners and foreign newspapers, is almost pathetic. “ *Tutta Europa ammira il valore dei nostri marinai e dei nostri soldati* ” (All Europe admires the valour of our sailors and soldiers !) runs one newspaper heading. “ *Magnifico testimonianzo degli addetti militari esteri sul valore delle truppe italiane* ” (Magnificent testimonial of the foreign military *attachés* on the valour of the Italian troops), is another. The *attachés* in question had only exchanged a few polite after-dinner compliments with the officers at the front.

Arab treachery was the theme around every camp-fire and in every trench. The moral of every tale told was that no trust can be placed in an Arab. “ *La leggendaria impenetrabilità araba* ” was insisted upon.

You might hear again, as in Abyssinia, the pleasant talk of the camp-fires, about mutilations worse than death and about fiendish native cruelty. The Italians



seem to have a perfect genius for getting among people of whom such stories can be told. But I do hope that some of the stories were fiction.

During the course of the battle one of the Bersaglieri had suddenly appeared among his comrades, who had given him up for lost. On being accused of having come down a tree, he evolved a lurid legend about having been captured and carried off along with six others by an overwhelming force of Arabs. When his captors had reached a safe spot in the recesses of the oasis, they tied the seven men to seven trees and mutilated them, one after the other, amid a wild mixture of dervish dancing, religious rites, and fiendish laughter.

As is the invariable rule in such stories he happened to be the last of the seven, but his explanation of his escape was rather unsatisfactory and incoherent. But, happily, the Italian camp was full of clever literary people, and a satisfactory conclusion was soon found for his little tale, which has probably formed, by this time, the subject of a new poem by Gabriele d' Annunzio, to whose peculiar style of genius the theme is exactly suited.

It was even asserted at the time in Tripoli, and the statement was published afterwards in Italy, that an Arab had been caught running through the oasis with a bag filled with portions of Italian flesh (*D' un Arabo che fuggiva con brandelli di carne umana in un sacco*). Incidents of cannibalism on the part of the enemy were furnished by other Bersaglieri who had "escaped."

The gloom around our camp-fire was not decreased when a superstitious Sicilian introduced the religious and supernatural element. This Sicilian said that a Holy War had been proclaimed. He spoke of a

strange excitement which he had noticed among the Arabs several days before. A wild light had come into all their eyes. They had walked like hypnotic subjects. There had been weird, unholy rites and chantings in the mosques. Some of them had pointed to the crescent moon, which then rode high in the heavens, as a sign that a Turkish victory was imminent. Others had mentioned an old prophecy according to which a Christian nation would come to Tripoli and would at the end of forty days be expelled amid storms and tempests, thunder and lightning.

Pleased with the impression he had made, the Sicilian went on to speak of those mysterious Freemasons of Islâm, the Senussi, whose head-quarters are at Kufra in the Egyptian desert, and whose influence extends from the Nile to Morocco and far southward into the unknown heart of the Dark Continent.

The Sicilians habitually spoke of the enemy as "the Saracens." Terrible legends of the Saracen conquest of Sicily tinged their minds, perhaps unconsciously. Various theories were put forward to account for the sudden appearance of such a large body of Arabs in the rear of the Italian line at Sharashett, and the theory most in favour was that a subterranean passage ran between Tripoli and the Turkish camp. Soldiers told how Arabs whom they pursued had mysteriously disappeared—undoubtedly *per mezzo di una escavazione sotterranea*.

I might here remark that, later on, this story of a *sotterranea* became an obsession, not only with the soldiers, but even with the Italian civilians and some of the officers. It was said that Turkish spies constantly penetrated in this way into the town, that

there were many Arabs underneath the earth, that half the city might be blown up. The most circumstantial account of this passage was given to the police by "the oldest inhabitant," a wise Jew. Some authorities said that there were two passages. One of those passages was so ample that four men could walk abreast in it. They were variously said to open (1) on the seashore; (2) in the centre of Tripoli; (3) in the oasis; (4) in the Governor's palace.

Finally the authorities became seriously alarmed, for it was not impossible that some old Roman or mediæval passage did open into the Castello; and Lieutenant Vicinanza made an elaborate search for those mythical tunnels. He went down wells, entered grottos, tapped walls to ascertain if they gave forth a hollow ring, dug in cemeteries. He questioned Hassuna Pasha, the present representative of the Karamanli family, which had long ruled the country from the old castle. Hassuna declared that there was no tunnel underneath the castle, and that there could not be a tunnel because, as the soil was sandy and rich in water, any such passage would soon collapse.

But in spite of this, enthusiasts went out to Gargaresh and examined every suspected point. By this time the foreign correspondents had begun to take an interest in the matter and to write about it. They wrote with all the more enthusiasm, inasmuch as this was the one and only subject on which the Censor allowed them a free hand.

Arab treachery was the theme of innumerable stories. The moral of every tale was that no trust can ever be placed in an Arab. Under the influence of religious fanaticism, he is capable of killing his best benefactor if that benefactor is an Unbeliever.



You may save an Arab boy from death, you may feed him, clothe him, educate him; but when the Holy War is declared he will be sure to stick a knife in you.

The Italians are predisposed to this form of profound distrust. When, before the bombardment, the Consuls considered what they should do in the event of a native rising against the Europeans, not improbable at that time, Vice-Consul Galli shocked his colleagues by saying that what he would do would be to first kill his Arab cavass and then barricade himself with his Italian friends in the Consulate. Now, that old cavass had been in the service of the Consulate for years. Those who have been in the Near East will understand how faithful such old servants are, and how ready to give their lives for their masters.

Among the tales of Arab treachery which were told was one about an Arab youth employed by the Bersaglieri officers, who thought they had made quite a pet of him. When, in the morning, the officers prepared to fight the enemy, the youth approached a captain and killed him with a dagger. He was instantly shot.

And certainly there is something to be said of the Italian private's point of view in this matter, though nothing can excuse the mixture of massacre and muddle which the higher military and civil authorities made of the campaign.

The privates felt that they had, on the whole, treated the natives with friendliness. They had freely shared their bread and cheese with the little Arab *bimbo* who had stretched out its hand murmuring: "*Italiano bono, mangeria.*"

Sometimes they had bought a little cotton cloth



to make a dress for the small, naked boys. They thought that they had established relations of good-humoured fraternity with the parents of those little mites. The friendly smiles of the fathers seemed to indicate that all was well. The Sicilian soldier was not vexed at the Arab "friendly" breaking faith with Rome. He was vexed at the Arab breaking the tacit pact with him, a pact sealed by many grins and handshakes.

The recollection of those smiles, of that cotton cloth, of that bread, now made the Sicilian furious. He did not know that in most cases the people who assailed him in the rear were not oasis Arabs, were hostile Arabs, open enemies from beyond the front. He knew or heard of a few cases of treachery, and that was enough to make him curse the whole Arab race.

The Sicilian soldier had heard the most fantastic stories of Arab cruelty and ferocity, how the wounded and even the dead had been hacked and mutilated, how bearers who went to pick up wounded Turks had been shot by the dying men, who had then breathed out their life in a last deep sigh of thankfulness to Allah. He had heard how Bersaglieri had been found in the thickets, naked and crucified.

Most of those stories were fiction or at least exaggerated, but the Sicilians and Neapolitans believed them and passed them on, amplified, still more horrible. The theatrical instinct of the southern Italian had full play. With eloquent gestures, in torrents of words he described "*il dramma sinistro della rivolta e della repressione*" (the sinister drama of the revolt and of the repression).

The circumstances under which those stories were told added to their impressiveness.

The night was as black as Erebus and, in a state of extreme nervous tension, their fingers on the triggers of their rifles, one ear sometimes turned sideways to the ground, the sentinels seemed to listen more than to watch. The movements of the Arabs along the sand during the course of the past battle had been so snake-like that ears were needed as well as eyes in order to detect the approach of the enemy.

Suddenly a sentinel called the attention of his companions to a strange distant noise. It was the faint roll of a drum, and it must have come from some point far out in the desert.

What could it mean? Was it a signal of war? Was it the accompaniment of some devil-dance carried out by savage allies whom the Mohammedans had summoned from the dark heart of Africa?

And there were other mysterious signs. In the profundity of the sandy waste a light distinctly gleamed for a moment, then disappeared, then reappeared, finally went out. Moreover, several men saw, or fancied they saw, a comet, very faint, in the heavens.

These watchers of the skies were disturbed from time to time by soldiers talking in their sleep around them. One murmured the name of a woman, one the pet name of a child, one the name of a Sicilian village, fair as a dream of paradise.

"*Il dramma sinistro della rivolta e della repressione.*" To the Sicilians, however, and in fact to every one in Tripoli at that time, including the Consuls and the foreign business-men, it was something more than a mere drama that was being enacted before them. "Is tragedy again to dog the steps of the Italian soldiers in Africa?" That was the question most people asked themselves and one another that night.

The breaking of Caneva's line, the rear attack, the certainty that all the Arabs were now on the Turkish side were very serious facts. An army is a great animal which is easily panic-stricken, and the prospect of a frightened and demoralised soldiery rushing pell-mell into Tripoli and making for the transports was one that did not appeal to the average Esparto Grass merchant, or shipping agent in the town. He had come out to make money, not to get skinned alive.<sup>1</sup>

For the Italians themselves, the events of the day had been stunning. The very ground they stood on was unsafe. The race on which they had graciously decided to build their Colonial Empire had slipped away like quicksand from underneath their foundation-stone. What if their new, untried army slipped away also? What if a blacker day than Adowa was before them?

New tales of cruelty were invented round the camp-fires, and by morning the authors honestly believed in those stories themselves. Hence an exaltation of mind which made terrible reprisals certain, unless the officers kept their men well under control. Alas! the officers were not strong enough to exercise that control.

"Owing to the helplessness of the officers," wrote the "*Frankfurter Zeitung*" correspondent a few days later, "a wild man-hunt began."

And when the man-hunt did begin, the soldiers

<sup>1</sup> There was a great exodus from Tripoli, and those who remained made ready for a change of masters. All Turkish coins disappeared because the shopkeepers hoarded them in the conviction that they would come in handy when the Turks returned. Von Gottberg, who lodged with a Jew, found his landlord busily occupied in brushing and smoothing the old Turkish fez which he had replaced by an Italian wide-awake on October 4th. "One never knows what may happen," quoth this Hebrew Vicar of Bray in answer to my colleague's look of inquiry.

wrote about it in a manner which shows how insane they were with terror and rage. In letters to their sweethearts, mothers, and brothers, they described the cruel extirpation of the peaceful Arabs as they would have described the extirpation of venomous serpents. One man who dates his letter "Tripoli, October 25th," and who writes to his "dear Parents," begins with the words "It is midnight," and goes on to say "the night is dark and silent, and in the midst of the tragic, solemn silence I hear the 'Who goes there?' of the sentinels, and the rifle-shots which cut down inexorably those vipers who bear the name of Arabs."

Going back to describe the surprise of the 23rd, he says, "On a sudden, thousands and thousands of those vermin in human form issued from all directions and surprised the battalion."

It was to the mercy of men like this that the innocent oasis Arabs were left.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE ROAD TO THE FRONT

At the battle of Sharashett, on October 23rd, the Turks, having demonstrated along the Italian right and centre, made a very furious charge on the left and broke through the Italian line into the oasis.

Three days later, on October 26th, they repeated precisely the same tactics and with the same result. One would have thought that by this time General Caneva would have been ready for them. But at Sidi Messri, as at Sharashett, the oasis was "flooded with wild Arabs." This is General Caneva's expression, but, as a matter of fact, the exact number was 250.

General Caneva did, he says, devote the 24th and 25th "to the preparation of the line of defence, to an assiduous watch inside and outside the city where a grave ferment was noticed, a consequence of the repression in the oasis on the 23rd."

The Commander-in-chief further remarks in his official report that on the afternoon of the 24th he gave orders for the complete disarmament of the inhabitants of the oasis. This, he explains, was absolutely necessary in order to protect the troops from "treacherous attacks" in the rear.

This is very true ; but why did not General Caneva disarm those people earlier ? A week before, their houses might have been searched, and their knives,

razors, and antiquated flintlocks removed without any harm being done. Now, the Italian soldiers were quite carried away by fear and by suspicion, and they killed every Arab whom they found with arms of any kind in his possession. The "disarmament" was carried out at first by four companies of bluejackets *plus* two companies of the 6th Infantry Regiment.

"It was precisely at this time," says General Caneva, "that having seen how ineffectual the ordinary means of repression (*gli ordinari mezzi di repressione*) were against the animosity and the ferocity of the rebels, we were obliged to have recourse to severe and energetic measures, carried out, however, with all possible precautions, as is done in analogous cases by all belligerents."

These "severe and energetic" measures were the wholesale slaughter of the male oasis Arabs from the age of twelve or fourteen upwards. Whether General Caneva ordered this massacre or not I do not know, but if he did not, the massacre was inevitable as soon as he let loose among the peaceful Arabs a large number of panic-stricken and vindictive soldiers, operating, as a rule, in small groups not commanded by officers. "The Times" correspondent has said all that can possibly be said in favour of the Italians, but he has to admit (November 8th) that :

"There is one lesson that stands out in bold relief from this miserable business, and that is the necessity of employing in duties of repression an adequate number of officers and of having a sufficient number of officers thus to employ. As far as I could judge, the licence which carried the

Italian soldiery away was the fact that the house-to-house search for arms found small detachments operating without commissioned officers. This was where the danger crept in. Sicilians and hot-blooded Southerners who had just seen their dead—butchered, as they thought, in circumstances of black treachery—were dangerous material to let loose in a suburb when the orders were that the suspicion of carrying an arm was justification for a summary death-sentence. All armies, even our own, require a full complement of officers to cope with all the exigencies of war.”

But I shall deal later with this question of the “*repressione*.” First I must describe the battle of Sidi Messri. I should like to say, however, that the severity of the Italians towards the natives of the oasis was largely the result of fear. There was a general impression in the army that the 23rd had been only an Arab reconnaissance, pushed too far, and that there was impending a great attack in comparison with which Sharashett would be only child’s play.

Those suspicions were confirmed by the reports of the aviators who, on the 25th, reported several large Turkish columns three miles towards the south-east.

More ominous still, a Turkish officer rode in from the Desert with a white flag and demanded the surrender of the city in two hours. Some of the Italians professed to regard this as comic, some as “*insolenza eccessiva*.” I could not help thinking, myself, that it was one of those soldierly touches of which in this war there are very few to the credit of the invaders. The superb self-confidence of this young



Turkish officer, his military bearing, his curt salute, his curt message, made the Italians look like men who are only playing at soldiers. The Turks might have respected General Caneva more if he had even once sent an officer to their camp with some such bold, imperative message. Caneva never sent an officer, but hardly a day passed that he did not send unfortunate negro boys and other natives into the Desert with sly, treacherous, underhand letters, the object of which was to detach some of the Arab chiefs from the Turkish side. If those poor devils had refused to go, the Italians would probably have killed them—it was a painful sight to see some of them going out into the waste, in mortal fear of being shot in the back by the Italians. If they did go and did not destroy the letters on the way, the Arabs would hang them. A good many Italians must have regarded this strange demand of the Turkish officer as rather alarming, and the preparations for the defence were pushed on with feverish activity. The General Staff inspected the positions and strengthened weak points. The men worked all night in some places, putting up earth-works.

General Caneva's defensive preparations were as follows: The troops in the oasis were reinforced by bluejackets and detachments of fortress artillery armed with rifles, for the fortress artillery had not yet been placed in position. Several batteries of rapid-fire cannon and a number of machine-guns, which had not been landed or not placed in position on the 23rd, were now sent to the weak points of the oasis line, where they were of infinite service next day. The *Carlo Alberto* and the *Sicilia* were anchored at a spot off the shore east of Tripoli, from which they could bombard the advancing Turks.



But the Turks also had been busy. Invisible, inaudible, they had nevertheless crept up on all sides towards the Italian line. In some parts of the oasis they were only a few hundred yards off. During the night of the 28th, the Italian sentinels among the palm-trees felt like hunters driven to bay by an army of noiseless, velvet-footed tigers—tigers with the brains of demons and more than the usual blood-thirstiness of their own terrible species.

Already, on the 25th, Fethi Bey had passed his hand lightly along the whole Italian front as a connoisseur might pass his hand over a work of art. He had, in other words, made a brief, feigned attack which had disclosed the strength of the Italian defences from Gargaresh to Sharashett.

Shortly after five in the morning the real attack began. In the Minerva Hotel I heard the earth quiver and the windows rattle to the roar of the naval guns, and immediately ascended, half dressed and half asleep, to the flat roof. Dawn was still struggling with darkness. The stars still shone. A gentle breeze blew from the sea.

But all the Italian line was in action. We were girt by a circle of fire. Graceful little clouds of shrapnel burst over Sharashett; and above these clouds the aeroplanes fearlessly manœuvred. I soon saw that the fighting at Sharashett and Henni was much more serious than the fighting elsewhere, so without further ado I finished dressing myself, took my camera, revolver, and binoculars, and sallied forth in the direction of the east flank. The shops were, of course, shut, and the streets deserted save for occasional parties of sailors and soldiers who marched down them. At the entrance to the oasis, beyond the Esparto Grass Factory of the Banco di

Roma, a young officer stopped me and said that I would not be allowed to go further. But I showed him my pass and he was content, though anxious about my personal safety in going through the oasis. He asked me to await the passage of a *pattúglia* (patrol), and said that it would be madness for me to go on alone.

And certainly the rest of my journey was depressing enough. I walked along a street of houses which had just been looted and destroyed. I was alone, and the echo of my own footsteps resounded as if I were walking in a tomb. This suburb, so filled with noisy life four days earlier, was now as uninhabited as Pompeii. I did not see a single Arab all the way, nor did I meet with a single Italian.

The oppressive solitudes of the oasis were heavy with a sense of tragedy. The stillness was hostile, the very air was dense with unutterable menace. The shattered doorways and windows gaped like the mouths of dead men. Black with blood and pitted with bullets, the naked walls exhaled the quintessence of malignity and hate.

The oasis dogs are usually very noisy. On this day they were still as death. I saw some of them slinking past in the distance, their tails hanging low, and a furtive, guilty expression in their eyes. Had they been feeding on——? But I put the loathsome thought away and considered my own danger. For I must confess that I regretted not having waited for the patrol, before I entered on this blood-stained zone of death. Amid the cacti and the ruined houses there might very well lurk an unfortunate Arab who had survived the man-hunt of the last three days, and in his desperation he might easily mistake me for an Italian.

Finally, when I knew by the noise of the firing that I was not far from the Italian line, I came on a group of soldiers standing in reserve with about a dozen horses behind an Arab house and wall. There were sentinels on the look-out towards Tripoli as well as towards the Arabs, and, on seeing me approach, some of them aimed at me with every sign of excitement. My strange dress had evidently alarmed them, but a young officer restrained them and made me welcome. I did not know what a narrow escape I had on this occasion until I learned later that all the soldiers were under the impression that their orders were to "shoot every civilian approaching the rear of the trenches." A French journalist once asked a sentinel why he kept blazing away all night. The ingenuous soldier replied: "*Prima si spara, poi si dà il 'Chi va là?' ordine del Ministero della Guerra.*" ("First shoot, then ask 'Who goes there?' Such is the order of the Ministry of War.") He had evidently got the order wrong end foremost, and I suppose this explains how so many innocent townspeople, including seven or eight Maltese, lost their lives in Tripoli town itself during these days of panic.

We were about five or six hundred yards from the front, but the Arab bullets continually whistled over our heads, so that we found it necessary to hide behind the wall. Soon after I saw a long line of bluejackets in charge of a naval officer coming down a side lane, and I joined them as they crept along the road, which was certainly not in a very safe condition, for every few moments an ominous whiz passed down the centre of it and, judging from the sound, not very high above our heads.

These had come to reinforce a party of soldiers who were crouching behind a mud-wall about a hundred



yards from the front, and firing continuously at the enemy. The firing was heavy, the whiz of the bullets frequent, and it was most advisable, if not absolutely necessary, to refrain from looking over that wall. I did look over it once, and this is what I saw.

The extreme front was close to me. It consisted of a line of bluejackets lying flat on the ground behind a row of sandbags and firing very calmly and very steadily. An officer pointed out an Arab, but the Arab had vanished before I could see him. I could only see the palm-groves, cacti, olive-trees and mud-walls.

About half-way between me and the front stood the large uprights of a well. Behind those uprights and an adjacent wall were posted some half-dozen Italian soldiers. On catching sight of my khaki-coloured Tunisian sun-hat one of those soldiers manifested great alarm, but was reassured on seeing some of his comrades with me. That rear attack on the 23rd had evidently given a bad shaking to the nerves of the entire army. Somewhere at the front a machine-gun worked almost continuously, and was evidently of great assistance, for the Arab fire became very hot whenever it ceased for a moment or two. Unfortunately the Arabs used black powder, so that the smoke from their rifles always betrayed their whereabouts and showed the men in charge of the machine-gun where to direct their stream of lead. At the end of the wall behind which I lay was another well with the usual large uprights. One soldier lay here, on watch, looking south. Suddenly he began firing as if for bare life, and soon he was joined by several other soldiers, who also fired. They were firing on Arabs who were trying to flank them.



Those Arabs sent two or three bullets our way. Had they aimed a little lower, they would have enfiladed us and killed or wounded perhaps half-a-dozen soldiers with every shot, for we were crouching all in a row. Close by was an Arab hut which had been converted into a dressing-station. It was nearer the front than any dressing-station that I have ever seen in war, and was well provided with white and Red Cross flags. I went inside as a bullet whizzed past the doorway, very close, and found there some military doctors with their assistants. All seemed very lugubrious, but they gave me a cup of coffee, which I greatly appreciated. I found that I was watched carefully, however, and by and by an officer of the Carabinieri, an affable, tub-shaped man who speaks Arabic, I believe, and is connected with the Secret Service department, approached me, scrutinised me closely, and then asked curtly for my papers.

I would have felt more horrified than I did at the touch of his hand if I had known beforehand where I was to meet him next. It was on the Bumeliana road; his face was then dark-purple with excitement, his eyes were bloodshot, and he bellowed like a bull as he blazed away with his revolver at a crowd of manacled natives weltering on the ground in a pool of blood.

Having satisfied this dread functionary, I crawled back along the wall, got out into the road, and made a series of short dashes for the front. I ran first to the shelter of the well uprights, and then to the rear of a cart which had been abandoned in the roadway and which gave a greater touch of desolation to the scene than anything else in sight. From the shelter of this cart I photographed the line in front.

When I returned to the wall I was surprised by the silence and depression of those Italians, usually so volatile. That group was certainly not a "*magnifico quadro di guerra*."

Now that they had to face free men from the Desert, free men with rifles in their hands, the Italian soldiers did not look at all so gay as when they only had to shoot inoffensive people whose wrists were securely tied behind their backs.

But one cannot, after all, blame the private soldier and sailor for feeling miserable and looking glum under such circumstances. This was hardly the sort of "*passeggiata militare*" (military promenade) that they had been promised.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BATTLE OF SIDI MESSRI: ARABS AGAIN BREAK ITALIAN LINE

WHEN, on October 23rd, the Arabs broke the Italian line at Sharashett, the Italians said that they had been taken by surprise. The enemy had approached too near before being recognised. Besides, "he knew every palm-tree," as an Italian put it; the lie of the land was quite familiar to him. And he had taken a number of other unfair advantages. In short, he had not "played the game."

Just as if to show the invaders that they could break the line anywhere they chose, the Arabs attacked a point in the Desert on October 26th, and broke through there also. This point was a villa between the Cavalry Barracks and Bumeliana, called "the house of Gemal Bey." Gemal Bey is the Turkish Chief of Staff, and he may have directed the attack himself.

On account of this compound fracture of his left wing, General Caneva abandoned the whole Sidi Messri-Sharashett line on the 28th, and fell back nearly two miles. But, in spite of this, he claimed to have won a brilliant victory on the 26th.

The Italian commander offers many explanations for this second breakage. The broken ground in front of Gemal Bey's house made it, says General Caneva, a great temptation to the enemy and a

great peril to the Italians. He assures us, again and again, that the Turks were "*ottimi conoscitori del terreno*" (knew the land like the palms of their hands). It can easily be believed that the Turkish officer who led the charge was familiar with what was probably his own back-garden, but surely the Italians had had plenty of time to study it too, for it was, after all, a small garden. It did not contain three acres.

The bald fact remains that by means of a terrible frontal assault, the Arabs drove the 7th company of the 84th Infantry out of the house, killing Captain Hombert, the commandant.

The men from the Desert had, as usual, begun their attack at the most unearthly hour of the twenty-four, at the moment when day is in process of painful birth, and when the sleepy and tired sentinel cannot tell whether that dim, sickly white light comes from the approaching sun or is only a faint radiance exhaled by the Desert. A ghostly, unfelt wind had sprung up, and was shaking the tops of the palm-trees, which rustled mysteriously, in the early dawn, like the dark, nodding plumes of funeral cars. Cocks crowed; a dog howled dismally in the distance. There were mysterious and inexplicable tappings and movings in the underwood, and the sentinel's morbid imagination was crowded by phantom shapes from the blood-curdling folk-lore of Sicily.

At the same instant as the assault began on the house of Gemal Bey, an assault commenced all along the Italian line from Sidi Messri to Bumeliana. It was still dark, and the sand-hills were suddenly outlined against the black sky in a thousand little bursts of flame—caused by the discharge of Turkish and Arab rifles from the edge of the dunes. The



Desert looked like a public building outlined on some festive occasion in bulbs of electric light. But, alas ! it was no festival. October 26th was to be one of the ugliest days in Italian military history, a blacker day in some respects than Adowa itself.

Boom ! Boom ! Boom ! All the Italian batteries responded. All the rifles in the trenches went off ; and the trenches, too, looked in the darkness like a long line of flame.

Meanwhile, the remnants of the 7th company, which had been expelled from the house of Gemal Bey, turned up near Tripoli city and, in order to explain their presence, told the usual harrowing tale of having been attacked in the rear by "friendly" Arabs. Yes, when their ammunition was exhausted, they had been most treacherously set upon by a *pochi Arabi rimasti nei giardini vicini e non disturbati dai nostri per l' amicizia e la cordialità che avevano dimostrata* (a few Arabs who had remained in the neighbouring gardens, and who had not been disturbed by our men owing to the friendship and cordiality which they had demonstrated).

This was the sort of story that contributed to the massacres of October 26th. The peaceful oasis Arabs were again the scape-goats.

But during the previous three days the soldiers had killed or chased away every Arab in the oasis immediately behind them, while the rest of the "friendlies" were too well watched to be able to move.

Even General Caneva refused to endorse this second tale of an attack by "friendlies." His report leaves us under the impression that the rear attack was made by Desert Arabs who, "favoured by the obscurity," had managed to creep

unperceived through the line in the oasis before that line had been broken by the frontal attack. A similar view is held by some of his officers, while the "treacherous attack" theory is adopted by none of them.

We have, for example, the testimony of Captain Tamaio to the same effect, given by that out-and-out jingo Senator, Signor Enrico Corradini, in his "Conquista di Tripoli."

*"Il capitano Tamaio raccontava e diceva che forse gli arabi i quali avevano assalito alle spalle, erano degli stessi venuti coi turchi dal deserto e penetrati in qualche punto attraverso le trincee."* ("Captain Tamaio said that perhaps the Arabs who had attacked in the rear were some of those who had come with the Turks from the Desert and had managed to cross the trenches at some point.")

And, just as happened on the 23rd, the Arabs who now invaded the oasis found there many of their own men who had crept in the night before. Signor Corradini is positive on this point. "The Arabs," he says, "poured through this breach like a torrent and united with them others of their people who, during the night, had succeeded at this point in creeping into the oasis by deep, covered paths leading from the Desert. The men who had thus got in posted themselves behind walls, or lay down behind folds of earth, and tried to cut off the 6th and 7th companies."

But the able correspondents of the "Corriere della Sera" say nothing of Arabs having crept unperceived through the lines. They seem to attribute all the rear attacks that morning to the men who had broken the line at the house of Gemal Bey.

As I have already stated, the outside attack began

before dawn, and the Arabs had, as usual, crept up to within two hundred yards of the Italians before the latter had perceived them. *Gli arabi erano già sulla trincea quando i soldati iniziavano il fuoco.* (The Arabs were already on the trenches when the soldiers began to fire.)

The same correspondents admit that "the company, unable to resist the onslaught, fell back; and some hundreds of Arabs penetrated inside the circle of the advanced posts. The cries of the enemy, who came in masses, preceded by cavalry, were infernal." The shouts of "Allah Akbar!" drowned the screams of the wounded and the moans of the dying.

In front of them, we are told, bounded an athletic man whom the Italians recognised as a pleasant, gnarled old Jewish pedlar who had been selling tobacco at the front on the previous day, and who had seemed, so far as his limited knowledge of the Italian language permitted, to be overflowing with kindly benedictions on the Italian soldiers. "The fanatics having succeeded in breaking the line, rushed towards the cavalry barracks, spreading themselves out in the oasis and attacking the neighbouring trenches in the rear."

Once more, says General Caneva, "a horde of many hundreds of Arabs poured like a sea into the oasis through the open gap in our line of defence." As a matter of fact, the "horde" only amounted to 250 men.

The firing by the Arabs, who had thus broken the line, on the rear of the 4th and 6th companies caused, in the trenches which those companies occupied, what the Italians describe as "*una confusione sanguinosa*" (bloody confusion).

Unfortunately, the natives again made the mis-



take which had turned their victory of the 23rd into a defeat. Their craze for loot undid them. Hardly had they driven the Italians out of their trenches when they began stripping the dead bodies, and eating with avidity the biscuits and pieces of meat which they found in the pockets. They also appropriated the knapsacks and all sorts of odds and ends which they discovered about the trenches.

One Arab who was killed elsewhere that day was found to have on his feet a pair of ill-fitting boots which were afterwards identified as having been taken from the dead body of a corporal who had been killed that morning in the trenches. Somebody else must have got the rest of the corporal's belongings; and when he was shot, the Arab of the boots was probably roaming the oasis on the look-out for some soldier with a pair of socks that would match his newly acquired foot-gear. But the boots probably proved his undoing. He might have escaped had he not been wearing them when the Italians gave chase.

In the same way many Arabs were shot down in Gemal Bey's villa while industriously stripping corpses instead of trying to meet the counter-attack of the Italians.

But a great deal of booty must have been carried off into the Desert, for during later attacks some of the Arabs appeared on the horizon dressed as Bersaglieri, and in some of the soldiers' letters we find bitter complaints about all the spare linen and clothing having been carried off by the Arabs, with the result that the soldiers did not in some cases get a change of linen for months.

This stripping of the slain was an unpleasant habit of the Arabs, and the Italian soldiers seemed



to think that it was carried out with a view to insulting and shaming the dead. But I do not think that the practice constituted an atrocity. Up to a hundred years ago the stripping of corpses was the rule in European war; and, in the present instance, the only desire of the Arabs was, in most cases, loot. According to the "Corriere della Sera," they even stripped their own dead. They are now getting so much Italian loot, however, that I should not be surprised if, before the war ends, the Arabs are all dressed in Italian uniforms and provided with Italian Zeiss glasses, water-bottles, capes, rifles, etc. At least, that is the only conclusion I can come to after having read the accounts of unexceptionable witnesses who, like Mr. E. N. Bennett, have been with the Turkish forces in the interior.

Not only did the rear-attack of the Desert Arabs cause "bloody confusion" in the Italian trenches. A murder committed by one "friendly" also caused consternation.

The murderer was an old gardener who had been employed in Gemal Bey's villa, but who had latterly taken to cooking food for the officers; and the victim was Lieutenant Orsi of the 84th Regiment. The old man's daughter had been suffering from fever, and for days previously the young lieutenant had taken a kindly interest in her and given her quinine. Only that morning he had brought her medicine and also a cup of hot coffee from the regimental mess.

But the girl's father ran *amok* and seemed to lose his senses, when, a few moments later, he heard the deafening fusillade of the conquering Arabs and the terrible battle-cries of "Allah Akbar!" and "La ilaha illa-llahu Mohammed rasulu 'llah!"

Seizing a knife, he rushed at the man who had

saved his daughter's life and stabbed him to the heart. But he was bayoneted so quickly that he fell dead across the still warm body of his victim.

This story, I may remark, has been told in varying keys of indignation and horror by every Italian correspondent in Tripoli. It has been cited as an instance of the blackest ingratitude.

But we have not got the old gardener's version of it. Is it not possible that the gay young lieutenant was unaware of the fierce jealousy of the Moslems in everything which regards their women? Did he not know that a Mohammedan father would sooner see his daughter dead than snatched from the grave by a *giaour* who had looked upon her unveiled face?

In all these matters we only get, of course, one side of the case. The other side we never get, for the Mussulmans are too proud to write to our papers about the ill-treatment of their women, and in any case they cannot write, as they are dead.

Indeed, in the present instance all the members of the old gardener's family are dead. An Italian correspondent tells us that "all his [the gardener's] family was destroyed during the combat" ("*tutta la sua famiglia è stata distrutta durante il combattimento*"). This is rather a mysterious sentence. It lends itself to various interpretations, and to one very black interpretation when we remember the day this occurred—the terrible October 26th—and the scenes of massacre which the oasis was to witness before nightfall.

In any case, it is singular that the gardener should seek out Lieutenant Orsi while the latter was actually in the trenches "in the middle of his soldiers," unless the old man fancied that some wrong had been done to his daughter. Otherwise he would

naturally have attacked some one else. I only suggest, of course, that the young lieutenant may, in his ignorance of Moslem prejudices, have quite innocently lifted the girl's veil; but it is a pity that no investigation could be held.

I have heard of one case in which an attempt was made to assassinate a European in Tripoli. The would-be assassin was said, of course, to be an emissary of the Young Turk Committee, which was absolutely absurd. The victim received telegrams of congratulation on his escape, from all the municipalities, newspapers, mayors, and poets in Italy. I am told, however, that the assault was emphatically *not* because he was pro-Italian.

But, as before, the Arabs were too few in number and too badly armed to hold their own long, much less to break into the town. Besides, they continued to be over-fond of biscuits. For, having rushed the encampment of the 84th Regiment, they discovered there another consignment of biscuits and at once started to devour them.

I do not like to give General Caneva any hints that may help him in the prosecution of this iniquitous war, but if he were really crafty he would import some very tasty varieties of hard-baked bread, and leave boxes of them some distance inside the trenches, where they would form a sort of second line of defence!

Charles Martel noticed this weakness of the Arabs for loot when he warned the Franks against attacking those invincible invaders until "they have loaded themselves with the incumbrance of wealth."

Colonel Spinelli, who was in command at the Cavalry Barracks, slaughtered a good many of the biscuit-eaters and at the same time used his utmost



endeavours to drive the invaders out of the dense undergrowth at Gemal Bey's house. He sent two squads of the 12th company, the machine-gun section, and all the Lodi cavalrymen, the latter, of course, on foot. All were under the command of Captains Gandolfi and Landolina. This relieving force fought its way forward, step by step, but lost in the contest its captain, who was killed while leading on his men, and one lieutenant. The latter had seized the rifle of a soldier, and was not shot down until he had killed three of the enemy. We hear a good many of these tales of Italian heroism—and the Italian officer is undoubtedly brave—but we never hear a word of Arab heroism. Yet what an exploit that was of 250 Arabs to break the Italian line; and what a desperate fight they must have made of it afterwards in the oasis!

In a house which they had seized, a group of them held out till next day, and finally had to be blown up with dynamite, house and all. Not one of that brave 250 escaped, and, even if they had escaped, it is doubtful if they could have told their story in such a way as would appeal to Europeans. For the Arab is untruthful in a naïve way. He will spin a yarn (which nobody will believe) of having entered Tripoli and driven Caneva back to his ship; but of his escaping, say, from a burning house surrounded by Italian soldiers he will say nothing. And he may be sure that the Italians will say nothing.

But it was not Italian courage which saved the situation. It was the naval battery and the Krupp battery which prevented Nesciat Bey from reinforcing his men who were fighting in the oasis.

As soon as a gap was opened in the Italian flank, considerable numbers of white-robed Arabs appeared



on the crest of the distant sand-hills and moved rapidly towards the breach. If they had got in, the fate of the Italian army was sealed. But the quick-firing battery was hurried from the Cavalry Barracks: the Golzio battery, which had only been landed at Tripoli that very day, was rushed out to Bumeliana, and managed to reach that point despite the efforts of two brave and intelligent Arabs concealed in a house, to shoot the horses. At Bumeliana this new battery proved very useful; and meanwhile the two other batteries, which had been installed at Bumeliana since the occupation, began to shell the advancing Arabs with deadly effect.

It was impossible for Nesciat Bey to send reinforcements, considering how frightful was the Italian artillery fire from Bumeliana. The marine battery there, under Captain Savino, swept the Desert and the sand-hills. All the trenches vomited rifle-fire. The splendid field-artillery, which had by this time been placed to the left of the naval battery, prevented the advance of any Turkish reinforcements from the sand-dunes. The great guns of the men-o'-war threw, every moment, shells which burst among the enemy, hurling high into the air mingled clouds of sand and smoke. The machine-guns rattled incessantly.

The position of the field-artillery was several times shifted so as to let the Turks have the full benefit of it. Sometimes the wheels of the cannon stuck in the sand, but on these occasions even the officers put their shoulders, literally, to the wheel, and helped their men to move the guns. Amid the explosions one could hear the hoarse cries of the Italian leaders, "*Forza! Alzo!*" Sometimes numbers were called out,—the distances at which the shells were regulated

to burst. The deadly shrapnel searched everywhere for the enemy. It burst on the edge of the sand-hills, it burst in the valleys behind the sand-hills. Evidently there was no refuge for the Turks, save underground. Yet sometimes a few of them appeared on the crest of a hill. Amid the smoke of a shell one could often see them getting up and running. Nevertheless they continued to fire at the Italian trenches. But their range was too short, for one could see the sand knocked up by their bullets fully a hundred yards from the Italian lines.

The artillery was well served. It prevented a concentration of the enemy. Whenever a group of Arabs got behind a fold in the ground and began to fire, a shrapnel shell exploded over their heads and very often silenced them forever. When they took refuge in a hut a couple of shells demolished the roof and walls, and as the little garrison ran away, its members were sometimes stricken down by a deadly rain of shrapnel bullets.

Finally the Arabs were driven back, but not until some of them had, *con incredibile temerarietà* (with incredible bravery), as General Caneva says, come to within some thirty yards of the batteries.

Nay, one Arab came so far that he fell into the trench, at the bottom of which he lay on his back, dead, his face still black with passion, his mouth wide open.

Another, a beardless youth, crept mortally wounded as far as the Italian line under the Kaïmakan's house at Henni and laid down his blood-stained head on one of the sacks of sand in front of the trench, as if it were a pillow. One thought of that Arab youth, whom Gibbon tells us of, that youth who, at the siege of Emesa, shouted that he saw a black-eyed

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BATTLE OF SIDI MESSRI.  
Machine-gun at work in the Oasis line.



houri beckoning him on from the gates of Paradise, and charged to certain death. Over a thousand years have passed since then, but we find that marvellous bravery in the Arab still.

"In this fearful combat," says an Italian writer, "the courage of our troops was prodigious." If so, what must have been the courage of the *cattivo, furioso nemico* (the bad, furious enemy); as Signor Corradini calls the Arabs? "È incredibile!" is the only phrase the Italians can think of in this connection.

There were only 1500 of them attacking at this time an army of 20,000 men. Those 20,000 were entrenched, invisible, and consequently enjoyed an enormous advantage. Several of the photographs which I reproduce in this volume show how strong the Italian trenches are and what excellent cover they afford. By all the laws of war it is futile and mad for 1500 men to attack an entrenched force of even 1000. Here the 1500 not only attacked 20,000, but even succeeded in breaking the Italian line and in causing, two days afterwards, a retreat.

How the invaders behaved when they were the attacking party and the Arabs were waiting for them, not buried, indeed, in trenches, but just lying on the ground along the edge of the sand-dunes, is told by an Englishman, Mr. E. N. Bennett, who has been on the Turkish side. Mr. Bennett describes how on December 15th two Italian cruisers anchored close to the beach at Sidi Said, near the Tunisian frontier, and sent 150 men ashore. There were in the place only thirty-four Arabs, who concealed themselves amid the sand-dunes.

"Just as the landing-party commenced to climb the dunes, the Arabs opened fire. The officer,

badly wounded, fell on his knees, and a second bullet killed him outright. The effect on the Italians was striking. The 150 men simply turned tail and bolted in utter confusion to the beach, hotly followed by thirty-four Arabs, who could no longer be restrained from pursuit. The sailors managed to carry off the body of their officer and six killed and wounded comrades, but they left on the sand 50 picks and shovels, 300 cartridges, and a number of sailors' caps."

The Turks had seven old guns which were not in action on the present occasion. Against those seven old guns the Italians had a fleet which could throw any number of ten-inch shells among the enemy. A single one of the 522-kilogramme projectiles of the *Re Umberto* is capable of annihilating a whole brigade with its fragments and its deleterious gases. On land the Italians had at this time seven batteries of magnificent field-guns, nine batteries of mountain-guns, sixteen machine-guns, naval search-lights to sweep the seashore at night, search-lights to sweep the Desert, wireless telegraphy, telephones, all the resources of science. As for the Arabs, they were refused quarter, they were not recognised as belligerents, their white flags were not respected. Europe allowed any amount of German ammunition, any number of French aeroplanes, to pass into Italy, but did not (so far as lay within its power) allow a single cartridge to cross the Egyptian or Tunisian frontiers. On the Italian side, in Tripolitania, there are four-and-twenty big brass generals with a general staff. On the Turkish side there is one colonel and a few staff-officers devoid of all technical appliances.

Not only had the Arabs all these things to contend against on the present occasion. They had also to

reckon with aeroplanes which swooped over their heads, during the combat, like gigantic birds of prey. One felt inclined at times to get up and say to the Italians: "Now, look here, gentlemen, excuse me, but really this is not fair."

Worst of all, they have to contend with a system of espionage which reaches, I am afraid, into their own camp. Of some of the Levantines who have developed a sudden violent sympathy for the Turks and who have gone to condole with them in the hinterland of Tripoli, I am rather doubtful. Of the swarms of Maltese, Greeks, Frenchmen, and Italians who at Sfax, Tunis, Ben-Garden and along the Tunis-Tripolitan border seem to spend all their time in worming information out of passing travellers, I am not doubtful at all. They are Italian spies.

In studying this whole war, and especially this particular battle, the reader must not forget the tremendous advantage which the Italians enjoy by reason of their artillery. The Arabs recognise that if their artillery had been even one-tenth as strong as that of their enemy they would have conquered.

Hence their longing for foreign cannon—a longing which is never likely to be gratified by importation in the usual way, though it is likely to be gratified by the capture of Italian field-pieces. When the German Red Cross lately journeyed through Tripolitania in order to join the Turks, the constant chorus of the Arab villagers when they saw the long train of camels laden with boxes (of medical stores, however) was "*Die Deutschen bringen Kanonen . . . Gesegnet seid Ihr, die Ihr Kanonen bringt.*" ("The Germans bring cannon . . . Blessed be ye who bring your cannon.")

One fact about this battle may appeal to English-



men. It was not till Sidi Messri that the Italians had got their artillery ashore, and much of it was landed and placed in position while the fight was going on. The invaders had thus to depend mostly on mountain-guns and on the battleships for more than three weeks after their occupation of Tripoli city. If the Turks had got any decent sort of artillery at all they could have pounded General Caneva to pieces in his citadel before those three weeks had come to an end.

This shows how difficult it would be for any foreign Power to land an expedition in England. Even if the English fleet were beaten, the landing of the invader's artillery would take a long time, and meanwhile the enemy could be annoyed by aeroplanes and overwhelmed by powerful artillery collected from all parts of the Island ; while English torpedo-boats lurking in adjacent harbours would be a perpetual menace to their landing operations. Steam has shortened the distance between England and the Continent, but, thanks to the number of guns, aeroplanes, and other heavy or bulky objects which an army has to bring with it, the actual landing of an expeditionary force in hostile territory is a much more delicate operation now than it was in the days of Julius Cæsar or William the Conqueror.



## CHAPTER IX

### HOW THE GAP IN THE ITALIAN LINE WAS CLOSED

THUS, thanks to their artillery, the Italians were able to repel the enemy and to defeat Nesciat Bey's bold attempt to outflank and destroy the 84th Infantry. For the destruction of this particular regiment was the object of the Turkish leader's strategy at Sidi Messri, as the destruction of the 11th Bersaglieri had been his object at Sharashett on the 23rd.

Lieutenant Franchini reoccupied Gemal Bey's house with a portion of the 7th company, but was immediately besieged there. In the broken ground about the house the dismounted cavalry and part of the 12th company also found themselves in difficulties. Besides, the Arabs held some adjoining houses, especially one known as the *Sokt*.

A company of sappers was sent to the rescue, but it would have been overwhelmed along with the detachments which it had come to support had not a colonel sent after it from another part of the line the 3rd battalion of the 82nd Infantry Regiment. The 12th company of the 84th was already on the spot, and finally all those forces managed to surround the houses occupied by the enemy, to close the gap in the line, and to prevent any more Arabs from entering.

This movement could not have been carried out

had not the 3rd battalion of the 82nd Regiment arrived on the scene in time. It had been sent to the rescue, but had been stopped by Arab irregulars midway in the oasis exactly as it had been stopped the day before. To-day, however, Captain Robiony, the commander of the detachment, *esegui brillantemente la sua missione* (brilliantly carried out his mission), thanks to *uno stratagemma riuscito felicemente* (a stratagem which succeeded happily).

“A crowd of some thirty Arabs, mostly women, children, and old people, were passing swiftly along a side road, having abandoned their houses and being anxious to reach the city. The captain stopped them, put them at the head of his column, and made them march towards Henni. The effect was miraculous. All opposition ceased. The houses, the olives, the palms, the fig-trees ceased to vomit fire. This company which would otherwise have been obliged to fight all day like the battalion which had been sent to carry succour to Sharashett on the 23rd, and which did not reach its destination until the evening, when the battle was over, reached Henni at ten o'clock. Those hostages were afterwards seated in a circle on the ground to the right of the soldiers. Incurious, mute, and motionless under their white head-dresses, they seemed to be immersed in a profound and bestial stupor.”

No wonder! They were probably surprised at their treatment by the nation that has “thrice civilised the world,” and which, having used them as a shield against the Arabs firing in the oasis, now kept them at the front as a shield against the Arabs firing from the Desert.

The above quotation is taken from a description written by one of the best and most liberal-minded of the Italian writers who deal with this war, Signor Giuseppe Bevione. Signor Bevione thinks that Captain Robiony's idea was "*un' idea genialissima*," which "would have saved us many lives if it had occurred to somebody else on the 23rd."

All the Italian writers who describe this incident are enthusiastic about it. But surely it was unfair, since, on the previous two days, every Arab man in that portion of the oasis had been killed or imprisoned, and every weapon in the Arab houses seized, even the women's scissors and the men's razors. The firing on Captain Robiony's party came, therefore, from desert Arabs who had broken in through the gap at Gemal Bey's house, and who should have been considered as regular Turkish soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

After the gap in their line had been closed it was comparatively easy for the Italians to crush the small number of Arabs who remained in the oasis. There were about forty of them to every Arab, and as most of the natives had used up all their ammuni-

<sup>1</sup> Like the honest German soldier that he is, Von Gottberg, of the "*Lokal-Anzeiger*," pours vitriolic contempt on the men responsible for this cowardly trick:—*Statt des Tambours, der an die Spitze der Kolonne gehörte, nahm ein Führer arabische Weiber und Kinder vor die Front und brachte mit ihnen als Schild seine Leute an den Feind. Italienische Korrespondenten berichteten davon unter der Ueberschrift: "Gelungene Kriegslist."* (*Messaggero* vom 28. Oktober.) *Neutrale Augenzeugen waren entsetzt und empört. Zu wundern brauchte sich niemand, der das Bild hinter der Front gesehen hatte, denn die Moral auch der besten Truppe ist nur ein brüchig Ding.*

In the "*Messaggero*," October 28th, under the heading "A Stratagem which succeeded" (*Strattagemma Riuscito*), we are told that when a company of the 82nd Infantry Regiment was sent to the front, the captain had to pass through an unsafe part of the oasis, so he "*adoperò uno strattagemma che riuscì felicemente. Egli raccolse una quarantina di Arabi fra uomini e donne ed alcuni abitanti che si trovavano nei giardini dell' oasi e li costrinse a marciare innanzi alla propria compagnia.*" (He hit upon a plan which succeeded very

tion, the Sicilians had a great chance of performing the usual "prodigies of valour," with perfect safety to themselves. Colonel Spinelli surrounded one group of Arabs with three half-squadrons of dismounted Lodi cavalry and a detachment from the last company of the 82nd. The Arabs were all killed, or captured in order to be killed later. No mercy was ever given to any of those brave men, though one would think that they had every right to be considered as combatants. They did not wear a uniform, but neither did the Boers, yet Boers who were captured when their powder was exhausted were never put to death by British troops.

One tremendous triumph of the Italian arms this day has been loudly trumpeted by the Italian Press, by the officers invalided home, and probably by Gabriele d' Annunzio. This was the capture of *la bandiera verde del Profeta* (the green flag of the Prophet) by the gallant 8th company of the 84th. Soul-stirring descriptions have been written about the manner in which that gallant band of heroes cut to pieces the Arabs who clustered round that sacred emblem and captured the treasure. Even the generally restrained and accurate Corrado Zoli tells us how "a party of the 84th succeeded in taking a green flag of the Prophet carried by a group of Arabs." He omits to tell us that the Arabs were all dead.

nicely. He collected some forty Arabs, men, women and other inhabitants, whom he found in the gardens of the oasis, and forced them to march in front of his company.)

This is the same incident. All the Italian papers refer to it with genuine enthusiasm. This fact shows how hopeless are the arguments about the massacres that have been carried on during the last six months between Britishers on the one side and Italians on the other. Both sides differ as to first principles. It would be as hard to persuade a Sicilian soldier that it is wrong to go out hunting oasis Arabs with a gun as to persuade a Neapolitan cab-driver that he should not ill-use his horse.



On October 27th the Ministry of the Interior at Rome (which had been holding up all independent accounts of the previous day's fighting and surpassing even its own previous record by the energy with which it wielded the censorial blue pencil) kindly allowed the Italian Press to have a little thing of its own composition. This little thing was headed by the word "Official" and was dated "Tripoli, October 26th, evening." It purported to give a fair summary of the fighting, but totally forgot, for some reason or other, to say a single word about the Italian line having been broken. It certainly did not forget, however, the legend about the famous "*bandiera verde*." "The 8th company of the 84th Infantry captured," it says, "in a brilliant bayonet attack, the green flag carried by the Arabs."

I do not know if any one belonging to the 8th company has been left undecorated, but I believe the true facts of the case are as follows: The green flag was found, after the battle, underneath a heap of Arab dead, piled in front of Gemal Bey's house. There was no brilliant charge on the part of the Italians. Invisible themselves, their artillery and rifle fire had accomplished for them this heroic deed.

But occasionally the Italians came across Arabs who were not dead. At a cross-roads in the oasis, the 12th company of the 84th suddenly encountered a group of Arabs about equal in number to themselves. Had the enemy been unarmed oasis Arabs, the Italians would undoubtedly have pulverised them with great determination and bravery; the Italian leader would have shown himself to be a combination of Napoleon I and Bismarck; and his subordinate officers would have proved their right to be called "descendants of the Scipios."

Captain Faitini, a genial and observant officer, who was walking at the head of his column with a monocle in his eye, was at first, indeed, under the impression that these Arabs were the usual batch of dismal "friendlies" coming in to be shot and being meanwhile prodded in the rear by Italian bayonets. But when they had approached nearer he made the horribly unpleasant discovery that the scoundrels were armed. Upon this, "the heirs of ancient Rome" ran like rabbits, losing their leader, Captain Faitini, as well as Lieutenant Bellini and a considerable number of the rank and file. Most of the survivors climbed trees and remained aloft till a company of the 82nd arrived, whereupon the enemy retired. Of course, if Captain Faitini had only had Captain Robiony's *idea genialissima* of sheltering himself behind a crowd of Arab women and children, he might have been alive to this day and wearing a medal.<sup>1</sup>

The Lodi cavalry also lost heavily. Among the officers killed were Lieutenants Solaroli and Granatei. Captain Gandolfi was wounded.

The clearing of the oasis was a succession of

<sup>1</sup> Writing in "The Nation," in March, 1912, Mr. Richard Bagot accused me of having accepted the testimony of Arabs. I answered that when, fifty years ago, Northern Italy was trying to shake off the Austrian yoke, Englishmen did not swear by the Ballplatz version of events and close their ears to the Italian story. And, as to the incident which I have described above, what would Mr. Bagot have me do? It is quite certain that 250 Arabs broke the Italian line. Their action was a miracle of bravery. Would Mr. Bagot have me turn a deaf ear to one of these 250 heroes in case I came across him, and say: "No, no, don't give me your account of the affair. I must see that gentleman up the tree. I must get his version and no other."

Unfortunately, it is "the gentleman up the tree" who has a practical monopoly of all the news relating to this war. As a local poet has it:

Silent the Arab fights, and silent dies.  
His enemy descends the tree, and lies.

Sidney Street sieges. The Arabs sometimes got into houses, and it needed some strength of mind to tackle them, for they invariably killed somebody before they were disarmed, and then they died happy. In one house there were forty people. Two soldiers got on to the flat roof and fired down the stairs, but as nobody would venture to enter the building it was determined to burn it down. Branches of palm-trees and piles of wood were placed before the door, and a match was applied. The Arabs were all driven out by the flames and were all riddled with bullets as they left. In some cases the Italians could not approach near enough to set the house on fire, and the building had to be smashed by means of cannon or blown up with dynamite. At frequent intervals during the next two days the dull roar of dynamite was the only epitaph of little Arab garrisons holding out with matchless tenacity and laughing at the death of fire when it came.

And it came to many. Death stalked in those days among the palms of the oasis. Amid the abandoned courts of the ruined houses one continually came across corpses, the arms contorted, the red, trampled fezzes lying at a distance amid the grass. Sometimes one lifted a fez and immediately threw it down again with energy, for it was soaked with blood or a portion of the grey matter of the brain fell out of it.

Individual Arab soldiers were run to earth in all sorts of queer places, and always owing to the fact that they never attempted to hide, that they invariably continued "sniping" until their last cartridge was gone. Then they rushed out knife in hand and stabbed the first soldier they met.

But sometimes they were discovered before they had reached this stage. A group of soldiers stationed



in the oasis heard bullets whizzing past them at regular intervals, and after several of their company had been wounded they proceeded to investigate. They searched, but without result, a white native hut, from which the shots had seemed to come. It was dark and deserted, and they were just about to leave it when a Sicilian sergeant, who had command of the party, noticed something white stirring in a recess like a dog-kennel. Then a sudden, fierce rush on the part of the sergeant and his men ; a short, sharp, *violentissimo* struggle, in course of which the dog-kennel went to pieces ; and lo ! the panting sergeant stood gripping an Arab whose hair was dishevelled and who had had half the clothes torn off his back. The Arab had a Mauser, still hot, in his hand, and around his waist was a belt holding some fifty cartridges.

"Now, don't be alarmed ! *Don't* let us disturb you, sir !" murmured the Sicilian, with bland irony.

But the prisoner was absolutely undisturbed. He looked the soldiers tranquilly in the eyes, and though, of course, he read his death-sentence on every hirsute face, he only smiled. They were standing in a little white Arab courtyard, full of sunshine. The sky above was marvellously blue. The palm-trees were filled with birds, which also hopped about the deserted yard, and on top of the wall. Then a deep silence fell while the Sicilians made a few rapid preparations.

"*Pronti !*" (ready), said the sergeant.

The men levelled their shining gun-barrels. The Arab, still smiling, still contemptuous in his coolness, was placed with his back against a wall. . . . The air was suddenly rent by a violent rattle of musketry which reverberated like thunder through the empty



house. A big patch of plaster fell from the wall. The birds flew away screaming. The Arab lay on his back on the ground, his legs doubled up underneath him. His blood was trickling into a little kitchen-sink hard by. His pale brown face was thrown back and the chin was tilted sharply upwards. The smile was gone. The lips were drawn tightly. The white teeth were exposed. They were like the white teeth of a dog killed when about to bite.

As the Arabs outside fell back, the Italians made a feeble attempt at a counter-attack in order, it was asserted, *a tagliar la fuga al nemico* (to cut off the enemy's flight). It was a ludicrous exhibition, reminding one of a rabbit coming out of its safe burrow in order to cut off the flight of a terrier which had been vainly trying to interview it.

A strong detachment of the 40th Regiment advanced very slowly and gingerly over the sand, their brown clothes showing up against the grey desert. In front, like a procession of sandwich-men, went a small, dispirited advance guard; behind trailed the bulk of the company. Slowly they climbed the crest of the nearest sand-dune, the great shells of the battleships ploughing up the desert in front of them. Then they began to fire with quite unusual "dash"—to use a word which has seen a good deal of service in this war—for, happily, the enemy was now out of sight. Another company advanced and gained the dunes towards the sea. It was now ten o'clock, and the battle was at an end.

Tears of joy now stood in the eyes of the Italians and they embraced one another with enthusiasm. They discussed the taking of the "*bandiera verde del Profeta*." They exchanged tales of heroism and

adventure. One of them told how in the oasis he had killed five Arabs with his own hand. He did not say whether they were armed or unarmed. Another told a fable of a Turkish officer, disguised as a Moham-medan woman, who had attempted to penetrate to the town, and he detailed at great length how this "woman" had been questioned and what she had said. A third spun a long yarn about a bogus Arab funeral which was seized on its way to the town and quickly turned into a real funeral on a large scale, owing to the fact that the coffin was found to contain only Mausers.

Another man followed this up with a story of how a bogus mendicant, afterwards identified as a Turkish soldier, had got as far as the bread market before he was arrested and deprived of an interesting Arabic letter which he carried. Many tales were told of the *effetto terribile* of the bombs hurled by the aeroplanes, and of the narrow escapes of the aviators from the enemy's bullets.

But, of course, the *atti di valore*, the "acts of valour," were most discussed—each man candidly telling tales about himself. Sometimes popular officers were spoken of. The deeds of *il piu puro eroismo* (the most pure heroism) on the part of the officers were *numerosissimi*.

Lieutenant Manera of the Carabinieri had retaken the trenches and made 200 prisoners. Armed with a rifle taken from a Turk, Lieutenant di Palma of the Engineers had held out for five hours in Fort Messri.

Captain Caracciolo had had two horses shot under him. At one time he and three others were surrounded by twenty Arabs, but *i quattro valorosi* (the four brave men) did not lose their presence of mind. With rifle and revolver shots they put to

flight their assailants, who left five dead and three seriously wounded on the field of battle.

Horsemen and infantry performed *prodigi di valore*. They sometimes ran out of the trenches just to have a slap at the enemy, and then returned uninjured.

All the above stories may be found in the jingoistic "Giornale d' Italia." The other Italian papers (and, of course, the "New York Herald") contain foolish fabrications about the "cruel pressure" which the Turks brought to bear on the Arabs in order to make them fight: how they kept native families as hostages: how they themselves remained in the rear while forcing the Arabs to advance.

Legends like these gather around every battle, and their growth is encouraged by every wise commander. Sometimes it is the commander himself who starts them. During a critical period at the battle of Liaoyang, I remember a wild rumour being brought to us on Shao-shan Hill by a staff-officer. It was to the effect that General Stœssel had broken out of Port Arthur, was coming north with his army, and might be expected every moment. The Russian soldiers cheered wildly, but Colonel Waters, one of the British *attachés*, damped the prevalent enthusiasm by an innocent inquiry as to whether Stœssel and his legions were coming in balloons.

In old times, unknown privates with a poetic imagination invented or dreamt those thrilling stories. Poets afterwards furbished them up, and possibly those furbished-up versions are the only accounts of some ancient combats that have reached us.

In modern times, however, these legends are generally turned out by War Offices and other official



abstractions, and have no poetic value whatsoever. The torrent of official mendacity which one encounters in this war makes one inclined to say that war is falsehood. Some days ago an Italian aeroplane scattered among the Arabs thousands of Arabic leaflets whereon was printed a statement signed by the Italian Prime Minister and the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the effect that Italy was the richest and most powerful country in Europe and that it was no use for the Arabs to continue the war, since the Italian fleet had just sunk sixteen Ottoman transports !

The Italian losses in this engagement were particularly heavy, especially among the officers. The most distinguished of the officers that fell was Captain Pietro Verri of the General Staff, who had been connected with the Secret Service Bureau in Tripoli. Captain Verri had been a Secret Agent in Eritrea, Aden, China, Trieste, and Tripoli, and he enjoyed among all who knew him a great reputation for bravery and for ability. Just before the bombardment he had come to Tripoli under the name of Vincenzo Parisio, and under the title of "Inspector of the Italian Post-offices." His object was, of course, to collect all the information he could on the distribution of the Turkish forces and the armament of the Turkish forts. The Italian War Office had already got the fullest details on those points, but it wanted to verify them and bring them up to date. Sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Signor Saman, the dragoman of the Italian Consulate, Captain Verri had travelled on horseback through all the country around Tripoli, from Zenzur on one side to Tagiura on the other, and had got the most exact details of all the batteries and all the forts.



I may add, by the way, that similar postal or other "inspectors" were, I dare say, sent by the Italian Government to Derna, Benghazi, and all the other places on the coast, while "scientific" and "commercial" missions were certainly sent inland. All these "missions" were allowed by the Turks to go where they liked, nevertheless Italy was, according to her own indignant statement, reluctantly forced into war on account of the difficulties thrown by Turkey in the way of her commercial exploitation of Tripolitania.

Captain Verri seems to have, at this time, worked hand in glove with Vice-Consul Galli, the pompous little representative of Italy in Tripoli. Galli, who was himself engaged almost entirely in Secret Service work, made much of his mysterious guest whose visits appealed to his Florentine thirst for intrigue, masks, midnight conferences, and melodramatic situations.

Shortly before the bombardment, the Italian Vice-Consul was standing with a journalist on the terrace of his Consulate watching the lights on the Italian battleships when Signor Galli was hailed by a tall, thin, elegantly dressed civilian, with a nervous, energetic manner. Thereupon Galli turned with his most mysterious air towards the receptive correspondent and said, "Never tell anybody about this person whom you have often seen with me. A single word might cost him his head." The stranger was, of course, "Vincenzo Parisio."

This spy left Tripoli with the Consul, but soon returned as Captain Verri of the General Staff. He was the first to land in Tripoli, having come ashore before the others, at Fort Hamidié in order to see if the old torpedo-station there had been destroyed by

the bombardment. He afterwards drew up the plans for the first defence of Tripoli by the bluejackets. But though he first fortified Bumeliana and fixed the lines for the future trenches, he was strongly in favour of an advance into the Desert. He thought that the scattered bands of Turks could easily be captured or dispersed before they had had a chance of rousing the Arabs. There is something to be said in favour of this view. Either Italy was or was not in a condition to take some part of Tripolitania beyond a few towns on the sea-coast. If she was, she should have advanced. If she was not, then she should not have made war. But General Caneva believed in slow methods, and refused to be guided by the advice of his more enterprising subordinate.

There was something of a mystery about the death of this capable officer—I mean, of course, Captain Verri. The most important object of his *ante-bellum* mission to Tripoli was to ascertain if the Arabs would assist the Turks, and he is said to have reported that they would not. The events of October 23rd came, in consequence, as a great disappointment to him, and it is said that, as a result of that disappointment, he committed suicide on the 26th.

But the explanation given by his friends is this : Though exceptionally well qualified by nature to discharge the duties of a Secret Service agent, he had never liked that work very much and had always desired to command men in the field, to lead soldiers against the enemy. I dare say that most military officers who are ordered to devote themselves to espionage feel very often in the same way.

On the morning of the 26th he happened to be the guest of Colonel Fara at Henni, and during the progress of the fight he saw a detachment of the

enemy moving around towards Sharashett in order to outflank the Bersaglieri. Colonel Fara determined to send to his left a company of marines from the *Sicilia*, and Captain Verri begged for permission to lead them. The permission was given, but Captain Verri exposed himself needlessly in the trenches and was shot dead, no less than twenty of his little detachment being killed or wounded.

The heavy losses among the Italian officers were probably due to their rashness in exposing themselves, as well as to the probable fact that the Turks and Arabs had been instructed to pick off as many officers as possible. It was always easy to distinguish the Italian officers by their uniform, while, on the other hand, it was impossible to make out who were the leaders of the Turks, for each Turkish officer wore an Arab dress, had a rifle like his men, and was in no wise distinguishable from the rank and file. Moreover, the Italian officers stood up in the trenches, while the Turkish officers wisely availed themselves of every inch of cover.

Once during the battle of Sidi Messri an Arab, at the end of a line of the enemy advancing against Henni, was observed to wave a rifle as if it were a sword and to give at the same time some commands to his companions. His action cost him his life, for the Italian sharpshooters at once concluded that he was an officer, and never rested till they had picked him off. Beneath the rough white dress which covered each of the Arab dead, was sometimes found the dress of a Turkish officer.

Turks and Arabs waste ammunition frightfully, but in comparison with the Italians they fired on this occasion with great care and never at random. The Italians consoled themselves by saying that this



was owing to the fact that they had not got too much ammunition. The aviators reported that whenever an Arab fell, one of his companions always took the fallen man's cartridge-belt, and this confirmed the invaders in the belief that the enemy was near his last cartridge. But, on the other hand, the Arabs shot in the oasis were sometimes found to possess a very great quantity of ammunition, and, as a matter of fact, the Turks in Tripolitania have cartridges to burn.

Thus ended the battle of Sidi Messri. What was the result of this great Italian "victory"?

"To-day," writes one Italian author on the 28th, "in consequence of the victorious action of the 26th, all the east front has been brought back about a mile and a half towards the city so as to form a straight line from the tombs of the Karamanli to the Marabout of Sidi Messri. . . . We have thus abandoned to the enemy . . . two forts (Messri and Hamidié) and one most important position (Henni), also a large stretch of land very near Tripoli whence the enemy can fire with cannon on the city, and all our dead buried on the 23rd."

And this was the result of the "*grandioso successo*" of the Italians, of the "*vittoria grande per noi*," of "*la plus grande et la plus décisive de nos victoires*," as Signor Marinetti calls it.

The terror of the night following this "victory" is difficult to describe. "*Orribile notte*," wails one Italian impressionist, "*piena di tragedie ignote, quella in cui le ombre si aggirano sui campi della morte!*" ("Horrible night, night full of unknown tragedies, night in which the shades wander around on the fields of death!")



Horrible, indeed, for this was not only the night of the victory (with inverted commas): it was also the night of the massacres (without inverted commas), and every road, pathway, and garden in the oasis was strewn with dead bodies—the bodies of innocent men, women, and children.

To add to the confusion and horror, a violent artillery-fire began at half-past ten. The correspondents in town thought at first that it was thunder. Then they felt sure that the Arabs had begun a furious night-attack at Sidi Messri. But it was not thunder and it was not a night-attack. It was entirely an Italian cannonade, and it was due to the appearance of small parties of the enemy, who were discovered by the search-lights, which now turned night into day on the Desert in front of Sidi Messri.

Those parties waved white flags and signified that they only wished to take away their dead and wounded. The Italians deeply sympathised. "*E probabile pero*," says one tearful writer who describes the scene, "*che alla spicciolata, con tenace amore dei proprii cari perduti, piu d' uno di essi sia ritornato ancora nella notte al pietoso ufficio*." ("It is probable however, that, with strong, unwavering love for their own dear lost ones, more than one of the Arabs had again returned in the night to render the last sad offices to the bodies of the slain.")

Bursting with sympathy, the Italians allowed the Arab ambulances to approach—and then opened on them a terrific artillery and rifle fire which (for the invaders had now got the range accurately, and the splendid search-lights made the aiming of the guns very easy) strewn the Desert with fresh corpses. The Arabs fell back in confusion, but they evidently

thought that a mistake had been committed, for they did not return the fire, and after a while they advanced again. Once more the "heirs of ancient Rome" allowed the ambulance-bearers to approach. Once more they threw the search-lights on them, and opened a heavy fire with their batteries and their rifles.

Again some of the Arab ambulance-men fell; while the survivors fled and did not attempt to return that night.

Few of the Italians could believe that mere Mohammedans would twice run such a risk simply in order to give a cup of cold water to a dying friend whose shrieks had reached them as he writhed in the agonies of thirst, or to give burial with Islâmic rites to their heroic dead. They concluded, therefore, that *un grande capo arabo* (a great Arab chief) was among the slain and that it was his body which the enemy wished to remove.

As for the Arab wounded, if they were inside the Italian oasis, their cries and moans were soon stopped by a bullet. If they lay out in the Desert, the Italians neither helped them themselves nor allowed others to help them.

They let them die without a cup of water under the piles of corpses which stifled them; and an impressionist writer—Tripoli was at this time full of Italian impressionists and futurists, for this was their war, they had brought it about—cleverly describes how, as they lay powerless on their backs, they looked up vainly with glazing eyes *al cielo impassibile del Profeta* (at the impassible sky of the Prophet).

Carried into the Italian lines by the night-wind from the Desert, their delirious shrieks of agony

intensified the horror of a scene which was already horrible enough. Quite proper, of course, to treat in this way the "bad, furious enemy" who had given so much trouble to the good Italians!

For military reasons the dead bodies of friends and foes are always examined very carefully in war, and in this case an examination was made of the Arabs who had fallen in front of the trenches, as well as of the Italians, Turks, and Arabs who had fallen inside the oasis. Opposite the villa of Gemal Bey the Arab dead were piled so high that they formed a little wall from behind which their living comrades had fired. It was underneath this pile, by the way, that the famous "green flag of the Prophet" had been "captured." Practically all the dead at this point were Arabs. Only one corpse had a Turkish uniform underneath his Arab dress. On the person of each native was a little "soldier's manual," and a book of simple instructions regarding the rifle. This showed that the combatants were irregular Arab soldiers in the *redif*.

The attack must have been made by some 1500 Arabs from Tarhuna, Misurata, Tagiura, Agelât, and Gharian. The Italians pretend to believe that the enemy were 4000 strong, but, even if he were, he dislodged from an entrenched position a force five times superior to himself. In modern military history such a feat deserves to rank with Plevna and Silistria.

As for the Italians who had fallen in the oasis, it was seen that many of them had been killed with knife-wounds at close quarters. There had evidently been many hand-to-hand fights in the palm-gardens; and, wherever it was a case of man against man, the Italian, unsupported this time by his battle-ships,

his artillery, and his aeroplanes, had invariably got the worst of it.

Surely, when they read the report of this battle, the statesmen of Rome must have regretted their precipitancy in coming to death-grips with a people like this—the people whose perpetual and turbulent freedom is referred to in a text of Scripture and in a line from Horace—the race before which even “the legions of Augustus melted away in disease and lassitude.”



**PART IV**  
**THE MASSACRES**



## CHAPTER I

### THE BURNING OF THE BEDOUIN VILLAGE

I HAVE already touched on the "purging" of the oasis, that is, the killing of nearly all the male Arabs above thirteen or fourteen years of age in the Italian palm-gardens. Those Arabs were killed or exiled because they were suspected of having fired on the Italian rear or of being capable of doing so in the future. As I have already explained several times, the mistake arose from the fact that on several occasions the Arabs from the Desert had crept inside the Italian lines and attacked those lines in the rear. They were mistaken at first for "friendly" Arabs who had "treacherously" risen, but they were not friendly Arabs. I have shown by extracts taken from the reports of the Italians themselves that the men who fired on the Italian rear were Arab auxiliaries who had come from a distance with the Turks. On the 25th and 26th, however, the Italians deliberately killed many peaceful oasis Arabs whom they knew to be innocent. There was a carnival of killing, a regular *pogrom*. These massacres had been going on pretty steadily for days, but they reached their grand climax on the morning of October 26th. The reasons are evident. They are as follows:

All sorts of rumours had been circulating in the Italian camp the night before. It was reported that the mysterious head of the Senussi had proclaimed a

holy war, and that 40,000 well-armed Senussi were on their march to Tripoli. It was recognised that the affair of the 23rd had only been a trifling reconnaissance, but that next time Nesciat Bey would mean business. And every indication pointed to the fact that "next time" meant the 26th or 27th. It was known that the forces which had attacked the Bersaglieri in the oasis on the 23rd, and which were reported by the Italians to have been almost swept off the face of the earth, had only gone back about half a mile and were preparing another attack. The aviators discovered that fresh forces were marching from the interior towards Tagiura at the eastern extremity of the oasis, and the junction of these two Arab columns was expected to take place on the 26th. From the top of Messri fort other small columns of the enemy were seen afar off in the Desert.

All these circumstances combined to create terror and desperation in the Italian ranks, and the climax was reached when, on the morning of the 26th, the Turko-Arab force again attacked and again broke the Italian line.

For the Italian army this was near being the end of all things. The oasis was again flooded with Desert Arabs, and, as we have already seen, matters were well-nigh hopeless. The Italians were trying desperately, but vainly, to close the open wound in their flank, the wound through which the enemy's steel was being forced deeper and deeper. A straw might turn the scale. A handful of oasis Arabs attacking in the rear might bring about a disaster to which Adowa would be as but a street accident, and which the House of Savoy could hardly hope to survive.

To prevent this rear attack, the Italians killed off most of the innocent oasis Arabs in their rear.



General Caneva's proclamations did not, it is true, order a general massacre, but those proclamations were interpreted in such a way that a general massacre took place.

"The orders were issued, therefore," says a well-informed English eye-witness, writing in "Blackwood's Magazine" for December, 1911, that the oasis should be immediately cleared, and that all male Arabs found with arms in their hands, or who were shown, from circumstantial or other evidence, to have been implicated in the rising, should be summarily executed. The orders were sufficiently lax and general to permit of a sharp and salutary lesson, as the Arabs had already been warned by proclamation that the possession of a rifle would be considered a capital offence. Caneva and his staff, however, had not calculated upon what this order meant to troops that had just seen their mutilated dead, who believed that they were about to be attacked treacherously in the rear, and who had ever over them the shadow of Adowa. The carrying out of the duty necessitated the breaking up of the troops into small detachments, which loosed the control upon the inflamed passions of the soldiery. Nor did the Staff know how or when to place a period upon the license they thus gave the troops. The result was a retribution upon the Arabs, which will live in the memory of Tripolitania for generations, and which will react for many a year upon the perpetrators themselves. It is not desirable here to go into the details of the days of bloodshed that swept through the Italian portion of the oasis. War is horrid and merciless, and its horror and mercilessness is intensified when killing is done by men actuated by terror."

“The Times” correspondent said :

“The severity with which the Italian army has exacted retribution upon the suburban Arabs who rose last Monday might justly be described as indiscriminate slaughter. The two quarters from which the Arabs assailed the Bersaglieri in the rear have been turned into human abattoirs. It has been a miserable business. . . . The Italians having set themselves to cow the Arabs, the flood-gates of blood-lust were opened, and in many instances the men got beyond control and the innocent suffered with the guilty. The tale of retribution has been shockingly heavy. . . . The memory of this awful retribution will take long to live down. Even making allowance for the exigencies of the military situation, there is every possibility that the hideous severity of the retribution will give rise to a war of sanguinary and pitiless reprisals upon unfortunates who fall by the way. War is merciless. I have witnessed one of its most merciless phases. One hardly knows to what limits the elasticity of the phrase ‘military exigencies’ will be stretched in the twentieth century.”

“For three days,” said the “Daily Chronicle” correspondent, “Italian troops shot down all whom they met without trial. Innocent and guilty were wiped out, and many women and children perished in the confusion. Including those killed in the fighting, 4000 Arabs perished between Friday and Monday last week. . . . Orders were given by the authorities to exterminate all Arabs found in the oasis, and to make a systematic house-to-house search for arms and ammunition. For three days this dread task continued. Parties of soldiers penetrated throughout every portion of the oasis, shooting



ON THE WAY TO EXECUTION.





indiscriminately all whom they met, without trial, without appeal."

"Who could ever have imagined what we have had to look on at?" said M. Cossira, the special correspondent of the Paris "Excelsior." "The rush to assassinate—the hecatombs of old men, women and children, the executions by heaps—the piles of mangled flesh smoking under the wool of the burnouses, like a human incense burnt before the ruined altar of a dearly bought victory!

"Whilst going away from the cavalry post I came upon a hundred corpses thrown against a wall, where they had been shot down, in horrible attitudes, all mixed up together. I hurried away to escape the sight, and passed an Arab village. A native family was grouped there round a burnt-out fire. They had evidently been about to eat, but now they were all dead. One little girl had thrust her head into a box so as not to see anything; another had fallen back on to a cactus bush."

Mr. Ellis Ashmead - Bartlett, who represented Reuter, wired as follows:

"On October 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th, the troops proceeded to make a clean sweep of all that portion of the oasis of which they held possession. There is no certain proof that any Arabs in the west end of it ever took part in the rising; but, even admitting that there were, there were vast numbers of men, women, and boys who were perfectly innocent, and of these nearly all the men, and even the boys above a certain age, were shot, while undoubtedly many women perished in the confusion, and in one instance I know soldiers without an officer were only restrained from shooting at a woman by the intervention of a foreigner.

“ But even supposing these wholesale executions were justified as condign punishment and as a salutary lesson to evil-doers, the manner in which they were carried out cannot be too strongly condemned, and it is only fair to say that many Italian officers, looking at the affair calmly after its occurrence, are of the same opinion.

“ For four days parties of soldiers scoured every portion of the oasis, shooting indiscriminately every Arab they met. . . . The blood of the men was up, and naturally so ; they had seen their comrades shot from behind, and even, it is reported, mutilated ; but of the latter fact I could not ascertain the exact truth ; and with their excitable temperament and highly developed imagination they suspected every living soul to be guilty ; and decided to punish all accordingly. Thus for four days gangs of soldiers, often without officers, shot every one.”

In addition to this, Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett wired from Malta a description of a ride he had taken in company with Mr. Grant of the “ Daily Mirror ” and Mr. Davis of the “ Morning Post.” This statement was afterwards signed in the British Consulate by all three gentlemen, Mr. Grant and Mr. Davis making, however, reservations with regard to cases which they had not seen themselves.

“ On leaving the town,” says Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, “ the first object which met our eyes was a group of from fifty to seventy men and boys who had been caught in the town on the previous day, or on October 25th, and shot without trial of any sort. The majority of them were caught without arms, and were executed under a general order issued by the Governor, General Carlo Caneva, to exterminate all Arabs found in Tripoli or in the oasis. They had

been led to this spot with their hands tied behind their backs and shot down indiscriminately. This mass of corpses lying in all attitudes in a solid mass piled on one another could not have covered a space greater than fifteen yards wide to five deep. . . .

“The next object which struck our eyes was the body of a very old man lying in the centre of the road. From the attitude in which he lay he had evidently been shot while running or walking up the road. Every few yards we came across fresh corpses lying in every conceivable attitude just where they had been shot down, but not all had been killed in this manner, for some bore evident traces of having been bayoneted or clubbed to death with the butt-ends of rifles. Many had evidently only been wounded and had crawled to the side of the road, there to die.

“The road from the town to the desert, which had formerly been alive with Arabs—men, women, and children—was now completely deserted except for the dead. The houses on either side had been broken into and their occupants murdered therein or taken outside and shot. In the side tracks running off from the main road were many bodies, some lying alone, others in small groups, and in one spot lay two Jews who had shared the fate of almost all the inhabitants of the outlying gardens and houses.

“During the whole progress over a distance of two miles we never saw a single living Arab—man, woman, or child. Lying just outside the outpost line, was another group of about fifty men and boys, who had evidently been taken out there on the previous day and shot *en masse*. Several of them had been bayoneted or slashed with swords, and one man had his head completely smashed in—a wound



which could only have been inflicted by the butt-end of a rifle.

"Then we rode on out to the lines of the Bersaglieri, who were holding a position known as a fort, but we did not stay there long, because the troops had received orders to evacuate their position and to take up another closer to the town. The fort was thus abandoned and blown up. At the same time another position, a large white building known, I think, as the Agricultural College, was abandoned by the Italians. It had been held ever since the occupation of Tripoli, and there were several Arabs who stayed there with the troops, fetching them water or grazing goats in the Desert just beyond, returning to the lines at nightfall. I have also frequently seen a number of children round this building.

"Now, these men could not have been guilty of an attack on the Italians, because they had been living under their observation ever since the occupation, and had they been guilty they should have been shot on the 23rd, the day of the outbreak in the town, and should certainly not have been allowed to roam in and out perfectly free for four days. When the troops evacuated the position one of these Arabs followed them, evidently intending to accompany them into the town for safety. Suddenly, when he was only about thirty yards away, about a dozen soldiers turned around and commenced to take pot-shots at him. He attempted to run for shelter behind one of the evacuated entrenchments, but he was evidently wounded, for he could only walk. Then one of the soldiers had another shot, and he fell. They closed in on him, but he was evidently dead, for there was no further firing. This I will call for reference 'Case No. 1.'



“Case No. 2 was that of another very old Arab. He had been sitting most of the afternoon up against the wall of the college and saw what passed. He made no effort to escape, and the soldiers went back and shot him in like manner from a considerable distance as he sat against the wall with his head bowed as if too weary of life or too apathetic to survive the massacre of his friends and relatives. Then we rode past the mass of bodies lying just in front of the trenches. A party was at work digging a trench in which to bury them. Soldiers and sailors and some Italian journalists were standing around. There was talking and laughing, and photographs were being taken. Then we once more took the same road past the Cavalry Barracks leading to the town.

“Case No. 3. Suddenly we heard a shot and saw a figure emerge from a house and apparently fall in the middle of the road about one hundred yards ahead of us. Mr. Grant said to me : ‘Look, I believe there is a soldier or an Arab lying down to take a shot at us.’ I replied : ‘No, I don’t think so ; I don’t know what it is, but I certainly saw it move.’ Then we rode up, and we saw an Arab cloak lying in the road out of which had crawled a young Arab to a cottage to the right of the road. He was lying by the door, and was bleeding profusely and near death, so it seemed to me. Hearing our approach, he had evidently tried to crawl for shelter.

“Just then an Arab woman, doubtless his wife, came running from the cottage from which he had first emerged from the left of the road with a bowl in her hand, but when she saw us coming she ran in again. We could do nothing, so we passed on wondering who had shot the man, as we had seen no soldiers,

but, rounding a bend, we came upon a detachment under an officer. It was they who had taken him from his house and shot him before the eyes of his wife and then left him to die by the roadside.

"Cases 4, 5 and 6. Just as we reached this detachment, they met three perfectly harmless-looking Arabs walking up the road and carrying no weapons. They were clad in clean white robes, and evidently men of high class. It was obvious at a glance that they were not men of the fighting class, but peaceful and well-to-do owners of property in the oasis, and the last men to risk their lives and their property in a futile insurrection. One of them looked about fifty years of age and another about thirty, and the third was a youth in his 'teens, I should judge. But appearances availed them naught. They were seized by order of the officer, and without a word of interrogation or explanation, for the Italians had no interpreter with them, unless one of their own number could speak Arabic, an extremely unlikely contingency, they were taken inside a cottage and shot against the wall, not by a regular volley, but by a series of isolated shots.

"These are the six instances of men being shot before my eyes on the fourth day after the so-called insurrection.

"Although there was no fighting on the afternoon of October 27th, there was continual firing in all parts of the oasis. This was entirely produced by small bodies of soldiers, in many instances without officers, roaming throughout and indiscriminately massacring all whom they met. We must have passed the bodies of over one hundred persons on this one high road, and as similar scenes were enacted through the length and breadth of the oasis some





UNARMED "HANDS-UPPERS."



estimate of the numbers of innocent men, women, and children who were butchered, doubtless with many who were guilty of attacking the Italian troops in the rear, may be appreciated."

"Steps have been, and are being taken," writes Mr. Bennet Burleigh, the war-correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" (Nov. 7th), "to ensure us greater tranquillity in Tripoli. The oasis of palms is being ruthlessly cleared of its population of villagers, small farmers and peasants. Very many have been killed and their corpses bestrew the fields and roads. The scent of war's scythe poisons the air. An aged Arab declares that 4000 have been slain, and with them at least 400 women and many children. Say half that number, and still you have a fearful, sanguinary monument of the horrors of war and conquest, if not of something worse, and of a massacre of the strong, the weak, of aged greybeards, and the young. Many have unquestionably been wantonly murdered. That is not always preventable in war, but in the twentieth century, and in civilised warfare, it is quite without the pale to shoot men and lads wholesale on sight without trial and because of their skin and dress.

"I have seen a crippled beggar—a man whose limbs were so deformed that he had to move by pushing along the ground in a sitting position—deliberately shot at near the Austrian Consulate. Dozens of other natives I have seen herded and corralled and others fired upon in broad daylight. But there are half a dozen colleagues, English, French, and German—who assert that they have seen Arabs fusilladed in groups, and have even 'snap-shotted' instances where soldiers and officers indiscriminately fired upon these unfortunate natives. At any

hour of the day you may see gangs of wretched natives being marched through the streets as prisoners. These are subsequently dealt with by the carabinieri, imprisoned—or otherwise. The daily captures effected in town and suburbs of men, women, and children run into hundreds, nay thousands.”

“Owing to the helplessness of the officers,” wired the Tripoli correspondent of the “Frankfurter Zeitung,” “a wild man-hunt began. The troops were even allowed to fire on women and children. Thus far, at least, 3000 natives have been executed or shot down. . . . In the execution of these measures I witnessed myself unheard-of atrocities.”

“The Arabs were shot a little everywhere,” remarks an Italian correspondent lightly. “At Bumeliana there was an enormous pit, into which one descended by a narrow path, a pit dug in the hot, morbid earth, a gash in the ground which had the sinister aspect of a gigantic wound. The Arabs were thrown (alive) into this pit from above. Then a soldier descended, and one heard a series of dull explosions as if there was firing going on in the bowels of the earth. The soldier ascended—alone.”

Whole sections of the suburbs were surrounded by soldiers who hunted through the huts, houses, and date-gardens exactly like sportsmen hunting big game. Not only did they shoot at every Arab whom they met. Blinded by perspiration and panic, they also fired at one another in mistake, and these accidents gave rise to fresh massacres.

In many instances the soldiers were received with rifle and revolver bullets on the thresholds of native houses, which they had come to search. The inhabitants may have been leagued with the Turks, but it is quite possible that some of them were innocent

people driven to desperation by witnessing the fate which had overtaken their friends and neighbours. Under the Turkish *régime* they had kept arms in their houses for self-protection. The new rulers of Tripoli city had not made known to them the fact that they wanted those arms surrendered and that to retain them meant sudden death. If the proclamation of the 23rd requiring all arms to be surrendered within twenty-four hours had reached them at all, it had reached them at a time when the oasis was overrun by crazy soldiers who would most certainly shoot any Arab caught with arms in his hands, whether he was on his way to surrender those arms or not.

Under these circumstances even a worm would turn, and the Arab is not exactly a worm. Seeing no other way out of the difficulty he remained at home and prepared a hot reception for the emissaries of King Victor Emmanuel. When the first soldier crossed the threshold there was a loud report from the obscurity of the cabin, and that soldier fell. The others raked the house with bullets and then set it on fire. The Arab died game. He had not to submit to the indignity of being dragged outside, kicked, buffeted in the face, and then placed against a wall and killed. Since he had to die in any case, well, better let an Infidel or two go before him. Nobody can blame the Arabs for acting like this towards opponents who were practically insane. Under similar circumstances Englishmen would have done the same thing, and Rudyard Kipling would have written ballads in honour of them.

Behind the Esparto Grass Factory of the Banco di Roma, was a Bedouin village containing several hundred inhabitants. On the morning of October 26th,



the place was burned to the ground and most of the inhabitants were butchered. Among the blazing embers I found the corpse of an old grey-haired woman with a bullet-wound in the left shoulder. A few feet away I found a sick boy and two sick and bed-ridden old women lying on the ground near the dead bodies of several women and men. These three sick persons had not been protected from the heat of the fire ; and the boy, who seemed to be about thirteen or fourteen years old, was left lying on the ground, half-naked and exposed for a whole day without food or drink to the intolerable blaze of the sun. He moaned piteously as he lay in the ashes and dust, and pressed his hands against his temples. Twenty yards off was a temporary Red Cross hospital under canvas, and at the door of it stood two very stylishly dressed military doctors with nothing in the world to do at that moment save to twirl the ends of their well-waxed moustaches. Behind them were fully twenty Red Cross soldiers, also with absolutely nothing to do. I asked the officers if they could not have those sick people carried inside the hospital or given at least the drink of water for which they were most piteously begging. The doctors promised to attend at once to the matter. They said, "Yes, yes, we are not barbarians. We shall at once send for stretchers and have all those people brought into the hospital." And as they apparently gave directions to that effect, I felt sure that the sick people would be attended to, and went out into the oasis. But when I chanced to pass that way some hours later I found that the officers had broken their promises and that the sick Arabs were still in the same condition. I determined, therefore, to appeal to a venerable Franciscan who was not only a high official of the





BURNT BEDOUIN ENCAMPMENT.  
Naked woman left to die. She was dead the next day.



REMAINS OF BURNT ARAB VILLAGE.

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*Photos by Author.*



Red Cross organisation, but also an ecclesiastic of very elevated rank. I refer to the Very Rev. Father Giuseppe Bevilacqua, ex-Prefect Apostolic, who had just returned from Italy in order to lend his powerful assistance to the Red Cross. I had read in the local, ultra-jingoistic, ultra-“patriotic” Italian organ that Father Bevilacqua had obeyed the summons because of his “extraordinary self-abnegation” which made him think himself “ben felice di poter ancora rendersi utile alla Patria.”

I felt convinced that if I drew Father Bevilacqua’s attention to the case of this Arab boy he would at once attend to it. I found the Reverend Father walking along the sea-front in company with several large, well-groomed countrymen of his.

The bare feet, the rope cincture, the rough dress, the Red Cross badge, all indicated devotion to the outcast and the poor. Surely he would seize with avidity this opportunity of showing the benighted Arab the superiority of Christian morality.

Father Bevilacqua promised in French that he would represent the boy’s case to the medical authorities. The large well-groomed public men who were with him could not conceal looks of surprise and disapprobation as they heard my request; so that I hastened to explain that I would bear all the expenses of the boy’s treatment.

After an hour had passed I returned to the place where the lad lay and found to my surprise that Father Bevilacqua had not kept his promise. The boy was still in the same place. His eyes, nostrils, and mouth were black with flies which had settled on him as if he were already dead. The two old women were in the same condition.

I next approached another Franciscan, a young

Frenchman. He was pious and sympathetic, but very weak and simple. On our way to see the boy we met Father Bevilacqua, who avoided my eye, but hastily counselled my companion not to bother himself about the dying Arab lad. "Let him die" was his parting observation. I did not hear that remark, but, with a horror-stricken face, the French Franciscan translated it for me.

The young French monk came with me and we both tried every means to get the unfortunate Arabs attended to. It was all in vain. The fury of the Italians against the Arabs made the admission of an Arab to any hospital a matter of utter impossibility. There is here an Italian hospital looked after by French nuns. My friend the French Franciscan assured me, however, that it would be utterly impossible to get the boy into this or any other hospital. My renewed offer to pay all the expenses did not improve matters. The thing could not be done. The fury of the Italians against the Arabs was too great.

Within some yards of where I stood, a private soldier was savagely kicking a corpse. I offered him money if he would attend to the dying Arab, but he refused. I had almost persuaded an Italian labourer to undertake the work when, on examining the lad, he suddenly declared that it was a case of cholera, and informed me that he would have nothing to do with it.

An interpreter who accompanied the Franciscan questioned the sick boy in Arabic. The boy said that he was suffering from hunger and thirst. He attempted to rise to his feet, but failed. That he was not shamming is proved by the fact that when I visited the spot next morning I found him dead.



THE  
COLUMBIAN



DYING ARAB. SENTINELS ON GUARD.



SOLDIERS JEERING AT DYING NAKED ARAB WOMAN, WHOM I FOUND DEAD AT THE SAME SPOT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.

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*Photos by Author.*

His mouth and his finger-nails were full of earth. In his death-agony he had evidently torn the ground with his teeth and nails. He died without any one near him to offer him a cup of water, for all his tribe—men, women, and children—had been exterminated. The two old women who lay at some distance from him were also dead.

At the entrance to the enclosure in which the boy and the old women lay, a number of half-crazy soldiers had been on guard all night. In the day-time it would have been impossible for any Arab to approach the place. They would have been shot down at once. At night it would have been equally dangerous for a European civilian to approach. Even a perfect knowledge of the Italian language was not always a safeguard. In broad daylight next morning Lorenzo Falcon, a peaceful Maltese fisherman and a British subject, had been shot dead by a sentinel on the sea-front, the most fashionable and frequented street in the city. The British Foreign Office accepted the Italian explanation that the man had been fired on only after he refused to stop or to give the password.

This Arab child had died a lonelier and more abandoned death than even Christ had died on the Cross, for the Italian soldiers of that day had allowed at least His mother and His favourite disciple to approach. This Bedouin lad died naked and abandoned on the ground.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was when von Gottberg and I saw these dead bodies that we decided to send back our papers to General Caneva and to leave an army in which such things were done. This brave German gentleman was moved almost to tears, and I remember him saying as we stood over the corpse of the Arab: "This is what a quarrel between England and Germany will mean—the weakening of both, and consequently a free hand to the peoples who do things like this."

I must say that during my stay in Tripoli I felt much attracted by the Germans and Austrians, owing to the honest and manly indignation

Next day I saw Father Bevilacqua on the steps of the Franciscan Church receiving consuls, consuls' wives, powerful financiers, and military magnates who had come to attend the Solemn Requiem Mass for the Italian dead.

Before concluding my account of the sick Arabs which the Italian outrages roused in them. Those outrages seemed to affect the French and the other European residents much less, indeed at one of the worst spots in the oasis I met on this day a young French lady from Tunis calmly photographing the corpses with which the ground was strewn, and not seeming to be in the least put out. I suspect that on the question of killing there was a fundamental difference of view between the Germans and myself on the one hand and the Southern Italians, Southern French and Tunisian French on the other. The terrible account of the massacres which Reuter sent from Malta on November 6th shocked all London, but an Italian paper which had it retransmitted expressed its surprise that these few killings should have aroused such a protest. The same observation was made by an Italian paper when von Gottberg published in the "Lokal-Anzeiger" an even more shocking story. In conversation with Italians I find that they sometimes admit all the cases I give, but object to my using the word "massacre." In fact that is all they object to. I must say that they also maintain that the women and young boys who were shot had been found firing on the Italians.

Von Gottberg gives in the "Lokal-Anzeiger" the following account of how he and I decided to return our passes to General Caneva. It was, he says, after we had seen the Arab boy's corpse.

"McCullagh war nachgekommen, er begegnete mir mit einer Hand erhoben wie zum Schwur: 'Dafür sollen in London Versammlungen einberufen und Protestreden im Parlament gehalten werden!'

"Recht so! Aber zunächst werfen wir dem General unsere Papiere vor die Füße!"

"At once; if you please!"

"Und ich glaube, dasz jedermann unsere Entrüstung teilen wird."

I shall translate part of this, briefly, as follows: "McCullagh had overtaken me. He met me with one hand uplifted as if swearing an oath. 'For this day's work,' said he, 'there shall be meetings in London, there shall be speeches of protest in Parliament.'"

I may add that both prophecies came true, but I had no idea at the time that I myself would address one of those meetings. When the late Mr. W. T. Stead urged me to do so I declined on the ground of inexperience in the art of public speaking. "Well, then, I see what I must do with you," said Mr. Stead in his jocular way, "I must throw you into the deep water as a father throws a boy of whom he wants to make a swimmer." And he carried out his threat, for next day I saw it announced in the Press that I was to address a meeting in the Farringdon Memorial Hall. As Mr. Stead had already engaged the hall and printed the tickets I felt that I had got to address that meeting and I did so, Mr. Stead acting as chairman.





PULLING ABOUT A CORPSE.



MURDERED ARAB VILLAGER.

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*Photos by Author.*



whom I saw in the burned village, I should like to mention the case of an Arab girl, sixteen or seventeen years old, who was also left on the ground to die. Being sick or wounded she was unable to walk. The soldiers, therefore, dragged her along by the feet, so that her clothes came up over her head and all her body was exposed. At this the soldiers laughed. So did an officer who accompanied them. A foreigner remonstrated with them, and pointed out that the girl was evidently very ill. Then the soldiers caught the victim by the wrists and dragged her along the ground. Her veil fell off her face and this exposure, so repugnant to Mohammedan ideas of modesty, seemed to cause the poor girl more shame than the exposure of her naked body. Finally, the soldiers abandoned the girl at the gate of a Red Cross hospital. She lay there on the ground begging piteously for a drink of water—which was not given her. A group of soldiers and officers inspected her critically, for she was an extremely beautiful girl. . . .

Now these things were witnessed not only by myself, but by Otto von Gottberg of the "Lokal-Anzeiger," who afterwards, like myself, sent back his papers to General Caneva, by way of protest against this barbarity. They were also witnessed by the dragoman of the German Consulate, who speaks German, Italian, and Arabic. They were reported on to his Government by Dr. Tilger, the German Consul, who forwarded to Berlin the sworn statements of three Germans on this subject.

I know that these Germans have been suspected of animosity against the Italians. With regard to this incident, however, I find that they took even too pro-Italian a view. They could not believe that this Bedouin village could have been burned down

for nothing, that all these people could have been put to death because they might in future get arms and fire on the Italians. They assumed that the villagers had fired on the troops, but, even so, they found the punishment meted out to them too severe. Dr. Weibel of the "Frankfurter Zeitung" said that he had heard two shots fired near that village in the morning, and he presumed that those shots were fired by the villagers on the Italian troops, and were the cause of their own extermination immediately after. Herr von Gottberg immediately accepted that view, and took it for granted that the villagers had fired on some soldiers on their way to the front and had wounded several of them.

Now, will it be believed that the villagers fired no shots and committed no crime whatsoever, and that their extermination was carried out simply as a precautionary measure—lest they might become rebels later on? Yet this is the explanation given by the Italians themselves for the burning of this village, and for all the deaths and murders which that measure entailed. Signor Giuseppe Bevione may be almost styled the official historian of the war, since he never criticises the military authorities, always praises them, and dedicates his book, "Come Siamo Andati a Tripoli," to the Hon. Giovanni Giolitti himself. And Signor Bevione calmly tells us that this Bedouin village near Dahra was wiped out merely "by way of precaution"!

I shall give the whole passage containing this remarkable statement. He describes how he rode past the village in the morning, and suddenly saw it set on fire by the troops. Then he goes on as follows:

"A dense smoke rises behind the mill. A long tongue of fire shoots up through the darkness





ARAB CARRYING OFF HIS OLD MOTHER.



DYING ARAB GIRL.

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*Photos. by Author.*



towards heaven. A horde of ragamuffins, crowded together like a flock of sheep, pour out of Mill Street into the Market Square and go towards the shore between a cordon of soldiers. The miserable Bedouin encampment which they occupied has been set on fire by way of precaution." (*Si è dato fuoco per misura di sicurezza al miserabile accampamento beduino.*) "What a gang those inhabitants were!" Signor Bevione contemptuously adds. "When I saw them, they were going to seek an asylum on the sea-shore."

The only Italian correspondent, so far as I know, who says that the inhabitants of the Bedouin village fired on the Italians, is Mr. Luigi Barzini of the "Corriere della Sera." Mr. Barzini tells us how an artillery soldier, who, while standing in the Market Square, was slightly wounded by a bullet, declared that he had seen the shot fired from the Bedouin village. Immediately some soldiers attacked the village and burnt it. None of the Italian correspondents say that any search was made for arms; and I think we may conclude that if a single cartridge had been found, they would certainly have mentioned the fact. But they all agree that as soon as the hovels began to burn, there were continual reports of cartridges exploded by the heat. One of them says that the explosions reminded him of a battle. But it may have been the crackling of the burning wood. I myself passed the village while it was burning in the morning, and I heard no such fusillade.

Even if we accept Mr. Barzini's explanation, we must admit that the proceedings of the Italians on this occasion seemed very much like hanging a man first and trying him afterwards. On the mere word of an excited soldier, and without any search or

inquiry being made, a village is burned and many of its inhabitants killed. Then, the executioners hear amid the flames something which vaguely reminds them of the explosion of cartridges, and they say to one another: "What a lucky thing we burned that village! Those people would have been sure to fire on us sooner or later."

Moreover, the soldier who was wounded may have been hit by an Arab bullet from the oasis, for at that very moment the Italian line had been broken at the house of Gemal Bey, and the Arabs who broke it could easily have fired on the town from the tree-tops. Next day one bullet struck the roof of the American Consulate, not far distant, and another killed a soldier close to that consulate, but in both cases those missiles came admittedly from the front.

Other Italian correspondents support Signor Bevione's story. The military authorities, says one, continued energetically *le misure per ripulire l' oasi* (the measures for the purging of the oasis). "They burned houses and cabins," he adds casually, "and a Bedouin village at the gates of Tripoli."

If those Bedouin villagers had been guilty of treachery, or even of having razors and empty cartridge-cases in their possession, the fact would most certainly have been mentioned by General Caneva, by more than one of the forty semi-official Italian correspondents in Tripoli, by more than one of the hundreds of officers, soldiers, and deputies who have written about this day's "battle."

I at once made the above facts known in the "Westminster Gazette," and in the "Daily News." If those Arabs had been "traitors," that is, if they had fired on the Italians, that fact would have been quickly brought forward by the many active and



excellently-informed agents and friends of the Italian Government in this country.

That it has not been brought forward shows that this Bedouin village near Dahra was wiped out lest it might in future become disloyal.

The terrible story told in this chapter is confirmed by Otto von Gottberg in the "Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger." There was much controversy in the London "Daily News" on the subject of the Arab boy. Some English Roman Catholics drew the attention of Father Bevilacqua to it, and received from him a reply in which he admitted that I met him and asked him to succour a sick boy. He says that on going to the military hospital he found there a young Arab who had been wounded and who was, so he was given to understand, the child in whom I had interested myself.

I have been blamed for not having helped the boy myself, and in defence I have several times pointed out that it would have been impossible for me to have done so owing to the confusion which prevailed, to the distance of the nearest well, and the impossibility of obtaining the help of any Arabs or Italians to carry the lad away. No Arabs would venture near the spot. Their lives would have been forfeit had they done so. So terrible was the blood-lust of the Italians that the French Franciscan Father, of whom I have spoken above, was very much distressed about the safety of a little Catholic Levantine pupil who accompanied him wearing a fez. The monk feared, and with very good reason, that at any moment one of the crazy soldiers might mistake the boy for an Arab and bayonet him as he walked between us. Finally we persuaded the boy to put his fez in his pocket; and, as the rest of his costume was European, he escaped. But this incident shows how impossible it would have been to bring Arab labourers to this spot to carry away the sick lad. And Italian labourers would, at that moment, have been more likely to finish off the boy than to lend him a helping hand.

Then a good deal of time was lost owing to my certainty, first that the hospital authorities would take him in as they had promised, secondly that Father Bevilacqua would look after him as *he* had promised. Father Bevilacqua reproaches me in his letter with asking him, an old man, to look after a case which I could just as well have attended to myself; but the reproach is hardly fair, for he held a high ecclesiastical position, and among those Sicilian soldiers his word was law. Moreover he had a high official position. He was connected with the Red Cross and wore a badge of some kind. I naturally expected that by saying two words to an orderly he could save the boy's life. I certainly did not expect him to carry away the lad on his back, though a son of St. Francis of Assisi might not have considered even that beneath him.

When night had come on, there were sentries around the place where the lad lay, and for a civilian to approach that place in the darkness meant almost certain death. No returns have been made of the number of innocent people, unable to give the password, who were shot that night, but I should put it at almost a dozen. There was occasional firing in every part of the town, and in many cases the sentinel must have hit his mark.

Herr von Gottberg has written to the British Press confirming my narrative; and Mr. Thomas E. Grant of the "Daily Mirror" also sent the following letter to the "Daily News," which published it on November 28th:

"On returning from Tripoli yesterday I found in 'The Church Times' of November 24th an attempt, on the part of a contributor who signs himself 'Viator,' to throw doubt and ridicule on the story of a dying Arab boy, whom Mr. Francis McCullagh saw in Tripoli and whose hard case he has described in the 'Daily News.'

"As to the existence of the boy, there can be no doubt. I saw him myself on October 26th. He was then alive. I saw him dead on the morning of the 27th. In his account of the matter Mr. McCullagh is far too modest with regard to his own conduct. He does not say that, though the lad was undoubtedly suffering from cholera, he (Mr. McCullagh) repeatedly risked his life in my presence by touching him, brushing away the flies which tormented him, examining his body to see if he were wounded, and trying in every way to make him comfortable. What the lad really needed was medical attendance, and that, of course, we could not supply. Then, it soon became dark. Guards were drawn up around this lonely, burned village in the oasis, and it would have been sheer madness for us to have ventured in amongst them in civilian dress and without a perfect knowledge of the Italian language. Besides, there were scores of such cases, and it would have been impossible for us to attend to them all, though it would have been easy for the Italians to have done so, as their army in Tripolitania is wonderfully well equipped with hospitals and Red Cross people, the latter, for the greater part, standing idle on the occasion in question. We returned in the morning and found the child dead. . . .

"I know little of Mr. McCullagh, and have had little connection with him, having only met him casually once or twice on newspaper work abroad. But in the present instance I feel very strongly impelled to write in his favour as an act of fair-play and simple justice against the sneers of an anonymous arm-chair critic."

It may be thought that I am dealing at unnecessary length with this unpleasant subject of the atrocities. As a matter of fact I am only just touching on the fringe of it. I do not give the evidence of Herr Mygind ("Morgenpost"), Dr. Weibel ("Frankfurter Zeitung"), Dr. Gottlob Adolph Krause, or of a single Austrian correspondent. I

do not want to make my book a literary chamber of horrors, but on the other hand I feel it incumbent on me to let the reader judge for himself the truth of the Italian statement that not a single innocent Arab was put to death, the truth of Signor Giolitti's statement that the "behaviour" of the Italian Army and Navy on the present occasion "will render this war an example of generous and chivalrous civilisation."

## CHAPTER II

### THE "PURGING" OF THE OASIS

MEANWHILE a man-hunt was going on throughout an extensive and once prosperous Arab quarter extending to the left of the Bumeliana road all the way to the Desert. Dead men lay on the ground in all directions. A tall Fezzani lay almost naked in the middle of the street, the whole top of his head having been knocked off evidently by an axe or the butt-end of a rifle, and the contents of the cranium were lying several feet off. The body was not cold, and a soldier amused himself by kicking it and watching it quiver with that jelly-like motion of a corpse which is still warm. Some dozens of soldiers were wandering about with revolvers in their hands, shooting at every Arab who showed himself, and very frequently at comrades whom in the distance they mistook for Arabs. Those soldiers were literally drunk with blood. They had all the symptoms of alcoholic intoxication—the flushed face, the blood-shot eye, the unsteady hand, the excited, incoherent manner, the uneven walk, the utter loss of self-control. Many of them had taken their coats off and rolled up their sleeves, like butchers.

"Why are you shooting at those people?" von Gottberg frequently asked, and the answer always was the same—"Because they are traitors." It was rather vague.



THE  
CITY OF  
NEW YORK



MURDERED ARAB.



EXAMINING A CORPSE TO SEE IF IT NEEDS ANOTHER BULLET.

*To face p. 275.*

*Photos. by Author.*

We came on ten soldiers. Revolver in hand, they were walking through the deserted and battered houses peering into every corner and blazing away at everything that moved. Suddenly they caught sight of a number of men at a distance, almost concealed by the cacti, the palm-trees, and the mud-walls. They at once opened fire on them, and a moment later the others, who were certainly Italians, returned the fire with interest, and bullets began to whiz over our heads. The ten soldiers took refuge behind a wall, while Gottberg, the German dragoon, and I fled.

Next a soldier took us in tow in order to show us corpses. He also had a revolver in his hand and he walked along the oasis paths with the air of a proud hunter bringing visitors to see his "bag." And a good bag he had. There were corpses strewn in all directions. One was that of a woman. A little way off a man lay on his back. Our guide not only pointed him out with pride, but even jumped with glee on the dead body, shouting: "It was I who killed him."

This was too much. Again we fled. A group of soldiers rushed past us through the palm-gardens and, to our amazement, they were led on not by an officer but by an acquaintance of von Gottberg's, an Italian civilian, Count X. The Count wore civilian dress, but he had a revolver in his hand. His face was flushed, and his voice was rapid, thick, and indistinct, like that of a drunken man. My companion asked him something in German, whereupon he answered in the same language, saying: "*Achtung, hier sind noch Lebende versteckt!*" ("Take care! There are still some living ones hidden here.") With that he hurried on, followed by his soldiers, all of whom had their rifles ready.

Von Gottberg and I looked at one another in amazement. It was, then, a regular man-hunt. They were killing the Arabs, without inquiry, without trial, exactly as if those Arabs were wild beasts.

I shall now let von Gottberg speak :

“ A gang of soldiers rushed out from behind some houses. By their epaulettes one could see that they belonged to different regiments. A little pleasure-party, evidently, drawn from various parts of the army. A lieutenant was in command ; when they came nearer we could see that there were prisoners in their midst, five Arabs whose arms were tied behind their backs. Suddenly there was a great shouting in another direction, and a number of soldiers emerged from a house dragging with them an Arab. This Arab was added to the five and all were shot together. The original five may have been judged and condemned by some regular tribunal,—though certainly it did not look like it,—but the sixth had been casually picked up before our eyes and added to the group of condemned men without any protest being made by the lieutenant in charge of the party. This was not military justice. It was lynch law on a large scale.”

In the corner of a garden I detected an Arab family hiding and I noticed among them an infant only a few months old. An Arab, evidently the father of this family, was sneaking out of a gate-way, probably to get food. He had the look of a hunted animal, and he recoiled abruptly when he saw me. I did not see him shot, but am certain that he could not have escaped. It is even doubtful if any of his family escaped.



There must, by the way, have been in this extensive devastated district many infants at the breast. What has become of them? What has become of their mothers? I have been told that four hundred women and children were shot during these three days of panic and four thousand men—one-tenth the population of the whole oasis. Many of the women were shot in mistake for men. They were seen by the soldiers from afar off and immediately potted. In most countries a man cannot be executed unless there is some official order to that effect. In Tripolitania an Arab, in order to be safe, must very often provide himself with an official badge and a document in Italian to the effect that he is not to be shot. The bearers of cholera corpses have yellow brassards, the war-correspondents white brassards, and so on. Near the German Consulate I stopped an Arab gentleman to ask him for some directions. Fearing that I was about to shoot him, he hastily drew forth an official Italian permit to live and handed it to me with trembling fingers. It was this man, an intelligent and educated Arab, who afterwards said to me apropos of the massacres: "The Turks were bad, but they spared at least the women and children."

Suddenly hell was let loose. There was a roaring and a trampling and a shouting like that of a mob of mad-drunks who have been ejected from some cess-pool of a public-house after closing-time. Round the corner swung some fifty armed men wearing the uniform of the King of Italy. They were conducting six prisoners whose hands were tied behind their backs. Among these prisoners were a tall Fezzani, in European dress, and a light-coloured lad of twelve or thirteen years, in a red cap. With wild roars the

soldiers told us to stand back. They swayed to and fro, they lurched forward like drunken men. At their head was a lieutenant. His face was as flushed, his hand as unsteady, as those of the most excited of his men. He had as completely lost control of his soldiers as he had lost control of himself. The private soldiers bumped into him, and bumped out again without any apology. They shoved and jostled him as the whole disorderly rabble reeled unsteadily along. And on that officer's back was the uniform of the King of Italy. On his helmet was the Crown and the Cross—the Cross of the Merciful Christ !

None of these men had tasted wine. Of that I am certain. It was blood alone which had intoxicated them. It was dangerous to be anywhere near them, for, owing to their excited condition and to the way in which they held their rifles, any one round about might be accidentally shot. They knew this themselves. Hence their shouts to us, their wild gestures to get out of the way, though we were not in the line of fire at all.

They marched their prisoners to a small mud-hut, one side of which had been completely demolished. The floor had evidently been used for some weeks as a latrine by at least a regiment. Into this house of dirt and doom the prisoners were driven two by two, placed against the inner wall, and instantly riddled with bullets. No word of command was given when the firing began. The soldiers all blazed away as they liked. There was none of that order, discipline, and solemnity which, in civilised armies like those of England, Germany, Turkey, Japan, etc., invest a military execution with something of official dignity. The officer in charge of the party fired at the prisoners with his revolver.

The prisoners waiting their turn watched those who fell, but they were as calm as if they were mere spectators themselves. The soldier standing beside the Fezzani kept roaring something into his ear: the fingers of another soldier kept playing nervously with a very long black tassel on the top of the boy's red fez. The restless fingers plaited the silken threads of the long black tassel as if they were the strands of hair on a girl's head. The boy did not move. Like all the Arabs whom I have seen executed in Tripoli, he was perfectly calm and silent.

As the firing-line was only six feet distant almost every bullet told. The boy went in the second batch. His bronzed face had almost turned pallid, but he was still perfectly calm, and he walked over the corpses of the first two with the light foot of a child. At the first volley he pitched forward on his face, dead. His companion was struck first on the right cheek, then on the left shoulder: one could see that by the blood and by his quick, nervous motion, first on one side, then on the other. But he stood bolt upright, and even when he had received several other wounds he still attempted to face his executioners, proudly and erectly, his back against the wall. When he finally fell, his body was still stiff like that of a soldier on parade. He died as a desert horseman should die.

The tall Fezzani in European dress went last. He must have spoken Italian, for, before putting him against the wall, the soldiers questioned him, pressed him, urged him to do something. Evidently they were trying to worm some secret out of him. They wanted to make him implicate others—and then to shoot him all the same. But he only shook his head. He was placed in the far corner, as all the rest of the



space was now covered with corpses whose naked limbs and blood-stained bodies were strangely twisted and intertwined. Beside the Fezzani stood an elderly, bearded Arab with a noble brow and a yellow, pensive, deeply-furrowed face. A second or two before the fatal volley the Arab turned to his companion with the air of a man turning to say something to a friend in the street, and made some remark, whereat the Fezzani nodded. What could he have said? It will never be known, for the same instant there rang out the usual deafening report of rifles and revolvers. Like a flash the Fezzani fell, but the other span round and round like a top, his sunburnt face now deadly pale, his features contorted in agony. When the second volley came he, too, slid to the ground, dead.

This sight was witnessed by scores of soldiers and officers, who danced and yelled with delight as each pair of Arabs went down. A Red Cross doctor rushed forward with a cigarette in his mouth, and in his hands a folding Kodak drawn out to the proper distance and all ready for action. This was one of the unoccupied military surgeons who had promised to help the sick Arab boy and who had broken his promise. The presence of the officer-photographer at these scenes is quite a feature of them. He generally smokes cigarettes while snapshotting. At the execution of Hussein, the German cavass, I even saw two Franciscans, one of whom was beaming with smiles, as he looked at the body of the dead man.

Many officers and soldiers had been attracted by the sound of the firing and now crowded close to the firing-party. There was much pushing both by officers and men to get into the front row. While



the performance lasted, the walls and windows round about had been crowded with soldier-spectators, and when the last Arab fell there was a mad rush of officers, soldiers, and civilians to view the corpses. The air was filled with jeers and comments on the strange, relaxed attitude of the bodies, which seemed, as soon as life had departed, to have become as limp as wet rags. They lay doubled-up and twisted in the most unexpected and unnatural attitudes.

Over four hundred shots had been fired at these six people. . . . And the Italian newspapers called this day's work "a glorious victory," "revenge for Adowa." Alas! not even Adowa was as black a day for Italy as this.

The expression of sympathy and commiseration on our faces must have excited the attention of the lieutenant, who was now apparently getting cool and beginning to feel the reaction. He sent to us a soldier who, having been in America, spoke a little English. The soldier pretended that he wanted to see our papers, but his mission was clear when, having seen them and expressed his satisfaction, he tried to convince us that "these men"—indicating the six bodies—were traitors. He also told the usual story of Bersaglieri having been found crucified on the 23rd, and of Italian prisoners having been tortured.

I have never been able to understand how it is that those crucified and mutilated Bersaglieri were not discovered and photographed till November 26th—a month later. The Italians talked of them being at Henni on the 23rd, but they themselves did not evacuate Henni till the 28th, and presumably they buried their dead comrades before the evacuation. They reoccupied Henni on November 26th, about a

month later, and lo ! the mutilated Bersaglieri had arisen from their graves and were again crucified on trees. The Italian Freethinkers who manipulate the Press Bureau are cunning enough to insist again and again (with their tongues all the time in their cheeks) on this useful word "crucified." It makes such an appeal, you know, in England and America. Briefly, the Italian defence is this. We killed Arabs on Tuesday because Arabs killed our men on Friday of the same week.

I tried to get away from this horror, but only succeeded in finding a much greater horror. Down the main road which runs inland from Bumeliana marched about fifty soldiers. They were in the form of a hollow square. Inside the square walked about fifty Arabs, men and boys. There was one boy of ten or eleven—a slim, lithe child with a carriage as graceful as that of a young Arab foal. The children seemed to feel quite safe since they were in the company of their parents, uncles, cousins, and all the people in their street. They looked out beyond the glittering line of bayonets with wide-open but serene, unalarmed eyes. They were wondering whither the foreigners were bringing them.

The foreigners marched them down the street towards the oasis on the outskirts of the town, but half-a-mile or so from the edge of the desert and the Italian trenches. Then a strange thing happened. From the midst of the date-palm gardens a shot rang out, then another and another. Bullets whizzed past our heads. A sudden panic seized upon the soldiers, and they rushed to line the ditches on the side of the road. They left their prisoners standing in the middle of the broad pathway, all roped together, all calm and silent, and looking somehow

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ARAB WOMEN AND CHILDREN BROUGHT IN FROM THE OASIS OVER THE DEAD BODIES OF THEIR OWN KINSFOLK.  
AT SOME DISTANCE IN FRONT MARCHED A LITTLE MOHAMMEDAN BOY CARRYING AN IMPROVISED RED CROSS FLAG.

*To face p. 283.*



in their long white garments and in their general attitude like a flock of sheep and lambs. Not a soldier remained near them save one, who drove his bayonet into two prisoners, an old man and a youth. The latter fell on his back dead, whereupon the soldier pulled the dead man's clothes up to his waist, exposing his nakedness as he lay, and he lay there in the centre of the street for twenty-four hours. The old man, who was mortally wounded, was left to bleed to death, and his moaning was heart-rending. I afterwards saw a soldier jumping on his body and kicking him.

Along this road next day I saw a long procession of Arab women approach. The Italians had considerably brought them this way, as it was littered with dead bodies, some of them perhaps the bodies of these women's sons, brothers, husbands, or fathers. These refugees were all well dressed and evidently of good family. In passing the dead bodies they exhibited extraordinary dignity. Though their step sometimes faltered, and though they repeatedly drew their veils across their eyes, not a sound escaped them. What a contrast to the fog-horn lamentations of the Jewish and Italian women in Tripoli city when, on October 23rd, they thought the Turk was coming ! In front of these brave matrons and girls walked a gentle little Arab boy. He was, with the exception of the Italian soldiers, the only member of the male sex in the party. In his hand was a little stick and at the end of it a white flag, and lo ! a Cross—the Red Cross of Christ ! Has Christ, then, to do with this war, where one side is Mohammedan and the other worse than Mohammedan ?

As gently as I could, I tried to make the boy hold his little flag so that the light should fall on it in such

a way that it could be photographed. His hand was as chilly as that of a corpse, and without even looking at me he resigned his little ensign to me, closed his eyes, and bent his head in silence. A chill went to the marrow of my bones. The child had evidently taken me for an Italian "hero," and had expected that I was going to plunge a bayonet into him.

But I am anticipating. I must return to the fifty condemned men calmly standing together in the centre of the roadway and to the fifty panic-stricken executioners lining the ditches. The soldiers kept up a lively exchange of fire with some people in the undergrowth who replied. I knew that both sides were Italians, but God or the devil seems to have blinded the eyes of these bloodthirsty and half-crazy men so that they shot one another right and left. The same panic reigned that day all over Tripoli. It reigned even in the great *Sok*, or seashore market, at the foot of the citadel. Even here two soldiers were shot, undoubtedly by some of their own comrades firing wildly from a distance.

The lieutenant in command of the party to which I had attached myself was utterly ignored by his men, who fired without consulting him at all. He was a swollen, purple-faced little man who kept up an almost perpetual roar at the top of his voice, though nobody paid the least attention to his orders except to disobey them. Throughout the entire army the same demoralisation prevailed.

Finally, many other officers, as well as a detachment of blue-coated gendarmes, ran up; and, after they had fired for half-an-hour on their own comrades in the date-palm garden, the soldiers composing the convoy were persuaded to proceed with their dread work. They again surrounded

their prisoners and marched them into an empty and partially dismantled mud-hut exactly like the one which I have already described, and evidently used, like that one, as a regimental latrine. At the corner of the house one of the soldiers, unable any longer to control his ungovernable lust for blood, suddenly drove his bayonet into the side of one prisoner, an old man, who instantly fell dead. The others were hurried by groups into the house. Then the usual horror began. I need not describe it twice. The floor of the house became so encumbered with corpses that the victims who came last could not find standing-room and had to climb a pile of dead bodies. As their hands were tied behind their backs, some of them stumbled several times in doing so. When the work of the firing-party was finished, the floor of the house presented the same awful aspect of tangled and intertwined limbs and bodies as I have already described. Great pieces of plaster had been knocked off the wall by bullets. In other places there were great splashes of blood. These blood-stains were at the height of a man's head above the ground. The blood must therefore have spurted from some large arteries in the heads or necks of the Arabs before they fell.

But despite the great number of bullets which had been poured into the house, many of the Arabs still remained with some faint spark of life in them. The lieutenant in command began firing his revolver at every head he saw among the hideous pile of dead and dying. So did the tub-shaped Secret Service man whom I had met that morning at the front. A number of brother-officers gallantly helped in this sportsmanlike work, which continued for twenty minutes.

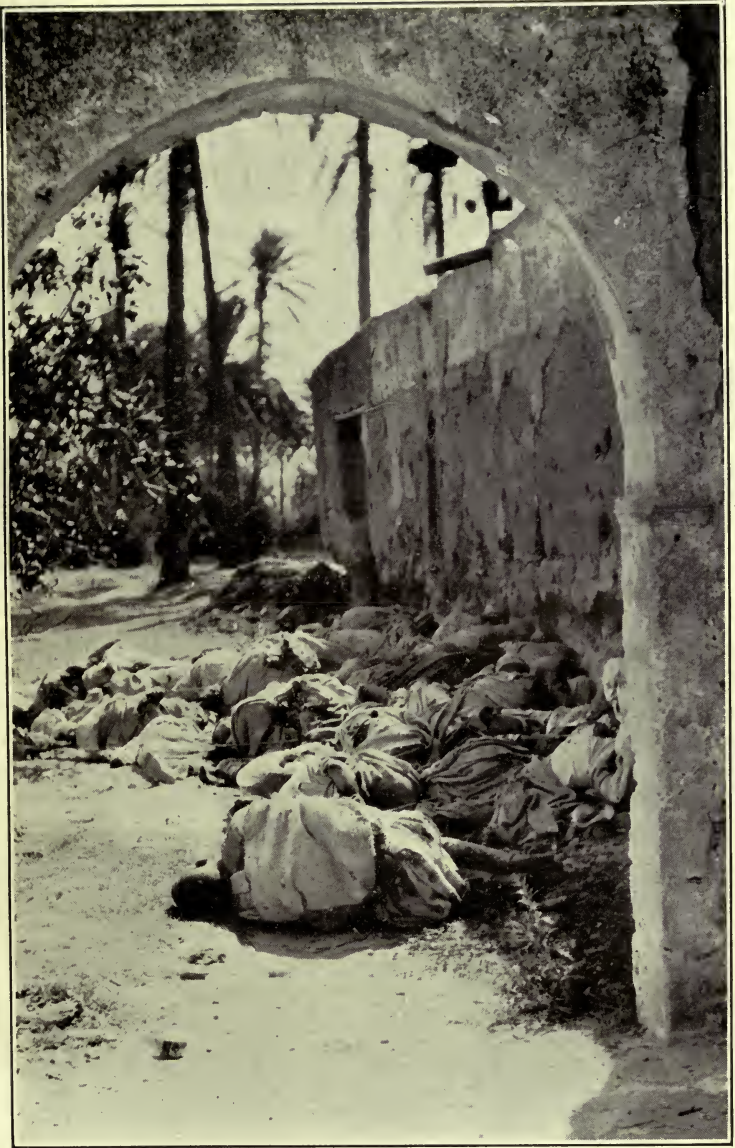


The blue-coated gendarmes also took part in the fun. But, despite all this shooting, there still remained in that heap men and boys who gave signs of life. The reason probably was that some of those who were shot first fell without being killed outright, and were afterwards shielded from subsequent bullets by the mass of bodies that fell on top of them. Sometimes, however, supposed corpses lying in exposed places gave gruesome and startling signs of vitality. On top of the pile lay an old grey-bearded Arab, his head propped up against the wall and his whole air and attitude exactly that of an aged man sleeping in a bed. Suddenly, while the body remained motionless and dead, the head began to roll slowly and deliberately from side to side like that of a person in an uneasy sleep, like that of some horrible mechanical doll with a head that worked in a socket. The mouth and eyes were closed, the body was still, but the head rolled from side to side with the regularity of a pendulum. It was a dreadful sight.

The sportsmanlike lieutenant aimed at the head once, but missed. The head continued to roll from side to side. The lieutenant aimed again. This time he hit, for suddenly the motion ceased, while, with a sharp jerk, the mouth sprang wide open and remained like that. The head had ceased to live.

There still remained a moaning at the very bottom of the pile near the door. The sportsmanlike lieutenant and his brother-officers emptied their revolvers again and again into that part of the hillock of bodies from which the groans came. But the sounds still continued, the hoarse plaintive sighing of an old, old man, asleep and very ill. Finally, the soldiers were again invited to fire with their rifles, and the corpses were once more raked with half-a-dozen volleys.





A PILE OF FIFTY MEN AND BOYS.

*To face p. 286.*



When I listened again at the door the moaning had ceased. But all this firing at very close range had torn and lacerated the corpses in a frightful manner. The whole face or forehead was sometimes shot away, brains and entrails hung out—but the subject is far too ghastly for detailed description. I am afraid, indeed, that much of what I have already given is unsuitable for a book, but it is just as well, perhaps, that the reader should know, firstly, what war is, and, secondly, what kind of warfare it is which the Italians are now waging in Tripolitania.

Some military readers of the foregoing particulars regarding the Italian method of warfare in Tripoli may be inclined to regard the writer as unduly sensitive. But such is not the case. I have been through a great war from start to finish. I have seen Chinese executed by Chinese, Chinese spies executed by Russians, Turkish traitors executed by Turks, and, save on the occasion of the first execution I saw, I was not in the least disturbed and never made any protest. Instead of making protests, I made photographs. But the recent butcheries in Tripoli were of such a nature as would arouse even Abd-ul-Hamid or M. Puriskevitch to indignant protestation. Mr. Otto von Gottberg, a Prussian officer, a firm believer in the strong hand and in drastic military action, has for the first time in his life taken the side of the civilians. I need not mention the names of the British journalists who take the same side. I think I am right in saying that the only journalists who regard the severity of General Caneva as justifiable are Italian journalists.

It may be urged that, in the cases I have already given, the boys of whom I speak were really guilty, and had really used arms. But it is impossible that

the sick boy or the old women could have done so. It is impossible also that one-tenth of the murdered Arabs whom I saw could have been regularly tried before a military tribunal. They often lay singly on the roadside. They never had weapons of any kind, and sometimes they looked as if they had just got out of bed and had not had time to dress.

The following instances which I have collected from trustworthy sources show that cold-blooded murder was the order of the day.

One of the chiefs of the Jewish community tells me that a blind Jewish beggar and his son were both murdered. They were arrested, and it shows what a farce their trial must have been when, despite all their protestations that they were Jews, the soldiers insisted that they were Mohammedans and killed them both. All the Jews in Tripoli are enthusiastically on the Italian side, and would dread nothing so much as the return of the Turks. It is evident, therefore, that these two Jewish lives were left entirely to the decision of an ignorant soldiery, panic-stricken, and inflamed to madness by stories of the mutilations inflicted on their wounded. Dani Saada, the elder Jew, did not die at the first volley. The soldiers therefore broke his legs with the butts of their rifles and beat him to death. He was sixty-two years of age, and his son was twenty-six.

The butchery continued for several days. Soldiers met well-dressed natives on the road. They took them into empty houses, robbed and shot them. The Italians abandoned on the second day their positions on the east and fell back. Old Arab cooks and labourers who had attached themselves to the newcomers hobbled after them. The soldiers took pot-shots at these unfortunate people. Sometimes a



man went back to finish off the wounded wretches with the bayonet. Hundreds were buried in the desert sand, hundreds were thrown into the sea; and, for many days afterwards, the Tripolitan fishers were continually finding these corpses in their nets. The oasis stank with unburied bodies. The soldiers refused to inter them on account of the smell, and the Arabs refused to do so unless forced to work at the point of the bayonet. The sea-breeze was tainted with the smell of swollen and putrid masses floating on the surface of the bay.

The whole truth about these massacres will perhaps never be known unless, indeed, some Socialist officer or soldier in General Caneva's army lets the world have his experiences. Permissions had been given to newspaper correspondents to circulate everywhere. When the murders began, all these permits were stopped and an attempt was made to prevent any foreign newspaper-man visiting the places where the worst and biggest butcheries were carried out. The military *attachés* were detained in Italy and then sent on to Benghazi, or Derna, so that they should not witness the horrors in Tripoli city.

During the early days of the occupation the Arabs used to carry the Italian wounded into the Italian lines under a flag of truce. It was not till the invaders began butchering innocent women and children that the Arabs mutilated the bodies of some Italian soldiers. These cases of mutilation have been made much of by the Italians. But even if the Bedouins had committed unheard-of atrocities, that was no reason why Rome should follow suit.

The real culprit is not the Italian soldier. On the battle-field every soldier tends to become a brute. It is, however, the duty of the officer to hold him in

check. The English, German, American, or French officer would have done so. Here it is, however, where the Italian officer failed.

I shall now give some more details of the cold-blooded murders committed by Italian soldiers during those terrible days.

An old marabout (holy man) who sat in the sand near Sokra in the oasis begging for alms was shot dead. The villagers set the dead man on a donkey and led him round about the oasis to show the people how the foreigners treat their saints.

Ali Frefer, a butcher of Sania, a hamlet in the oasis, was killing a sheep when some Italian soldiers arrived upon the scene, took his axe from him, and killed him with it.

In Tripoli a blind beggar was killed by soldiers.

A friend of mine had an old Arab servant for twenty-eight years a cripple. The soldiers shot him.

Hundreds of similar instances could be given. Almost every correspondent, almost every foreign resident, has his own list of horrors. Every Consul has sent official reports on the subject to his Government.

Not only was the possession of powder and rifles a capital offence. The possession of a razor, a dagger, a knife, or anything that looked like a weapon was equally a capital offence. Now, a razor is an absolute necessity in every Moslem family. It has a religious significance, being sometimes used in the ceremonial shaving of the head in the case of males, and of the armpits in that of females. Yet Arabs were murdered by the Italians for being in possession of razors. Butchers were killed with their own axes. Arabs found in possession of watches, buttons, and other articles supposed to have belonged to Italians who

had disappeared or been murdered were shot without any inquiry being made.

An Austrian explorer, Herr Artbauer, gives the following particulars :

" Three blind beggars came along a row of houses in Sokra, when some Bersaglieri, who were in a hut at the corner of the street, fired and killed them. Till evening their bodies were left lying where they had fallen. Three children fled out of the oasis into the graveyard of Sidi el Masri. The soldiers composing the Italian post there opened a rapid fire on the little ones, the eldest of whom was only eight years. At Sania a peaceful resident, Mohammed Mosuri, was coming from the market with a little money, when he was stopped, searched, robbed and murdered. On the Gargaresh road two women were riding on two camels. The Italians called on them to halt, but not understanding Italian they continued their course. Their camels had not gone a yard, however, when the sentinels opened fire, killing both women. Another woman was murdered on the Bumeliana road because she did not lift her veil. Some Italian soldiers who were passing by and who heard a wandering preacher chanting, sent him alms in the shape of bullets ; and the old man fell dead without a moan. This afternoon (October 26th) I saw a twelve-year-old boy drinking water at a well just outside Sania. Suddenly a report rang out very close and the lad fell to the ground with a shriek. At the Suk el Djuma (Friday market) on the Tagiura road a woman knelt over the body of her husband, wailing loudly according to the custom of the country. Her wailing did not last long, for an



Italian bullet soon stretched her dead beside the body of her spouse."

Otto von Gottberg has furnished the following particulars :

"Next morning (October 27th) I went to the left from the Bumeliana main road behind the Cavalry Barracks in the oasis. I did not go far, as the road was too dangerous. Out of an Arab hut, I saw a young woman emerge holding in her right hand the fingers of her little son, and in her left a water-pitcher. The street was perfectly tranquil, but suddenly three shots rang out and the woman fell dead. The screaming child fled back into the house. I must admit that the horror of this sight made me stagger and almost fall to the ground. On recovering myself, I hurried on and, meeting an officer, I said to him : 'Your people have just shot a mother at the well !'

"The officer seemed really shocked, but he said : 'Our soldiers cannot always see at the first glance if it is a man or a woman that they have before them.'

"This answer shows that, whether innocent or guilty, the Arab man is lawful prey. I shall give still another picture. Over the mud-wall of a house some soldiers were firing. As we went up to them they were in the garden, bending over the body of a grey-haired old man whom they had just shot. On our faces was the question : 'Why ?' By way of answer the under-officer fumbled in the dead man's clothes and triumphantly drew forth—a razor !

"This murder was justified by an order to the effect that every knife more than two inches long



is to be regarded as a weapon. Now in this country even the women carry a razor about with them owing to the fact that its use is prescribed by their religion for the removal of hairs from the arms. And this razor is never less than two inches long!"

Even as late as November 11th, the Tripoli correspondent of the "Vossische Zeitung" says (November 20th, 1911) that:

"I myself have more than once seen Arabs who went into the gardens to work or to mow some grass, simply shot down."

In some cases that have been made known to me the Sicilian soldiers acted like brigands. I am thinking particularly of one case in which some soldiers searched an oasis shopkeeper and, on finding some money in his purse, killed him for the money.

When the reaction set in very many of the private soldiers became insane and had to be sent back to Italy. The Nationalists tried to make capital out of their infirmity by giving out that it was the result of the atrocities of the Arabs. In some cases this may have been so, but in the greater number of instances I believe that the insanity was due to the atrocities committed by the Italians themselves. On March 28th I was stopped in front of the American Consulate by an Italian soldier who was wandering aimlessly about and obviously deranged. His belt and all his weapons had been taken away from him, however, so that he was not dangerous, but Heaven alone knows how many murders he had committed before he was disarmed. A more disgusting spectacle I have seldom seen, for his eyes were bloodshot, he was dirty and unshaven, his mouth hung open, and the slaver poured down on his uniform. Seeing in

The universality of this hate is one of the proofs that there was a massacre. Alone it would be sufficient to disprove the Italian assertion that not a single innocent Arab was killed. For the Arab is not easily shocked by massacre. He is accustomed to it on a small scale, and dabbles in it himself occasionally. Only something colossal, frightful, and stupefying could have aroused him as he is now aroused from the Yemen to Algeria, from the Mediterranean to the heart of Africa. And neither the Arab nor the Turk could have invented a massacre "story," as some pro-Italians have suggested. They invent many things, it is true, but their taste in mendacity and exaggeration lies in quite a different direction from this. They might say, for example, that they killed tens of thousands of Italians, re-took Tripoli, Derna, Tobruk, and Benghazi, drove all the Italians back to their ships, and captured an aeroplane. But it would never have occurred to them to fabricate a massacre legend. It never occurred to the Mahdi who fought us in the Sudan, nor even to the opponents of the French in Algeria. And even if the Arabs did fabricate such a story, they would not die in hundreds for their own fabrication as they are dying to-day. The merciless nature of this war and the unparalleled fury with which the Arabs fight are proofs of the massacre. There is hardly one of them who has not had some friend or relation butchered in the oasis. Some of them have seen the massacres. Once there was a sallow Arab clerk who worked in a French shipping-office opposite the Hotel Minerva in Tripoli. On October 26th an Italian soldier, accompanied by an ex-Turkish policeman, called on him and told him that his brother had just been executed. The grief of this unfortunate clerk was





MINARET DISGUISED WITH PALM-FRONDS SO AS TO PREVENT IT SERVING  
AS A MARK FOR TURKISH ARTILLERY.

*To face p. 297.*



pitiable to see. The brother may have been a child or a cripple, sitting at home in a little hut among the palm-gardens waiting for the return of the breadwinner. His guilt must have been impossible ; otherwise his brother would have been to some extent prepared for the result of it. But, with a loud cry, he collapsed utterly. He threw himself flat on his face on the floor.

Next day his high office stool was vacant. His high office stool knew him no more. He had done what every youth in England would have done under similar circumstances. He was out in the Desert with a rifle in his hand. Scores of men like him, scores of eye-witnesses whose testimony could not be doubted, gradually made clear to all the Arab race the great Christian crime at which the Tripolitan palm-groves had shuddered.

And not only did the Italians hopelessly alienate the Arabs by their rank injustice. They alienated them still more, perhaps, by their tactlessness in religious matters. The soldiers violated many of the mosques in the territory which they occupied. They were not aware of the intense dislike of the natives to seeing Christians enter even the grounds of a mosque. They turned some of them into observatories and filled others with soldiers. The Italian newspapers have published photographs of minarets crowded with troops. One Italian writer describes for his readers how "from the terrace whence the muezzin once called the faithful to prayer, seven or eight Italian rifles now dominate the surrounding country."

Another mistake made by the Italians was their wholesale violation of the harems and their wholesale unveiling of Arab women.

Alarmed by foolish stories about Turkish spies who had masqueraded as veiled women, they had sometimes shot women who refused to unveil. The result was that during the last week of October the veils were torn from the faces of nearly all the Mohammedan women in Tripoli. One never saw a veiled woman in the streets, and on the Italian steamers by which Turkish families left, all the women were unveiled. To any one who knows how strongly the Arabs feel on this subject of the veiling of women, the intolerance of the Italians on this point will seem one of the gravest mistakes they made.

What renders their case hopeless, however, is their immovable and unalterable conviction that they have done the correct thing as no other race under heaven could have done it. One of their commanders, we are told, won all the native hearts "*con un impeto e una genialità di cui sola la nostra razza è capace, senza un errore d'intelligenza o d'energia*" ("with an impetuosity and a geniality of which only our race is capable, without an error of intelligence or of energy").

Even if we leave the massacres out of account, we must admit that, as a matter of fact, they have behaved ever since they came to Tripoli with the tactfulness of the proverbial bull in a china-shop.

## CHAPTER III

### HASSUNA KARAMANLI

EVEN if we admit for a moment (what I do not in the least believe, however) that the extension of Italy's rule to Tripoli would be a blessing, we must also confess that with a little tact, a very little tact, the Italians might have avoided bloodshed almost altogether. They should have allowed themselves to be guided by their staunch friend, Prince Hassuna Karamanli, whom they made Vice-Governor of Tripoli. Prince Hassuna, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter, was a grandson of Jussef Karamanli, the independent Bey of Tripoli, whom the Turks dethroned in the middle of the last century; and the obvious plan of the Italians, if they wished to possess themselves of Tripolitania, was to come in as the supporters of Hassuna against the Turks.

If they had made Hassuna king and allowed him to sign all the proclamations to the Arabs, to give largess to the chiefs, and to act as a potentate generally, they could have ruled Tripoli as the French rule Tunis. Karamanli himself had pointed out this course to the Italians in 1890. Crispi, who was then in power and who had designs on Tripolitania, conceived the brilliant project of getting suddenly excited even to tears by the wrongs of the Karamanli, and sending a few battle-ships to take their part

against the Turkish oppressor. The whole story has now come to light since there is no longer any necessity for concealing it, and the confidential correspondence between the Arab Prince and the Italian Premier has been published. Crispi asked Signor Grande, the Italian Consul in Tripoli, to sound Karamanli on the subject of Italian intervention. Now, Karamanli, though a traitor, is also a statesman of quite unusual capacity, a fine diplomatist, a tactful, reasonable, unambitious man of business, and, at the same time, a great chief whose ascendancy over practically all the Arabs of Tripolitania was unquestioned until the blundering bombardment of the Italians and the landing of General Caneva deprived him of all his followers save a few personal servants, one son, and a group of discredited ex-chiefs. In answer to Consul Grande, Karamanli declared that he was willing to act the puppet-part which the Italians wished him to play. To quote Consul Grande's letter :

“ Sid Hassuna Karamanli showed himself well disposed to help in the Italian occupation, since he is convinced that if we do not occupy Tripolitania some other Power will. He says that he can dispose of all the strength of the mountain population since he enjoys their sympathy. He would accept a form of government similar to that of Tunisia. This arrangement would, he says, prevent any resistance on the part of the Arabs and would pacify the country. He does not deny that Turkey will fight, but he thinks that she can do nothing serious if she is not supported by the Arabs.”

Early in last year Italy intimated to Karamanli that she was ready to act, and the Prince again



insisted, I presume, on the necessity of doing the deed gradually, on the terrible consequences which would result if the Italians simply bombarded the towns on the coast-line, filled them with soldiers, and frankly annexed the whole vilayet in the name of King Victor Emmanuel. He undoubtedly pointed out that, in that case, the whole Arab population would join the Turks and wage war against the invaders until either they or the Italians were exterminated. He assured them that if they blundered into the country as "the heirs of ancient Rome," the members of his own family would fight in the ranks of the Osmanli, and that probably not a dozen Moham-medans in the country (besides himself) would be found on the Italian side. But the Napoleonic Galli, the Bismarckian Giolitti, refused to listen to him. They preferred the slapdash method, the bull-in-a-china-shop manner. It is said that Giolitti intended to make Victor Emmanuel Emperor of Italy as Bismarck made King William I of Prussia Emperor of Germany at Versailles, and he could hardly do so if there was anything veiled or indirect about the Italian conquest of Tripolitania.

Besides, the jingo Press was yelping at his heels. The newspapers wanted *la guerra ad oltranza*. They would not have a protectorate on any terms. Ignorant of the importance which the management of despots plays in the theory and practice of modern Imperialism, they refused to maintain any native despot for the purpose of giving their crude aggression a show of legality and right. They did not even stop to ask themselves how they could manage about the franchise in case Tripoli was declared to be as much a part of Italy as the Roman Campagna. So far, this is surely a case of greediness grasping too much

and getting next to nothing. That pagan people, the Japanese, conducted the absorption of Korea with infinitely more tact, while their diplomatic correspondence with Russia, which ended in an ultimatum, makes the tactless and ungainly notes which Signor Giolitti sent to the Sublime Porte look like the immature scrawls of a barbaric chief.

Consequently Hassuna Karamanli, with all his long experience of the country and all his intimate knowledge of his own people, was overborne by men who did not know the difference between an Arab and a Berber ; and the fatal expedition was decided upon. The Italians thought that Karamanli was playing for his own hand. He wanted to be Bey like the Bey of Tunis, and in order to attain to that ridiculous eminence he tried to frighten them, " the descendants of the Scipios," with cock-and-bull stories of Arab ferocity. This smallness and greediness, this want of a large, generous outlook, is characteristic of the Giolitti Ministry. They may always be confidently relied upon to do the wrong thing. I would not trust them with the handling of a tramway strike, much less with the tactful settlement of a dangerous conflict which raises more than one delicate question and which may ultimately involve all Europe in war. No wonder that England, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary wait with the most intense anxiety to see what these schoolboy statesmen are going to do next.

To make the defeat of the Prince all the more galling, the Italians spoke sorrowfully of his wrongs and threw out a hint that they were there to avenge them. In the congenial columns of the " New York American," Gabriele d' Annunzio wept tears of blood for *la dinastia dei Caramanli brutalmente spodestata dai*

*turchi e il modo come il Caramanli allora dominante fu attratto sulla nave ammiraglia turca, legato, portato a Costantinopoli, dove subi la morte misteriosa della tradizione ottomana.*

"A profound, incessant gleam burned in the eyes of the last Karamanli," says an Italian writer, describing the scene of the formal submission in the castle after Admiral Ricci's landing. "His vendetta on the Turkish usurper was at last finished."

Yes, under the Turks even, he was a Prince and a Pasha by whose beard nearly a million Arabs swore. The Italians made him Vice-Governor of Tripoli town!<sup>1</sup> Thus were avenged the secular wrongs of the Karamanli!

So the invaders had things their own way; and as Hassuna Pasha was in the same boat with them, he had to submit. But when he made submission to Admiral Borea-Ricci in the name of all the Arabs, he was depressed and despondent, for he knew very well that he only spoke for himself. To the surprise of the Admiral, he turned to him and said, "I hope you will spare the lives of my people." He trusted that the Italians would assure to the Arabs respect for their religion, their women, their property. When interviewed by correspondents innumerable, he repeated, sadly, the same phrase about wanting the lives at least of his people to be spared. Journalists asked him about the resources of the country, the minerals hidden in the mountains, the possibilities of a Klondike or a Johannesburg. Prince Hassuna sadly shook his head and said that the country only wanted peace, that the Arabs only

<sup>1</sup> He is afterwards referred to frequently, however, as the Mayor. It does not seem to be quite certain what sort of a tenth-rate honorary position the unfortunate man held, but officially he was Vice-Governor, at least in the beginning.



wanted respect for their religion, their women, their property.

"Don't you think that the Italians will be well received by the Arab population of the interior?" they asked.

"Provided that the Italians respect the families and the religion of the people," answered Karamanli sadly, unable evidently to get away from this aspect of the question.

"Won't Your Excellency come forward to accept the leadership, the representation, so to speak, of the Arab people—if Italy invites you to do so?" they tactlessly asked.

"I wish to keep entirely apart," answered the Prince. "My only desire is for the peace and tranquillity of my people. What Allah decrees must be, *ma se l'acqua non si cheta la sabbia che c'è dentro non precipita*. [But if the water is not at rest, the sand in it does not settle down to the bottom.] The Arabs only want respect for their religion, their women, their property."

Then came the massacres, and Prince Hassuna was in bad odour immediately. His powers as Vice-Governor, always rather mythical, were immediately curtailed. The Hon. Deputy De Felice wired from Tripoli that "*Per misure di ordine generale i poteri accordati al sindaco della città sono stati limitati allo stretto necessario nei riguardi esclusivi degli usi locali*." ("For the sake of the general tranquillity, the powers accorded to the Mayor of the city have been limited to matters of strict necessity in exclusive connection with local customs.")

In other words, after allowing him to reign with sham brilliancy for exactly twelve days, the Italians suddenly "busted" (to use an Americanism) their



puppet Lord Mayor, the *capo della municipalità di Tripoli e capo riconosciuto dagli arabi della città e delle campagne* (the chief of the municipality of Tripoli and recognised head of the Arabs of the city and of the country).

De Felice added that "the notables of the city *apparently* continue in favour of the Italian occupation."

The unfortunate Mayor was made the scapegoat for the sins of Italian officials who, having got the city into a state of massacre and muddle, were now anxious to blame somebody else for it. He was blamed for having tried to make the Italians pursue a peaceful policy towards the Arabs. "You prevented us from disarming those oasis Bedouins, and now, thanks to your leniency, they have risen in our rear and wiped out two companies of our best troops." "You told us the Arabs were on our side and your prophecies have all come wrong." "You assured us that we would have no difficulties save with the Turks, and now see the mess in which you have landed us."

Such were the reproaches addressed by blundering, angry, incompetent officers to *il ultimo dei Karamanli* (the last of the Karamanlis). Newspapers in Italy even agitated to have his wretched salary reduced—the unfortunate man was getting a few thousand lire a month to keep up his state as "Prince" and as Lord Mayor of Tripoli—on the ground that he had not carried out his engagements to keep the natives quiet.

Probably because he refused to abase himself to the last pitch of degradation by signing a protest against the "exaggerated" accounts of Italian atrocities which had appeared in the foreign Press, he was actually suspected of being in communication with the Turks,

of being, in short, a spy, of intriguing with the enemy through his son, a Turkish cavalry officer, who had left the city with Nescia Bey.

In spite of all his sacrifices, he was suspected. During the battle of Sidi Messri I spoke with an officer who threw serious doubts on Karamanli's loyalty, and who said that he was probably betraying the plans of the Italians to the Turks through his son the cavalry officer out in the Desert.

In all probability, the unfortunate man now regrets that he ever helped the Italians to come to Tripoli. Save for a younger son, and for the members of his harem, he is alone in the world. All the Arabs in Tripoli hate him as a Judas, and sooner or later one of them is bound to put a knife or bullet into him. During the progress of the massacres he was a pathetic sight as, in obedience to peremptory orders from his Italian taskmaster in the Castello, he perambulated the streets of the city accompanied by a few Arab "notables" who looked as bedraggled and dispirited as himself. He was supposed to be out on a vague and hopeless mission of calming the people and allaying the turmoil, but he dared not speak to any Arab. Had he ventured to address the lowest *hamal* (porter) in the street, the *hamal* would have considered himself insulted, would have spat in the face of the traitor who had brought in the *giaour*.

If an Arab bullet does not end his days, this mock "Prince" will probably finish his picturesque career as a suspect in some Italian fortress. Bitter, indeed, is the bread of the man who has betrayed his country. Thrice bitter is the bread eaten by the "*amico dell' Italia, Hassuna Pascià, ultimo dei Karamanli, principe della Tripolitania.*" For he is thrice a traitor.

He has betrayed not only his country, but also his religion and his race.

And, as if the hand of Allah had smitten him, his eldest son has been taken away from him by an untimely death. Early in November, far away amid the Gharian mountains, this brave young soldier was carried off by fever.

## CHAPTER IV

### CANEVA OVER-CAREFUL

It is generally supposed that the oasis massacres were the result of a sudden rising of the Arab "friendly" on October 23rd. As a matter of fact, they were inevitable from the moment General Caneva landed.

The arrangement of the Italian line made them inevitable. So did the utterly mistaken ideas which General Caneva had brought with him from Rome regarding the submission of the Arabs.

In arranging his line and in everything he did, General Caneva erred, sometimes by over-caution, sometimes by insufficient caution.

He was over-cautious when he posted his soldiers shoulder to shoulder in a semi-circle round the town, one end of the entrenched line reaching the sea west of Tripoli at Gargaresh, the other end reaching the sea east of Tripoli at Sharashett. While keeping a very strong reserve in Tripoli, he should have attacked in detail the very small parties of Arabs who harassed him; he should have occupied positions far from the town. But his line was in no place more than two miles from the citadel on the water's edge, and at night there were no outposts in front of this line, so that the Arabs could come up to within forty yards of the Italians, while the Turkish artillery amused itself for weeks and weeks by throwing shells into



the city. Considering the relative strength of the two armies, this patience and humility on the part of the Italian leader was preposterous. The Turko-Arabs numbered 1500 men, with eight old cannon. The Italians 20,000, with, at the end of October, seven field-batteries, nine mountain-batteries, ten machine-guns, not to mention half-a-dozen men-o'-war and half-a-dozen aeroplanes. Armed with modern rifles, any body of soldiers can keep at bay a force three times as great as itself; but here we find an entrenched army compelled to retreat by an enemy less than one-tenth as numerous.

The retreat took place on October 28th. It was probably due to over-carefulness, to General Caneva's anxiety not to run the risk of another Adowa, of a disaster which might lead even to the overthrow of the dynasty at home. But in war this sort of over-carefulness is nearly always fatal. It was extremely near being fatal in the case of the Italians, for it caused great jubilation among the Arabs, who considered that they had gained a victory. Meanwhile the Arabs in the city were kept in a constant state of excitement by hearing, continually and distinctly, the crackle of their kinsmen's rifles in the Desert, by seeing Turkish shells strike General Caneva's house, by seeing Arab rifle-balls kill soldiers in the market-place and in front of the American Consulate.

I regret that I must add that General Caneva was perhaps rather too careful of his own person. He lived in the old citadel of Charles the Fifth and was never visible. He never went about among the troops. He never came into personal contact with the bulk of his officers.

Especially after he had become convinced that the friendly Arabs were really hostile, General Caneva

manifested such a frenzy, as I can only call it, for protecting his own person that the Arabs, accustomed to look for personal bravery above all things in their own leaders, were filled with contempt, while the Italian soldiers and officers were not much edified.

At first he seemed to be afraid to come ashore at all, and remained, it is said, in a transport. Towards the end of October he did venture to come ashore, but it was whispered that he used to go back to his transport at night, so that he might have a good start with the news in case the Arabs rushed the town in the darkness. It looked as if he were really a "New York Herald" correspondent, after all, and wanted to reach Malta first with his cable in case anything happened.

Even when ashore, he remained hidden all day somewhere in the huge grey citadel on the edge of the sea. But as soon as shooting began at the outposts hurried preparations were made to put this citadel in a state of defence. The glass in the windows was broken so that the soldiers could more easily fire through. The *castello* was surrounded with troops, lines of sand-bags were laid in the open ground-floor windows, as well as in the gateways and the doorways of the citadel; and, behind those bags, soldiers lay prone on the ground as if they were in the firing-line. The flat roofs were crowded with troops, also prone, their fingers on the trigger. The courtyards bristled with bayonets. The flat roofs of all the neighbouring houses were grey with soldiery. The steam-launch got up steam, so that if the worst came to the worst the Generalissimo might be able to make a "bolt."

Those preparations for a last stand at the front door of the Governor's house (while His Excellency



THE GREAT PANIC.

Soldiers lining flat roofs of houses next General Caneva's residence.

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escaped by the back door) caused an extremely bad impression among the Arabs as well as among the Italian soldiers.

The only reason the Arabs could see for all this preparation was General Caneva's certainty that the Desert Arabs would be in the city within a few moments, and his desire to have time to get off in his steam-launch before they rushed the citadel. Such extreme precautions on the part of a Commander-in-chief have seldom been seen in war since the days when the Byzantine Emperors (who also claimed to be "the heirs of ancient Rome") sent out their eunuchs in charge of armies. General Caneva's explanation would probably be that, if he exposed himself freely in the streets, his death at the hand of a fanatical Mohammedan would be almost certain, and that enough fire-arms remained among the town Arabs to make it possible for them to rush the citadel in case it were not properly guarded. But he himself was to blame for not having made it his first duty, as soon as he landed, to seize every rifle and every cartridge in the town. Proclamations were not enough. There should have been a house-to-house search, and everything in the shape of a fire-arm should have been seized. That done, General Caneva could have omitted those extravagant preparations for the defence of his own residence, which rendered him an object of ridicule to the whole native population, and which must have seriously damped the spirits of his troops.

Those troops had never been in the best of humour since the day they landed, and, in order to cheer them up, a military band used to perform regularly every evening at the Bumeliana well. But unfortunately the Turks nearly landed a shell one day in

the big drum, and never after that did the band play at Bumeliana to cheer up the soldiers. It played near the *castello* to cheer up General Caneva. It is to Herr von Gottberg that I am indebted for this instructive story.

To make things worse, the bad example of this invisible Generalissimo was imitated by all the higher officers. The Division Commander had fortified himself in a house nearly opposite that of the Commander-in-chief, and never went to the front save as a guest, a rare visitor. During the *pogroms* at the end of October no officer of the rank of captain, or of any rank above that, was to be seen with the troops. Yet if ever there was a time when the elder officers should have been on the spot in order to keep the younger officers as well as the men under proper control, it was then. I know that I have made this remark several times already, but I shall probably make it again, for it cannot be repeated too often.

## CHAPTER V

### CANEVA'S MISTAKE ABOUT THE "SUBMISSION" OF THE ARABS

I HAVE tried to show how General Caneva erred by over-carefulness. Now, he is generally supposed to be a very prudent and knowing commander, but, as a matter of fact, his carelessness and his child-like ignorance in some directions were astonishing. In some things he displayed quite a touching simplicity.

His initial mistake was in thinking that the Arabs had submitted. I shall deal with this mistake at some length, as it has a direct bearing on the massacres, for naturally there would have been no accusations of treachery if the Italians had not been convinced that the Arabs had sworn allegiance to them.

To find the origin of this mistaken optimism we must go back a long way. Four months before the war, just about the time that the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs publicly declared that there were no difficulties between the Italian Government and the Porte, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs unloosed a horde of spies and jingoes on Tripolitania. Those men took all conceivable forms. Some of them were postal officials; some of them were newspaper correspondents; but all of them were violent supporters of the new policy of *Nazionalismo*. Thus, long before the rupture, Signor Enrico Corradini, one of the founders of the Nationalist school, travelled all

over Tripolitania and afterwards pointed out in a book, "L'Ora di Tripoli," how useful this Turkish vilayet might be made to Italy, how it would employ Italian emigrants, how it would be prosperous like Tunis, how even its deserts could be made to blossom like the rose. Signor Giuseppe Bevione, another violent Nationalist, also visited Tripolitania in the spring of 1911. I do not say that those two gentlemen were actually in the employ of the Italian Foreign Office, but their reports must have been read at Rome, and their presence, as well as that of many other Italian publicists in Tripoli, some months before Signor Giolitti had discovered that he had any grievance there at all, is rather significant.

But the leading agents of the Italian Government in ante-bellum Tripoli were Vice-Consul Galli and Captain Verri. The former was a small, Napoleonic-looking Florentine; the latter a long, thin, military man. It is a significant indication of the direction taken by Italy's aspirations that both these men should have been previously employed in *Italia irredenta*, which, as is well known, the Italian Nationalists claim as part of Italy.

I hope that Signor Galli's reports from *Italia irredenta*<sup>1</sup> were more in conformity with the facts than were his reports from Tripolitania, for in the latter reports he seems to have given Rome the idea that the Arabs were all anti-Turk and would welcome the Italians with open arms.

Such mistakes are perpetually made, of course, by

<sup>1</sup> The excellent Tyrolese troops of Austria-Hungary would reach Venice in a couple of days after the outbreak of an Italo-Austrian war. During a walking-tour in the Dolomite Alps a few years ago, I was enormously impressed by the efficiency of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers in the South-east Tyrol. But on the other side of the frontier the Italian garrisons live on those vain delusions of their prowess which have cost them much in Tripolitania.



agents who are sent out in this way—even by English agents. Those agents are so anxious to make their names historical that they simply cannot say to their Government: "It is better to wait." They see a favourable and extraordinary conjunction of circumstances which may never occur again, and in their optimism, their enthusiasm, their intense desire that their Government should act at once, their judgment becomes hopelessly warped, they overlook the difficulties, exaggerate the facilities, persuade themselves that the "downtrodden" natives will welcome the invaders. And they do this all the more readily when they know that this is the only kind of report which their Government wants, that any other kind of report would only lead to their recall and disgrace.

This danger was all the greater in the case of Consul Galli, since he is a man of obstinate, overbearing, and self-sufficient character, and a fanatical Nationalist. To give the reader an idea of his character, I need only mention the fact that after the troops had landed and he himself had been made head of the Civil Government, he suddenly ceased to understand any language but Italian. Only a day earlier he would condescend to converse with the correspondents in French or even in a sort of English; but as Bismarck, though a good linguist, insisted, after Sedan, on speaking only German on official occasions, so Consul Galli insisted on speaking only Italian on account of Admiral Faravelli's great victory over a few antiquated Turkish forts on October 3rd.

But I am anticipating. Before the war Galli had succeeded in gathering around him a number of Arabs who said that they were chiefs or had

been chiefs. One or two of them may have been telling the truth, but a more extensive experience of Northern Africa would have taught the Consul that, though it is easy to get an Arab to sell his country, it is quite another matter to make him "deliver the goods."

The bulk of these renegades were so well broken in, however, that Galli could trot them out like a music-hall troupe at every function which took place in Tripoli after the Italian landing. Signor Galli's Arab marionettes appeared in their long white robes and performed their celebrated *kow-tow* when Commander Cagni entered the city. Signor Galli's supers turned up promptly when General Caneva took over the command. Their presence added a graceful Oriental touch to Italian reunions; and they always put in an appearance so quickly that it seemed as if the Consul kept them housed somewhere behind his Consulate, had them on call, so to speak, and could summon them at any moment by merely pressing an electric button. Even when their innocent countrymen were slaughtered by thousands in the oasis towards the end of October, this faithful Old Guard turned up at Galli's bidding and signed a protest against the accounts of these massacres that were published in the foreign papers. Could sycophancy go further than that?

Chief among these men was Prince Hassuna Pasha, the last representative of the great Karamanli family which had once taken Tripoli from the Turks and ruled it as an independent State until about forty years ago, when the Turks retook it. Hassuna Pasha, of whom I have already spoken in Chapter III, Part IV, is a tall, black-bearded man of ample presence. His features are regular,

his appearance is striking. He dresses well in European style, with a frock-coat, but with a fez instead of a tall hat. For a long time past he had been exceedingly anxious to sell his country. I have already shown that in 1890 he was in communication with Crispi with the object of facilitating the acquisition of Tripolitania by the Italians. Ever since that time he has probably been in receipt of a salary from Rome.

For a long time before the war Karamanli had been in close communication with Galli, but so far from having any right to speak, as he did, for all the Arabs of Tripolitania, he could not act as spokesman for the members of his own family—in so far, at least, as their direct transference of allegiance from the Khalifa to the King of Italy was concerned. He has an only son who was last October in the Desert at the head of the Turkish Cavalry. A few days before I left Tripoli the father sent a message to his son asking him to come back, swear allegiance to the invaders, accept wealth and honour at their hands. The son's answer was worthy of an ancient Roman. He said, "Yes, I will soon come back, but it will be at the head of my Turkish horsemen; and, when I come, you will be the first man I shall hang."

This, then, was one of the principal Arab supporters of Consul Galli. Even after the Arab "revolt" at Sharashett the Consul continued to be invincibly optimistic. He was recalled to Rome to give an account of the situation, and the headline "*L'ottimismo del Console Galli*," which appeared in all the Italian papers at that time, indicates his confidence in the Arabs. "*Le notizie riferite dal cav. Galli sono confortevolissime specie per quel che riguarda la fedeltà della popolazione araba della*



*città di Tripoli.*" (The news brought back by Consul Galli is most comforting, especially as regards the fidelity of the Arab population of the city of Tripoli.)

From this it will be seen that the Consul, once so ready to swear that all the Tripolitan Arabs would greet the Italian invaders as long-lost brothers, now confined himself to vouching for the Arabs of Tripoli city. He was certainly on the safe side now, for there are not many real Arabs in Tripoli city, the population being mostly composed of Jews, Maltese, Greeks, Levantines, Syrians, and of other mixed and parasitical races such as we find clinging everywhere to the fringe of the Ottoman Empire, besides a large collection of nondescripts of no definite nationality.

When asked to account for the oasis revolt, Consul Galli airily explained to the Rome correspondent of the "*Corriere della Sera*" that it was "the result of intrigues and *menaces* on the part of the Turks, who made the Arabs believe that a strong Ottoman army was about to reoccupy Tripoli."

The Consul then switched off the conversation to Derna, where he declared that "the soldiers live in common with the Arabs, and where both are in cordial solidarity against the Turks."

In view of the dreadful and almost continuous fighting that has since taken place at Derna, we can understand why Consul Galli was recalled in disgrace from Tripoli. A political prophet of this kind is a perilous possession for any country.

But Consul Galli was not the only false prophet. Captain Verri, a military spy who came to Tripoli in disguise before the bombardment, also prophesied smooth things. He is said to have been so upset by the brutal way in which events falsified his



predictions that, on October 26th, he committed suicide in the Desert just outside the Italian trenches. His friends maintain, it is true, that it was a Turkish bullet that killed him. I have already described the incident.

Thus the agents of Italy in Tripolitania were unanimous in declaring that the campaign would be a walk-over, a "*passeggiata militare*." A Socialist deputy even said that it would not cost a penny nor the life of a single soldier.

I am sorry to have to add that the Press was largely responsible for this wrong impression. I might even say that the long and tenacious campaign for the taking of Tripoli which was conducted by the Italian daily papers, had a great deal to do with the hounding on of this timid and unmilitary people into war. The Chauvinism of the daily Press is in all countries a new danger which the nations must seriously take into account, and the danger is particularly great in Italy owing to the fact that the leading journalists in that country are *litterati* and impressionists who are peculiarly irresponsible, who are peculiarly out of touch with realities. These writers had constantly before them the name of imperial Rome. They could not, under the circumstances, have had a worse inspiration. Italy should try to imitate the excellent example of some practical, progressive, and peaceful country like modern Denmark, not the sinister example of ancient Rome. She should drop the delusion about making colonial empires, and go in for making butter. The future belongs to the nations of farmers and shopkeepers.

Even on the question of the Arab attitude and of the strategical plans which should be followed, the Italians seem to have been considerably in-

fluenced by the Press. They were confirmed in their opinion that the Arabs were disgusted with Turkish rule and would welcome the Italians among them. Able journalists detected a certain indifference and impassibility on the faces of the Arabs whenever Turkey was mentioned, and, hastily translating this into words, they asserted that Tripolitania was sick to death of Ottoman oppression. They even declared that the Senussi would welcome with open arms the soldiers of Italy.

Misled by these statements, which seemed to confirm the confidential reports of its most trusted secret agents, the Italian Government had been won over absolutely to the "*passeggiata militare*" view. It reasoned in this way: The Turks have in Tripoli only four regiments of regular Infantry whom they can reinforce with a certain number of *redifs*, several squadrons of cavalry, and a few batteries of artillery. In all, they cannot place more than 15,000 soldiers in the field against us. We, on the other hand, can at once send against them an army corps of about 40,000 men, which will be amply sufficient to beat an army that cannot be reinforced, owing to our blockade of the coast.

But the gravest question of all—the friendship or neutrality of the Arabs—was left out of account not only by the journalists, but even by the Government and the leaders of the army.

The unexpected Arab rising against the invaders was therefore the iceberg on which the Italians suffered shipwreck. I must admit, however, that in her delusions on the subject of the Arabs, Italy was encouraged, to some extent, by history—at any rate, by the old histories which the Chauvinist Italian *litterati* seem to have read.

The Arabs have ever oscillated between two secular hates, their hate of the Turks and their hate of the Infidel. They have frequently fought against the Turks with as much fanaticism as they fight against Europeans. It was owing to his Arab soldiery that Mehmed Ali was able, in the first half of the last century, to beat the armies of the Sultan of Stamboul and to place Turkey in great danger. The Arabs in the Yemen have been fighting ever since against the soldiers of the Padishah. But it was not by men of Consul Galli's stamp that the proud Arab skeikhs could be won over. Besides, the Italians were not much respected by the Arabs. There were in Tripolitania too many cheap labourers of Italian nationality. This may seem, by the way, to be a cheap sneer on my part, but it is a profound truth with a most important bearing on the present conflict. The fact that labourers from Sicily worked in Tripolitania for the same wages as an Arab made the Arabs consider all Italians as coolies, as people who could not be regarded as Europeans at all, and who were on quite a different plane from the other nations north of the Mediterranean. All along the northern and eastern coasts of Africa it is the same story: the natives regard the Italians as not quite civilised. This is, of course, a gross libel on a great race, but it would be an error in the journalist or the historian to let a false sense of squeamishness prevent him from stating it.

"There is another very strong motive," says a correspondent of "The Times" (April 11th), "which incites the Arab to regard an Italian occupation of Tripoli with disfavour; it is the widespread belief that Italy is poor. An Italian here



or in Tunis will work for as little as an Arab. The Arab is no fool in what concerns himself personally. He thinks that a people as poor as he believes his would-be conquerors to be would not respect his title to his small possessions, and would create a killing competition for him in all those occupations wherein at present he gains a meagre existence. . . . The leaflets dropped by the Italians from their aeroplanes stating . . . that Italy was the greatest, the strongest, and the richest power in Europe . . . are laughed at. Among other beliefs the Arabs hold is one that the Italians themselves are far behind the rest of Europe, and many of them quite as much in need of civilisation and instruction as the Tripolitans. Whether public opinion in Tripoli has been cleverly cultivated by the astute Turks, or whether it results from prejudiced imagination and chance, it is not worth while to discuss. For Turkish interests it could not have been better formed by the cleverest and best organised department in the world. It has arrayed the people like one man against the invaders, and quadrupled Italy's difficulties."

This question of Italian cheap labour certainly makes Italy's position in Tripolitania difficult. Wherever Europeans rule Asiatics it is rather through prestige than through force, and prestige is lost as soon as the white Sahib is found sweeping the streets alongside the coolie. Spain, a poor country, had constant difficulties in Cuba and the Philippines where America, richer though with a smaller army, has had no trouble. Portugal has perpetual turmoils in her colonies. England and France have practically no difficulty with the vast African and Asiatic popu-



lations which they rule, because these two countries are wealthy and because their white emigrants do not compete with the manual labourers of the conquered territories. The great distance at which India and Indo-China lie from the countries which dominate them is a positive advantage to these paramount Powers, surrounding, as it does, with a sense of mystery the white stranger from over the sea. And even in Tunis and Algeria the French are a class apart from the cheap Arab and Italian labour which does all the rough work. Even the Turks did not compete with the Tripolitans to any large extent in manual and casual labour. The only Turks in Tripolitania were functionaries and soldiers.

With Italy it will be entirely different, and one of the Turkish military leaders was right when he said: "This war is a question of extermination, the extermination of the Arabs or the extermination of the Italians. There is not room in Tripolitania for both." Thus, Italy's very proximity to Tripolitania, on which she based her absurd ultimatum, is a drawback. If the new colony is flooded with cheap Italian labour, the prestige of Rome will at once go to the dogs. If there is no Italian emigration to Tripolitania, the colony will only be a white elephant, for assuredly English and French money will never be invested in such a shaky speculation. And here I might refer the reader to the *Riforma Sociale*, in which Luigi Einaudi, the jingo economist of the *Corriere della Sera*, now confesses that foreign capital is indispensable for the development of Tripolitania. But I am afraid that Italy will wait a long time before any foreign capitalist nibbles at such an unenticing bait as the Libyan Desert, especially when he sees that, in the same article, Signor Einaudi

maintains that "it is perhaps indispensable, so as to gain over the bulk of the population, which reflects little and reasons less, to diffuse a moderate dose of illusion regarding the wealth of the new colony."

I have already shown that Italy was in many ways fortunate in the time she chose for her raid. The Turkish garrison had never been so low, the commander of the troops was absent, while the attention of all Europe was engrossed by the Moroccan question. But one thing was against Italy, the hatred of the Turks by the Tripolitans had already become an old story. Perfect peace was reigning in the vilayet when the Italians came. The Turks held it peacefully with 10,000 soldiers, while the Italians will not be able to hold it with 200,000. A few months before the war Mahmud Shefket Pasha, the Turkish War Minister, was proposing to arm the Tripolitan Arabs. This measure was really equivalent to Home Rule, and it was to prevent it taking practical shape that the Italians declared war when they did. At least, this was one of many reasons.

The Arabs of Tripolitania were quite pleased with the Turkish "yoke"—at least they are fighting desperately at the present moment in order to keep it on their necks. General Caneva was wrong, therefore, in thinking that they were on his side. "*Il tradimento degli Arabi è stato certamente una sorpresa*" ("The treason of the Arabs has certainly been a surprise"), wailed all the Italian papers after October 23rd. There was no treason, and the opposition of the natives should not have been a surprise. General Caneva's idea that the Tripolitans would march with him against "the common enemy," the Turk, was one of the maddest ideas ever entertained by a military commander. For as Mohammedans the

Tripolitan Arabs are the strictest of the strict, and their only quarrel with the Turks was that the latter were too lukewarm in the faith, too friendly with the Infidel. That the Arabs of Tripoli could under any circumstances ally themselves with Christians against their own co-religionists is unthinkable. It was the natural thing for the Arabs to oppose the invaders, and if Consul Galli had prophesied otherwise, the Arabs were not to blame when those prophecies came wrong.

Bearing in mind, therefore, the misapprehensions as to the Arabs under which General Caneva laboured when he came to Tripoli, the subsequent story is easy to understand. First we have the grandfatherly proclamations; then the liberty allowed to the Desert Arabs to slip inside the Italian lines; then the sudden change on the part of the Italian commander from imbecile benignity to ferocious cruelty.

The Proclamations would form a very amusing little book. The Italian commander seems to have discovered somewhere a rare volume, which I expect, by the by, to see re-issued by some enterprising publisher ere the present craze for Napoleonic literature has died out. I refer to the remarkable series of proclamations which General Buonaparte addressed to the Mohammedans of the Nile valley on the occasion of his Egyptian expedition. In those proclamations Napoleon said that he had come to free the Egyptians from the yoke of the Circassian beys. He quoted the Koran freely in order to show that the Mohammedans should obey him. He frequently appealed to Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. He wrote throughout in the ultra-pious, semi-religious style of a devout Moslem administrator.



General Caneva did the same. He began his proclamations with the stereotyped Mohammedan phrase: "In nome de Dio clemente e misericordioso, regnando sul gran paese d'Italia Sua Maestà il Re Vittorio Emanuele III che Dio conservi e renda sempre piu grande e glorioso." He had come to release the people from "the servitude of the Turks," and "to punish the usurpers." I have been ordered, he said, by the King of Italy ("to whom Allah grant length of days") to "protect you against those foreign usurpers, the Turks, and against every one else that may attempt to enslave you." He described the Turk as "the common enemy."

He never mentioned the King of Italy without adding some phrase such as "just and glorious," "whom God preserve," "whom Allah keep in his guard," "*che Dio benedica*," "*che Iddio protegga*."

He invited them to "pray in your mosques for the greatness of the Italian people, for the glory of the Italian king, *che Dio salvi*, who have taken you, the population of these countries, under their tutelage and protection, and who intend that their name shall be feared by your enemies, but loved and blessed by you."

He promised to govern by "the Book," the "Laws," the "Sunna," and the "Sheriat." Like Napoleon, he quoted freely from the Koran in order to show that the Arabs should obey him. "Remember," he said, "that Allah has declared in the Book: 'To those who do not make war on your religion and do not drive you from your country, you should do good. You should protect them because God loves benefactors and protectors.' Remember also that it is written in the Book: 'If they in-



cline to peace, accept it, and place your trust in Allah.' ”<sup>1</sup>

He even attempted a little poetic flight when he described the white, red, and green of the Italian flag as symbolical of faith, love, and hope.

So far as the Mohammedans were concerned, the publication of these rigmaroles only made matters worse. It was only adding blasphemy to injury. It was a case of a clumsy Infidel parodying the sacred writings.

Here ends abruptly the resemblance between General Caneva and General Buonaparte. Napoleon followed up his proclamations by deeds. He boldly advanced into the interior, and victory crowned his arms. Caneva fortified himself as close to the shore as possible, and now, after the lapse of more than half a year, he still stands shivering under the guns of his battle-ships.

After the battle of the Pyramids many of the Arabs did believe Napoleon to be really assisted by the Prophet, for this warlike race admires valour in others and is powerfully impressed by it. But after Sharashett and Sidi Messri there were few, indeed, even among his own troops, who put their trust in Lieutenant-General Carlo Caneva.

There was one who did, however, and that was General Caneva himself. Until October 23rd he believed his own proclamations, he believed that the Arabs regarded him as a father, and this led, firstly, to his failure to disarm them, and, secondly, to his

<sup>1</sup> The Sheikh of the Senussi can quote Scripture too. In a recent letter to Enver Bey he only cited one short text, but every word was a ton weight. It was this, "God will destroy the murderers." He is not confining himself, however, to quoting the Koran. He is also developing a taste for music, and has imported a large number of extraordinarily heavy pianos. But I don't think that the Italians will like the tune which those "pianos" play.

slackness in letting them enter his lines whenever they had a mind to do so. Any Turkish officer who chose to don a turban and an Arab robe could stroll in from the Desert and examine the Italian defences—and this at a time when the journalists in Tripoli were exposed to a double-barrelled censorship, one at Tripoli, the other at Rome; and were sure that if one barrel missed them the other would be sure to hit. The Italian Censor interrupted telephone messages between Milan and Paris every time the word Tripoli was mentioned. He prohibited the foreign correspondents going to Chiasso in order to send off their telegrams, lest by any chance these telegrams would, after they had appeared in the papers, be re-transmitted to Constantinople and then sent on to Nesciat Bey viâ Tunisia. He even seized letters in the post. Mr. Donohoe tells me that on calling one morning on the Censor he found on the latter's table a letter which he had posted that morning and which he had fondly supposed to be then on its way to London. Yet all this time General Caneva benignantly permitted swarms of spies to examine his defences, and then ride into the desert to report about them!

Caneva was, as I have said, deceived by his Government on the subject of the Arabs; nevertheless he himself cannot be regarded as entirely blameless in this matter.

The attitude of the Arabs was the greatest factor in the military problem before him; but from the day he landed until the day he was surprised in the rear, he paid absolutely no attention to that vitally important subject.

Before October 23rd Caneva's plan had evidently been to send an expedition as soon as possible to

Gharian. As soon as the Bersaglieri had reached the front it was confidently given out night after night that, next time the Turks came to attack, they would be cut off; and many a correspondent lost his sleep while foolishly waiting up at the front for this capture to take place. Then the air was full of talk about the Great Desert Expedition. The Commander-in-chief announced that he would take no journalists with him on that expedition, whereupon the Italian journalists sent a collective protest to Rome and the newspapers made collective war on the War Office. An enormous amount of printing-ink was consumed in this way. Really it might have been better employed, for more than six months have now elapsed, yet the Great Desert Expedition has not yet started and there is small prospect of it starting for nine months yet, if ever it starts at all.

The Great Desert Expedition was knocked on the head, of course, by the events of October 23rd. That day showed that the Turks had succeeded in most cleverly turning to military account the religious fanaticism of the Arabs. The Italians have ever since been besieged in Tripoli, Benghazi, Tobruk, Homs, and Derna, and are unable to venture outside the range of the guns on the battle-ships. The "Vossische Zeitung" correspondent at Azizia gives a graphic account of the stalemate in Tripoli. General Caneva is, he says, exactly where he was after the first occupation of the coast, with the additional disadvantage of an army greatly depressed by inactivity. "The Italians send out the Askaris (native troops): the Askaris surrender. They recruit Arabs: the Arabs are captured. Swarms of spies and agents are sent out, only to be destroyed. Appeals and proclamations are scattered by the thousand. The

enemy laughs till his sides ache." He adds that the Arabs are stealing even the material for the railway which has been begun. Here they are certainly doing a service to the Italian taxpayer, for that railway is a gigantic folly. It starts from Tripoli. It has no other terminus save the Sahara. It has no object save to run down the mobile and fleet-footed Arab, to pursue the mirages of the Desert.



## CHAPTER VI

### CANEVA'S NEGLECT TO DISARM THE ARABS

I HAVE said that, besides being over-cautious, General Caneva was not cautious enough. The first thing he should have done on landing was to seize all the arms in the town, then to place a powerful reserve in the city and to thoroughly patrol the streets. But he made no serious attempt to collect arms from the natives, and, incredible as it may seem, he placed all his soldiers save his personal guards out at the front, a couple of miles off. He actually kept no reserves in the town. The policing and patrolling of the city he left to the Arab gendarmes who had served the Turks, and who were still allowed to go about with rifles and with belts full of very ugly-looking dum-dum bullets. I really think that General Caneva intended to be magnanimous, but a weak man is sometimes magnanimous in the wrong way. He begins with a neglect of precaution which would make a boy scout laugh, and winds up with a cruelty which would make Abd-ul-Hamid's hair stand on end.

I shall now, even at the risk of wearying the reader, go thoroughly into this question of the non-seizure of arms, for General Caneva's negligence in this matter afterwards cost thousands of innocent people their lives.

The Italian marines occupied the city of Tripoli on October 5th. At their head was a very competent

officer, Captain Cagni, the associate of the Duke of the Abruzzi in Arctic travel. A few hours after he landed, Cagni asked Prince Hassuna Karamanli to see about the collection of arms from the natives. The Prince probably sent a crier through the streets to tell the people in a friendly way that all arms must be forthwith surrendered. He offered two *talleri* (about one *scudo*) for rifles surrendered on that day, one *tallero* next day. Those not given up before the third day he would take without compensation. On the first day more than a thousand rifles with ammunition for them were brought to the Comando. Five hundred were brought the second day. On the third day, and for some time afterwards, rifles continued to come in though no reward had been offered for them. As I shall explain later, most of these rifles had been looted from the Turkish barracks by the Arabs after the Turks had left the city, and before the Italians had come in. For whenever there is a chance of looting, the Arab desires fire-arms next after money. If there had been Arabs at the looting of Peking in 1900, they would have collected rifles and left the precious jade figures and other artistic treasures of the Manchu emperors to the Europeans. Next after a pedigree Arab stallion there is nothing the Bedouin lusts for so much as a good new Mauser rifle with a nice shiny barrel. As a rule, its high price and the suspicion of his rulers put it out of reach; but his lonely and dangerous manner of life and the inadequate police protection which he enjoys under Ottoman rule, make him value it exceedingly for strictly practical reasons.

As will be seen later, this fact has an important bearing on my subject. It accounts for the great number of rifles and the large quantities of ammuni-

tion which were afterwards found concealed in Arab houses, and which invariably led to the death of the householder.

But the town Arabs quickly surrendered their weapons to Commander Cagni. "*Dominati dal nuovo potere che appariva, gli Arabi si separavano senza lamenti dalla nuova arma lucente, che è per la loro gente oggetto inuguagliato di desiderio e d'amore.*" ("Dominated by the new power that appeared, the Arabs surrendered without a sigh the new, shining rifles which are for their race unequalled objects of desire and of love.") So says an Italian writer who saw those rifles surrendered.

But every European in Tripoli knew that all the rifles in the hands of the Arabs had not been surrendered. One English resident told me so about the middle of October. He added that the Italian authorities knew of this fact also, but thought that it was sufficient to keep a register in which were entered the names of all the Arabs who possessed arms. My friend assured me, however, that this register did not contain the names of half the Arabs who had arms.

It is easy to understand why Commander Cagni did not succeed in getting all their rifles from the oasis folk. His public crier did not go into the oasis. The oasis Arabs did not come to town, and consequently knew nothing of the order regarding the surrender of arms. Moreover, with only 12,000 men under his command to keep back a possible 4000 Turks and hold a dangerously long line, Cagni could not possibly institute a house-to-house search. His men were overwhelmed with work as it was, and hardly able to walk from want of sleep, otherwise this distinguished sailor would soon have got posses-



sion of every rifle owned by natives inside the Italian sphere of occupation.

What he did, however, showed that he had a clear idea of the danger, both to the Italians and to the friendly Arabs themselves, of his leaving arms in the hands of the natives.

At Benghazi and in Cyrenaica, General Briccola took the same view of the matter. Not only did he order the surrender of all arms; he also took care that his troops searched most carefully for rifles in the houses, gardens, and in all places where weapons could possibly have been hidden—even in the mosques. When General Caneva did issue some vague orders about the advisability of the natives letting the paternal Italian visitors take care of their arms for them, he contented himself with pasting up those orders in one or two places on the town walls. Now, many of the Arabs cannot read their own language, and the oasis Arabs remained at home, and consequently did not know about this proclamation.

No steps were taken to make it known among the illiterate Arabs. I myself employed a pro-Italian native to get news for me, and I naturally mixed with the Italians, with my journalistic colleagues, and with all sorts of people in order to acquire every kind of information bearing on the situation; but I never heard even as much as a whisper about this proclamation of General Caneva's, while I was in Tripoli. I first became aware of it in Italy after I had left Tripolitania, early in November.

But even if this proclamation had been posted up on every house in Tripoli instead of on one or two dead walls, that would not have been enough. More energetic measures should have been taken to collect



arms. The Arabs are a suspicious race ; they are not accustomed to European ways ; and the order to hand in their rifles may have only excited the alarm of the few natives who chanced to see it. Most of the weapons had originally been stolen from deserted Turkish barracks ; and the owners may have thought that, if they brought in their booty, the foreigners would only punish them for having looted.

There was another reason, moreover, why the Arabs should be reluctant to part with their arms—even those Arabs who knew that they had been ordered to do so. As I have already remarked, those arms had been necessary for them under the Turkish regime with its inefficient police. Under that regime they had had, to a large extent, to protect themselves as all people have still to do in the outlying parts of the Ottoman Empire. Under the Caneva regime things were even worse so far as an adequate policing of the town and the oasis was concerned. The Commander-in-chief talked much in his proclamations of his paternal solicitude for the natives, but, as a matter of fact, he proved himself to be simply a barrack-room martinet with no capacity for civil government and no idea that he had any duty *vis-à-vis* of the thousands of ignorant and helpless natives whose obedience he claimed. The worst scoundrels of the old Turkish police force had remained in town, had been taken into the Italian service, and to them alone was entrusted the policing of the city and the suburbs. There was an army at the front, a fleet in the harbour, but between the two was chaos. There was practically no civil government in the town ; and despite the twenty thousand armed men at his elbow, the average native in the oasis stood in much more danger from

robbers and native policemen than he had ever stood in under Turkish rule.

It would have been better, therefore, for all parties if, instead of spending his time composing Koranic proclamations, the military Governor had tried to inspire a feeling of security in the town. In any case, if he wanted to disarm the people, a house-to-house search was essential, especially as General Caneva knew that not one-tenth part of the rifles stolen from the Turkish arsenals during the interregnum had been surrendered. What prevented him from ordering his soldiers to make a minute visitation of the native houses, as General Briccola had done? He had plenty of soldiers for this purpose; and if he did not wish to withdraw his troops from the firing-line, though they had very little to do there early in October, he might have made use of the blue-jackets and of his numerous civil assistants. Why was there no "revolt" and repression in Derna, Benghazi, Homs, Tobruk, and the other places occupied by the Italians? Because at all these points the various Italian commanders had disarmed the natives. In like manner there would have been no "revolt" and no "repression" at Tripoli if General Caneva had taken the most ordinary precautions there with regard to the disarmament of the oasis Arabs, whose flimsy and isolated hamlets could, moreover, have been very easily and speedily examined. In searching for arms in the simple, one-roomed huts of the Tripoli oasis the Italians would have had no trouble such as they might experience in the narrow and tortuous streets of a great city.

The fault rests not so much, perhaps, with General Caneva himself as with his political advisers and with the Government at Rome. Both the advisers

The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a central hexagon with six dots representing its nearest neighbors. The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice, with a central hexagon highlighted by a dashed box. This central hexagon is surrounded by six neighbors, which are each surrounded by six more neighbors, forming a continuous hexagonal grid.



JOYOUS, BUT QUITE UNPROTECTED, ITALIAN CAMP IN THE OASIS DURING CANEVA'S BENIGNANT PERIOD  
IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE OCCUPATION.

*To face p. 337.*



and the Government had received such optimistic and rosy accounts of the good dispositions of the Arabs that they thought it would be a great pity to disturb the poor dear natives by entering their homes and possibly interrupting them at their tea in order to search for rifles. Consul Pestalozza concurred in this matter with Vice-Consul Galli. It was thought that a rough, coarse search for arms by a ribald soldiery might provoke adverse comment in native circles. No wonder that an Italian newspaper afterwards described this policy as : *Machiavellismo latte e miele i cui frutti sono stati di rivoltà e di sangue, e quanto sangue!* (Milk-and-honey Machiavellism whose fruits have been revolt and blood, and how much blood !)

General Caneva had, I repeat, come to Tripoli under a complete misapprehension which led him to imagine that, by neglecting to disarm the natives, he was acting with a wise magnanimity and toleration. He imagined that he was a deliverer ; and, when Consul Galli's well-trained troupe of bogus Arab chiefs kow-towed and performed before him, he was profoundly convinced that the great heart of the people welcomed him almost as a god.

What a wild rush to the opposite extreme when the alleged revolt took place ! A collection of the proclamations issued at this time would only give a faint idea of the mercilessness and injustice with which the Arabs were treated.

"Si pubblica in questo momento," wires one correspondent, Corrado Zoli, "un bando del Governatore che intima il disarmo assoluto della popolazione araba e turca prima del calar del sole, pena la immediata fucilazione." ("There is published at this moment an order of the Governor for the com-

plete disarmament of the Arab and Turkish population before sunset, under pain of instant death.") "Il generale Caneva," according to the official cable, "ha fatto eseguire un rigoroso disarmo degli abitanti dell' oasi stessa ed in città. ("General Caneva has had carried out a rigorous disarmament of the inhabitants of the oasis and the city.")

Now, I think that this "*rigoroso disarmo*" might much better have been carried out earlier. It might have been carried out during Caneva's benignant period, when the soldiers were foolishly familiar with the natives, as Latin races are prone to be when they go a-colonising. All the arms could then have been collected without much trouble, and nobody on either side would have lost his life or even his temper.

But it was now, at the most unsuitable time possible, that the search for arms began. Few of the oasis natives who were in possession of arms heard of General Caneva's "twenty-four hours" proclamation.

Even if they had heard of that proclamation, they could not have benefited by the exiguous time-limit allowed, for if they had set out from their houses carrying arms which they intended to surrender they would have been shot by the first soldier who met them. There was no possibility of explanation, as there seemed to be only two or three interpreters in the entire army.

But, as a rule, the unfortunate oasis Arabs seem to have made little or no attempt to give up their rifles. Frightened by the executions, they remained cowering all day in their isolated huts and knew nothing of the new departure until the soldiers came to search for arms—and to kill them. Those soldiers

came, in most cases, without officers, and in every case without interpreters. All attempts of the Arabs to explain matters were treated as insults and answered by savage blows on the face and kicks in the stomach.

Now, to entrust ignorant privates, during such a period of intense excitement, with the delicate work of searching for arms among people whom they regarded as traitors and murderers was simply to give them thousands of blank death-warrants. Those soldiers were mostly Sicilians, almost beside themselves with rage for what they regarded as the treacherous murder of their comrades and kinsfolk, almost mad with thirst for revenge. They even killed people in whose houses arms of any kind were found. Some of the fire-arms discovered during this search may have been kept with a bad intention, but a good many were old muzzle-loading heirlooms, and a good many had simply been looted. Ancient flintlocks such as are to be found in every Arab hovel and in every caravan led in many cases to their owner's death.

It may be maintained that the soldiers were ordered simply to arrest people found in possession of arms; and proclamations of General Caneva's may possibly be produced to bear out this statement. But no matter what the proclamations said, the fact remains that the soldiers took the law into their own hands and killed every Arab in whose house they found arms. In proof of this I need only point to the Italian newspapers themselves. They were filled at this period with accounts of houses being searched, arms discovered, the householders shot. There was never any mention made of a trial or even of the suspected parties being brought before an officer. In one



case a correspondent tells how he sympathised with some poor Arabs whose house was being searched, when he saw their humble clothes, articles of food, and cooking utensils being thrown about. The soldiers were going to turn away, satisfied that there were no arms concealed, when suddenly they came on a knife and some cartridges. Then, hey presto! what a change! Without further ado the Arabs were immediately put against a wall and shot.

The "Stampa" of Turin is a jingo Italian paper. It has ardently supported the war since the beginning, it is on notoriously friendly terms with Signor Giolitti. It is a serious and authoritative organ, yet it published on October 27th, the following account of an execution written on October 26th by its Tripoli correspondent, a personal friend of Signor Giolitti's :

"I felt it my duty to assist at the shooting of several of those (oasis Arabs who had been seized and condemned to death because arms were found in their houses). A man and his wife, two magnificent types of the Bedouin race, and, besides, intrepid carriers of arms, had been placed against the usual wall. At the distance of a few paces from them lay in an attitude of atrocious suffering, but really dead and stiff, the body of a Sudanese who had fired point-blank at a medical officer. The two newly captured Arabs, the man and the woman, did not show for a single instant any fear or reluctance. They did not take their eyes from one another. They held one another affectionately by the hand. Then they recited a prayer. They turned their backs to the rifle-barrels that were levelled at them. Then a dry word of command :



'Fire on the man!' An explosion, a flash! The woman had to let go the hand of her husband, for, after having swayed a second, he had fallen to the ground like lead. But she was not terrified. She awaited her own death without a tremor. Another shout: 'Fire on the woman!' Another abrupt explosion, and the woman's brains spurted out.'

At first the Italian papers saw nothing wrong with this paragraph, but when the English Press quoted it, with expressions of disgust, some of them fell upon the "Stampa" for publishing it. Note well, they did not object to the deed, they objected to any account of it being published. Through how many hundreds of columns of similar "copy" have not the blue pencils of the censors and of the sub-editors gone since this war began! For, of course, it is not right that the Italians should know what it really is, this ferocious war which they are waging. Telegrams from the battle-field should only speak of the "disciplina, la calma, l'energia" of our "valorosi" and of "l'eroismo dei nostri Bersaglieri" (the heroism of our Bersaglieri). It is very, very indiscreet to publish anything that may tend to excite sympathy with the enemy.

In his official report, General Caneva says that on searching the oasis he found "arms hidden everywhere and huts filled with provisions and ammunition." He says that "the huts were burned, it being impossible to provide for the prompt removal of the cartridges."

Signor Giolitti says that "many of the dwellings in the oasis, when set on fire, exploded like powder-magazines, so large were the stores of arms and ammunition hidden in them." Signor Barzini tells us of

"one house from which were taken 250 kilogrammes of ammunition, 800 kilogrammes of explosives, and a Turkish flag."

All the other Italian correspondents have similar tales, and, judging by those tales, it is clear that Tripoli was all one big bomb.

Writing in the "*Corriere della Sera*" of October 12th, Luigi Barzini says that "the sack of the forts has put into circulation a quantity of explosives which the people handle with all the audacity of ignorance. One may everywhere see Jewish boys playing with live projectiles and with live shrapnel shells." Other Italian writers were amazed at the enormous quantity of projectiles and explosives of every kind which the Turks had accumulated. Besides the full powder-magazines, there were in the forts two great stores of powder which might have lasted (we are told) throughout a long war.

Was it not stupendous carelessness on General Caneva's part thus to leave huts full of ammunition just in the rear of his line? Imagine any General of ordinary capacity committing such a blunder. The chunk of Tripolitan territory which Caneva occupied was so exiguous, the number of soldiers under him was so great, that a fairly efficient search could have been carried out in a few hours. And Caneva had had a fortnight to do it!

As a matter of fact, there never was a town so bursting with unofficial arms and explosives as Tripoli was at this time. The oasis was full of arms. The city was overflowing with rifles. Cartridges were as common as dates. Gunpowder was as plentiful as salt. If my own trunks had been searched at this time, quite a number of Turkish and Italian cartridges would have been discovered.

The Italian cartridges I had found out at the trenches, the Turkish cartridges I had picked up in the Cavalry Barracks, where the Turks had left behind them from 50,000 to 100,000 rounds of Mauser ammunition.

This superabundance of illegal arms and ammunition in Tripoli is easily explained. On the evening of October 2nd the Turkish troops had all left Tripoli, with the exception of a few fortress artillerymen. The bluejackets, under Captain Cagni, did not take possession of the town until October 5th. The Jews and the Arabs of the town and the oasis had thus three clear days in which to plunder the arsenals, the gendarmery stations, the post-houses, the barracks, and even the Konak, or Governor's residence. Some weeks afterwards I visited the Cavalry Barracks on the edge of the oasis, and Colonel Spinelli laughingly pointed out how the natives had, during the interregnum, stolen even the glass from the windows and the handles from the doors, carried off hat-pegs, tables, carpets, and latches. In short, they had appropriated everything that they could lay hands on, and, during the first few days of the occupation, one could see Arabs selling all kinds of loot to the Italian sailors—putties, note-paper, knapsacks, etc.

I have already pointed out the great desire all Arabs have to possess a rifle. Naturally, therefore, the rifles and ammunition left behind by the Turks were most sought after. A large number of rifles had been left behind, and the Arabs immediately seized upon those treasures, not necessarily to use them afterwards against the Italians, but to sell them, if possible.

Some people may say : "This is a far-fetched theory. Surely the Turks would first send all the rifles and ammunition into the Desert." Well, they did not ;



evidently they had not time to do so. When I visited the Cavalry Barracks on the occasion already referred to, I found there, as I have just pointed out, hundreds of boxes of rifle and machine-gun cartridges. A great deal of this ammunition had been stolen, but before the Arabs could cart away all of it the invaders had taken possession of the Cavalry Barracks. Sometimes an Arab stole only ammunition ; sometimes he specialised in rifles.

In the batteries, the citadel, and all over the town this looting of explosives went on during the bombardment until there was a trail of gunpowder along the streets and quite respectable powder-magazines in many of the houses. At one time there was some danger that an Italian shell might ignite this trail and blow up half the town. Behind the English cable-office on the Marina an Arab blew himself up by accidentally applying a light to a large quantity of explosive matter which he had diligently collected ; and the explosion caused consternation for a time, as it was at first supposed to have been caused by a projectile from one of the battle-ships.

Seized by the prevalent collecting craze, even the Arab servants of Europeans could not resist the temptation to surreptitiously convey rifles, shells, and gunpowder into their masters' houses. Mr. Wright, an Englishman who represents in Tripoli the Eastern Telegraph Company, suddenly found one day, during the interregnum, that there was about a quarter of a ton of high explosive in his cellar. It had been industriously collected by his Arab servants, who had stolen it, not because they wanted to blow up the Italians when they entered the city, but because they had been urged on by that ant-like craze for accumulation which is as marked a



characteristic of the Arab as it is of his cousin the Jew. It was the only loot left in the forts when they arrived, and everybody else was busy carrying it off.

Mr. Wright dealt with the situation in a masterly manner. He instantly went down to the servants' quarters and gave his "boys" one hour to have all that explosive sent out of the house. At the end of the hour there was not an ounce of gunpowder on his premises. Had General Caneva behaved like that English telegraph operator, the horrors of October 23rd-27th would not have taken place, or would have been very limited in scope. As it was, every Arab possessing even an empty cartridge was put to death, though undoubtedly much of the ammunition found in the Arab houses had been brought there simply as loot and not for offensive purposes.

On visiting the fort of Sharashett, some days after the bombardment, I found some dozen Arabs busily engaged in extracting the explosive matter from unexploded shells. As they only used a hammer and chisel in this dangerous work, I rapidly put a hill between them and myself and only regarded them afterwards through binoculars. The Italians also contemplated them with much amusement and also at a respectful distance. By some miracle or other these men escaped being blown to pieces until October 23rd, when the Italians, seized by a sudden suspicion that there was a gigantic conspiracy against them, began shooting every Arab who had powder in his possession, and probably shot the Sharashett powder-seekers as well. At all events, those powder-seekers disappeared after that date from history.

Mark the abrupt transition from criminal slackness to criminal severity. On October 22nd those Arabs in the Sharashett fort and the other forts had been extracting powder, not literally under the noses of the Italians—for, like myself, the Italians, as I have said, preferred watching these proceedings from a safe distance—but, at least, with the connivance of the invaders. On October 23rd any of these same Arabs who was found with powder in his possession was put to death. To this rule there was no exception.

Undoubtedly General Caneva blundered badly when he omitted to collect their arms from the natives. Signor Bevione, the jingo and Nationalist author whose dedication of his book on the war to Signor Giolitti shows that he views the Tripoli raid in the proper official light, is forced to confess that "the military authorities made a most grave mistake in not requiring the natives to give up their arms on the first day."

An even more pro-war journalist than Signor Bevione is M. Jean Carrère, the Rome correspondent of "Le Temps"; but even he declares, in an interview which appeared in the "Secolo" on October 26th, that the invitation to the Arabs to surrender their rifles in return for a compensation of ten lire was insufficient. He thinks that "a thorough search" of the oasis should also have been made.

And the "Secolo" thinks that "it may have been an error to have left the Arabs their rifles, or not to have kept them at a distance from the scene of operations."

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW THE ARABS GOT IN THE ITALIAN REAR

SINCE I returned to England many Italians have called on me to point out that the attack on the 11th Bersaglieri on October 23rd was a full justification for the killing of the oasis Arabs which followed. They were evidently under the impression—and I think that a good many English people are under the same impression—that those Bersaglieri were playing with the Arab children somewhere far inside what I shall call the Italian oasis, when suddenly the children's fathers and mothers crept behind them and treacherously cut the soldiers' throats. Nothing could be further from the truth. The 11th Bersaglieri were on the extreme edge of the Italian line. Hardly any Italian force was further from the city than they. And the attack which inflicted such loss on them was made by the fighting Arabs outside. Some Arabs inside took part in it, but most of these also were desert Arabs, who had previously traversed the Italian lines during what I have called General Caneva's benevolent period. Signor Luigi Barzini, the extremely jingo and anti-Arab correspondent of the "*Corriere della Sera*," admits this himself in an article which appeared in that paper on November 6th (page 4, col. 2). In that article he acknowledges that the attack on the Italian rear on October 23rd was made, after all,

by fighting Arabs who had thus slipped through, their rifles concealed underneath their loose, flowing robes.

The same admission as to the continual presence of Turkish officers in the town was made to me by the American Consul in Tripoli. As early as October 9th he told me that he had met in the street Turkish officers of his acquaintance. They were disguised as Arabs, but they talked to him freely. An English resident also met disguised Turkish officers in the bazaar. A Turkish soldier even came to his house once, asking for food. "The Times" correspondent admits that disguised Turkish officers were "constantly" in the town. Thus we have very important evidence—English, American, and Italian—to prove that the enemy was able to slip through the Italian lines. It was men that had thus slipped through who were responsible for the attack on the Italian rear which occasioned such terrible reprisals. It is possible, of course, that a few "friendlies" may have joined in this attack, but I do not believe that they numbered more than one hundred in all. The Italians say that they numbered thousands, but I have already shown the extraordinarily unbalancing effect of panic on the judgment of the Italian officers, soldiers, and civilians. To put the matter in a nutshell—General Caneva committed great mistakes of omission; and when the natural consequences of these mistakes showed themselves, he punished not the real culprit—himself—but the innocent oasis Arabs.

He had been warned that there were emissaries of the enemy in the town. On October 20th a Franciscan friar had told him that Turkish agents were at work among the Arabs trying to bring about an insur-



rection. The Commander-in-chief went no further than to reinforce the patrols, which walked the streets all night with fixed bayonets. But nothing occurred that night, and Caneva forgot all about the warning which he had received.

Even the newspaper correspondents showed better judgment than he, though they had not at their disposal, as he had, an elaborate system for obtaining information. On October 22nd the Tripoli correspondent of the "Secolo" telegraphed that things looked very ugly among the oasis Arabs and that a great Arab attack might be expected at any moment from outside. Even as early as October 17th the "Secolo" published a long telegram sent on the previous day by its correspondent Corrado Zoli, and dealing with the dangerous native elements which were allowed, through General Caneva's carelessness, to accumulate in the city, and which threatened at every moment to bring about an explosion.

"To understand the situation at this moment," writes Signor Zoli, "the reader must remember that when we say the Arabs have submitted to the new Italian Governor, we allude only to those Arabs who are known to Hassuna Pasha and indicated by him to us as representing the native population in the interior of the walled city and in the immediate neighbourhood. But besides these, who may be called the notables of the new colony, there are other natives who, now that the terror of the bombardment is past, have come to the city from distant places. Crowds of ragamuffins and of unknown persons swarm in the streets, insinuate themselves into every nook and

cranny, observe, listen, get hungry, offer their services, and are not inscribed in any register.

“ Among this crowd are humble, serviceable men, such as one finds in every port of the Levant. But one not unfrequently encounters energetic and silent specimens of that strange population of the African desert which knows the routes and the distant oases, people who deceive but are not deceived, people who are capable of leaving the beaten caravan paths and conveying news to an immense distance with a rapidity inconceivable to the European accustomed to consider the great difficulties of travelling in countries swept bare by the Saharan wind.

“ That the Turkish army has tried to keep in some sort of touch with the city through Bedouin caravans is certain. And it must not be supposed that all the arms and ammunition landed by the *Derna* were put on camels' backs and immediately sent into the interior. Part of that cargo may be hidden in some unknown locality.”

Signor Zoli then deals with a very large caravan of camels laden with food-stuffs which had been seized on the previous day when about to leave Tripoli for some unknown destination.

“ There is reason to believe,” he says, “ that the forty camels seized yesterday in the market-place intended to convey barley to detachments of Turkish soldiers stationed nearer to us than the central Turkish camp at the foot of the Gharian mountains. . . . The men of that arrested caravan will be carefully watched, for it is feared, and not without reason, that under the festive and loyal Tripoli basking in the full light of the sun, tranquil in the

protection of its new armed population, proud of being guarded on sea by a long and imposing girdle of cruisers, there exists a subterranean Tripoli whose labyrinths it would not be easy to explore."

Until October 23rd General Caneva was extremely lax about letting Arabs or people who said that they were Arabs pass through the lines at any point, either to enter or to leave the city. Between Shara-shett and Henni a whole company of Turkish soldiers could have slipped through the dense oasis undergrowth at night without the sentinels being any the wiser.

On October 22nd, the eve of the "revolt," I drove out to Sharashett with a colleague, Herr von Gottberg, and only met one sentry at a cross-roads. We showed him our passes and were allowed to drive on towards Amrus. Near a mosque, at some distance outside the Italian line, we found a large number of white-robed Arabs sitting on the ground under the palm-trees. They had been engaged in some discussion before they saw us, but were perfectly silent as we passed by. They did not cast very pleasant looks at us, but, in a little hamlet which we passed somewhat further on, the crowd of Arabs collected on the village green scowled at us so malignantly that von Gottberg hastily asked me if I had brought my revolver with me. Of course, I had left it at home. It always happens thus with a revolver. The weapon in question would have been of little use to me, however, if those Arabs were the gentry whom I now suspect them to have been. Neither of the two groups looked like the ordinary village assembly. There was not enough variety among them in the



matter of age and physical condition. There was no blind beggar, no cripple and no corpulent *hodja*. There were no boys playing about and no children. No veiled maidens drew water from the wells. All of those Arabs were determined-looking, hardy men in the prime of life, all save one vigorous ancient with a long grey beard and a glittering eye which transfixed us as that of the "Ancient Mariner" transfixed the wedding guest. All devoured us with their looks in a way which seemed to indicate intense anxiety as well as intense hate.

In a palm-grove we found a youth and an old man—both of them evidently local people—getting down dates. My companion gave them a small coin and signified that he would like to buy some of the fruit. They filled his hat, and when he turned to go the youth ran after him. Von Gottberg thought at first that he wanted more money. On the contrary, he wanted to give my companion another hatful of dates.

The two large groups of Arabs may very possibly have been the Turko-Arabic force which slipped in behind the backs of the Italians that very night and cut two companies of the Bersaglieri to pieces next morning. Their arms were probably inside the mosque and the houses.

We had made this excursion, my friend and I, in order to learn the Italian defences in this direction. Von Gottberg, who is a military man, was much exercised in his mind as to the strength of the Bersaglieri on the left, and he concluded that Sharashett was covered not only by several companies on the spot, but also by a fairly strong force stationed at Amrus. But there were no troops at Amrus.

At Sharashett there are two parallel roads to



Amrus and Tagiura, not far distant from one another, and bordered by luxuriant date-palms and olive plantations. They join, I believe, a little outside of Sharashett.

According to Signor Bevione, the road running along the sea was left entirely unguarded because the Bersaglieri had a vague impression that the battle-ships lying off that point were watching it, while the fleet understood that the Bersaglieri were looking after it. Some jealousy between the naval officers and the crack infantry regiment may have been at the root of the misunderstanding, and a certain amount of stiffness on both sides may have prevented explanations.

Von Gottberg and I found this road quite unguarded. It was apparently dominated, however, by an Italian cruiser which was about a mile off, but looked much nearer on account of the clear atmosphere and the bright sunshine.

Signor Giuseppe Bevione thinks that it was along this seashore road that the fighting Arabs passed on their way during the night of the 22nd in order to attack the Italian rear. He thinks that the four or five hundred men who attempted this encircling movement could have thus gradually passed the Italian line. They began to filter through two or three days before and to take up positions in the dense undergrowth.

This statement is now, he says, accepted by all the Italians (*ormai accettata da tutti*) owing to the *fatto gravissimo* (most grave fact) that "on the morning of the 23rd the look-out men on board the ships anchored in the harbour observed a very rapid and unaccustomed influx of Arabs from the oasis towards Tripoli along the road which runs parallel to

the sea and which was then absolutely devoid of troops. Those Arabs were the irregulars, who thus tranquilly completed the envelopment of our extreme left and proceeded to the posts which had been allotted them in the rear of our line."

The same writer admits that those irregular troops were "Arabs from the interior who have never made submission to us. They have been enlisted and paid by the Turks, as irregular forces of the Sultan." They "were even perhaps commanded by Turkish officers dressed in Arab costume. . . . When the Turks, having immobilised the bulk of our forces elsewhere by means of feigned attacks, commenced a frontal assault on our lines at Sharashett, the Arab detachments of the enemy, which had succeeded in entering our lines, threw themselves against our rear, and thus caught us between two fires. Nor is it impossible that the desperate resistance against the reinforcements from the 82nd Regiment which was made by the Arabs at the Feschlum cross-roads, that is, in the most favourable strategic point, and which prevented these reinforcements from advancing, had been organised and commanded by some disguised Turkish officers."

Here, then, we have the greatest defender of General Caneva admitting that the so-called revolt of the oasis Arabs was simply a successful flanking movement on the part of irregular Turkish troops.

What are we to say, then, of those denunciations even in the English Press of the "friendlies" who rose in the rear of their benefactors? "Kepi," who describes this fight in "Blackwood's" of December last, says that at Sharashett "a few of the Arabs succeeded in breaking through the Italian lines,"

and that this handful afterwards provoked an insurrection among the "friendly" Arabs.

But the Italians themselves admit that this rear attack was carried out by four or five hundred Arab soldiers of the Turkish Sultan, who had been able, owing to the gross carelessness of the Italian commander, to slip round by the sea-coast. Instead of a few Arabs getting through and being joined by hundreds of friendlies, hundreds of Arabs got through and were joined by a few friendlies.

Where, then, is the treachery? Where, then, is the justification for those tears of blood which have been poured out in "The Times" and elsewhere for those poor, confiding Italians treacherously taken in the rear by the peaceful Arabs who had submitted to their rule and accepted bread from their hands?

It would be expecting too much from human nature, however, to expect that all the oasis Arabs should remain tranquil. They, too, had their grievances. There are well-founded reports of Arab women having been foully ill-used by Italian soldiers; and, in any case, some excitable oasis Arabs must have been carried away by patriotic and religious feelings when they saw their victorious compatriots from the desert amongst them with rifles in their hands. A hundred reasons made such defections inevitable, though I doubt if "defection" is the right word to use. Fanaticism, the instinct of imitation, the certainty that a decisive Turkish victory was assured, the fever of battle ineradicable from the Arab mind, the thirst for loot. One might as well try to keep a torrent from flowing downhill as to keep some of the young oasis Arabs from joining that band of their countrymen which had just cut to pieces two companies of the best soldiers in Italy. General Caneva



cannot blame them. He might as well blame gunpowder for exploding when a match is applied to it. It was his duty to keep the match from getting there, and in that duty he failed signally and criminally.

Probably some of those insurgent "friendlies" did fire on the Italian rear or on isolated Italian soldiers. They were shot for it, and justly. But Italy should be the last country in the world to raise up her hands in horror at such "treachery." I have little sympathy with Italian revolutionists, but that vigorous old Syndicalist Cipriani, was right in exploding with wrath when somebody spoke in his presence of "Arab treachery."

"Treachery," he shouted, "what treachery? Can we find a grosser or more stupid sophism than that of the Nationalists when they speak of treachery? Ah, *perdio!* Here it is a question of one country sending its soldiers, without any decent motive, into the house of another people in order to make itself master there. It is a question of a people being forced to bend the knee and to promise obedience under the menace of cannon ready to bombard and to exterminate them. What value has a promise extorted under such conditions?

"The Italian people should at least remember that when we had Austria on our neck we did to the Austrians as the Arabs do to us to-day. We did more. Austrian spies were stabbed, and every Austrian soldier on garrison in any Italian city had to look well to his back or he would have a dagger in it. He had to take very good care not to find himself after nightfall outside his barracks, in any deserted lane or on any bridge. If he did not take care, he was sure to be killed, thrown into the river, stoned to death. To such an extent did these assassinations go on



that when the Austrian Kaiser saw his Italian garrisons return decimated to the home country, year after year, he exclaimed that the occupation of Lombardy, Venetia, and the Vassal dukedoms cost him more than a great [annual] defeat in the field.

“ Treason on the part of the Arabs ! Is not this the very word which the Aulic Councillors used—in the name of His Apostolic Majesty—in order to condemn to hard labour and to death our own martyrs ? The victims of the Spielberg, the men hanged at Belfiore, were they not, forsooth, condemned for treason as well as for high treason ? The father of my excellent friend Ernesta Cassola, the leader of the Brescian people during the Ten Days—was he not sentenced for treason-felony ? But if Austria condemned those heroes, history has glorified them, and this very year official Italy gave them an apotheosis—this very year, a short time before she herself went to Tripoli in order to commit there worse crimes than Austria ever committed amongst us.

“ There are certain inalienable rights, and among them is the right of defence against an overpowering invader. It is never treason to combat *pro aris et focis*, no matter how one fights, no matter what are the *arae* and *foci* for which one combats.”

The attack of the Arabs upon the Italian Red Cross has been enlarged upon in “ The Times ” as the act of savages. Sometimes, however, the Italian Red Cross hospitals were practically in the firing-line. Early on the morning of the 26th I visited the Italian line between Sharashett and Henni while fighting was going on and found a small first-aid station, with several Red Cross flags waving over it,

situated in an Arab cabin within a hundred yards of the front. An Arab bullet whizzed from time to time past this hospital, but there was never any heavy fire concentrated on it, though the Arabs would have been well within their rights if they had attacked it, for it should not have been there.

It is true that a Red Cross hospital well inside the oasis was attacked, but I am doubtful if the wild Arabs who assailed it had any idea that it contained only sick and wounded men.

The flag conveyed little information to them, for some of the Italian flags also bear the cross. Indeed, it is probable that the blood-red emblem of Christianity which floated over the roof awoke in their memories traditions of the crusaders; and that they regarded the surgeons with Red Cross badges on their arms as a corps of Christian Janissaries more than usually fierce. In the "*Berliner Tageblatt*" (April 10), Dr. Goebel, the leader of the German Red Crescent with the Turks in Tripoli, says that he and his assistants would have been massacred by the Arabs if they had worn Red Cross badges.

On the other hand, I am prepared to make allowances for the Italian soldiers who several times at night shot Arab women who, not knowing Italian, did not stop when the sentinel summoned them to do so. The "*Corriere d'Italia*" tells of two women having been thus killed and two wounded on October 16. In war a great deal of sad but excusable killing of innocent people is almost inevitable.

An awkward question for the Turks is the question of uniform. Some of the Arabs killed in the oasis were found to be really Turkish soldiers with Turkish uniforms underneath their Arab dress. This proves pretty clearly that they at least were not those peace-

ful but "treacherous" oasis Arabs of whom we have heard so much. But even if they had been caught alive in the rear of the Italians, the latter would be justified, according to the rules of war, in shooting them. It seems to me, however, that the Turkish officers and soldiers fighting in the Desert against the Italians are quite right in wearing whatever kind of uniform they please. If a Turkish officer does not dress like the vast majority of the men he commands, he is sure to be singled out by the Italian marksmen. He may even be mistaken for an Italian and shot by his own men. Besides, it is impossible for him to renew his uniform when it wears out. And it is equally impossible for him to dress all his Arabs in Turkish military costume.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EVIDENCE FOR THE MASSACRES

AFTER what I had seen on October 26th, I decided that I could not stay with an army which went in for murder on such a large scale as the Italian army, and accordingly I determined to send back my papers as correspondent to General Caneva. I was so disgusted with the massacres, and especially with the way in which the Italian authorities had allowed the sick women and children of the Arabs to die on the ground, that I wrote to General Caneva a most violent letter in which I stated that I refused to associate any longer with "an army which is no army, but a gang of marauders and a band of assassins."

On October 28th I showed this letter to Mr. Alvarez, the British Consul-General, but he was horrified at the strength of the language which I made use of, and begged me to modify it. He promised that if I did so he would himself accompany me to call upon the General and make personal representations to him in regard to the atrocities of which I had been an eye-witness.

I declined this offer, as I foresaw that nothing good would come of it—only a barren interview, a vague promise to make inquiries, and the certainty of being kicked out ignominiously, inside of a week, on some trumped-up charge, with the result that all



my subsequent testimony about the massacres would be rendered valueless. But I did modify the language of my letter to General Caneva. In fact, I tore up the letter and wrote, in English, a fresh one, which ran as follows :

TRIPOLI,

*October 28th, 1911.*

*To His Excellency*

*General Carlo Caneva,*

*Commander-in-chief of the Army  
of Occupation.*

Your Excellency !

I beg to return to Your Excellency the enclosed papers which I have received from the Italian military authorities here. As I deem it my duty to criticise the treatment of natives during the past few days, I cannot any longer continue to accept favours from the authorities whose actions I criticise.

I remain,

Yours respectfully,

FRANCIS McCULLAGH.

I got no direct answer from the General, but soon received a message from the censor through another correspondent to call at his office in the Castello. Von Gottberg, who had also returned his papers, received a similar communication. We both answered the censor by letter in French, saying very politely that, having ceased to be correspondents accredited to the Italian Army of Occupation, we could no longer maintain any official relations with the censor and could not call on him in his official capacity.

We thanked him, however, for all he had done for us and said that we would be delighted to see him as a private individual at any time. If the Italian authorities wished to communicate with us, they might do so through our respective Consuls.

We received no answer to this communication, and left a few days afterwards without having heard anything further from the censor. No attempt was made to hasten or retard our departure, and no unpleasantness was shown us. All the Italian correspondents had evidently heard of what we had done, and one of them, Signor Tullio Giordana, tried to argue with me. He did not deny the truth of my story, but he told me horrible tales of Arab cruelty towards the Bersaglieri. On von Gottberg a more serious attempt was made. A mysterious Italian visitor tried to arrange through the German Consul to have an interview with him, and when that attempt failed, the stranger called at the house of the German dragoman, where my friend was staying. He asked to see von Gottberg, but refused to send up his card or even to give his name or the business on which he had come. My colleague consequently refused to see him, so that he remains a mystery.

From Malta I wired an account of the massacres and of the general situation to London; and a few days after reaching Naples I found that this account had been wired back to the papers there.

To some papers my messages came in a designedly exaggerated mistranslation. I was made, for instance, to say that the Italian troops went out killing all the blind beggars in the city. Another paper suggested that I must have been drunk when I wrote my Malta despatch. All attacked with the most savage invective, not only myself, but the other

British correspondents who had dared to send messages similar to mine.

Signor Giolitti even asserted that neither I nor my colleagues had ever been to Tripoli at all, that we had concocted our despatches in Malta. This assertion will be found in the "*Corriere della Sera*" for November 10th, in the report of an interview granted by the Premier to Dr. Christopher Pflaum, correspondent of the "*Deutsche Tages Zeitung*" of Berlin.

"During the entire war," said Signor Giolitti, "Italy has been too gentle rather than too severe and I can absolutely deny, therefore, the accusations of cruelty made by London and Berlin correspondents who, instead of being at the front, are living quietly in Malta."

This fable about our having been all the time in Malta has since been repeated. It was repeated by Mr. Richard Bagot, the novelist, in a letter which was published in the "*Spectator*" on February 10th. Mr. Bagot asserted that :

"The journalists and others who describe in such glowing language Italian cruelty in the suppression of the Arab revolt were many miles away from Tripoli during that suppression. The few journalists and other civilians who were present have unanimously testified to the fact that no such acts of cruelty ever took place."

I need hardly say that Mr. Bagot is mistaken. I could call hundreds of witnesses to prove that I was in Tripoli until the end of October last.

I shall only mention one, Signor Tullio Giordana, the correspondent of the "*New York Herald*" in

Tripoli. Being a strong supporter of this war, Signor Giordana attacked me in the "New York Herald" (Paris), November 9th, but he admitted that I was in Tripoli when the massacres occurred, and that I voluntarily returned my papers to General Caneva by way of protest against those massacres.

Nearly all the non-Italian correspondents who were in Tripoli at the end of October witnessed those massacres and described them. If we leave the Italians out of account as being prejudiced witnesses, we find that the denials came in almost all cases from journalists, novelists, and others living in Italy, France, and England.

We have Signor Marconi, Lord Roberts, Mr. Richard Bagot, Mr. Garvin of the "Pall Mall Gazette," and the Duke of the Abruzzi. Luigi, Duke of the Abruzzi, wired as follows from Taranto to the "New York American":

"My indignation at the libellous accusations levelled against the Italian troops in Tripoli by certain newspapers in New York is unbounded. As a matter of fact, our soldiers' treatment of the Arabs was humanitarian to an extreme degree, their very kindness to the Arabs was the cause of their undoing. The conduct of these Arabs in turning upon the Italians and trying to massacre them after having been received and succoured on terms of friendship and equality was nothing less than base treason. I hope the 'New York American,' with its acknowledged sympathy for all peoples who are engaged in *fighting for the cause of justice and truth*, will place these facts in their true light before the great American public."

I quote this cablegram in full, as it is typical of



all the others. I give in italics, by the way, the words "fighting for justice and truth," as they are rather amusing when applied, as the Duke applies them, to the proceedings of General Caneva in Tripolitania. The Duke had been at Taranto when the massacres took place. Of what earthly good, then, was his evidence even if he were ten times a Duke?

Of what value would such evidence be in, say, a murder trial, especially if all the people who had been on the spot and had seen the crime committed had been unanimous in fixing the guilt on one man? Hysterical denials from that man himself, from his relatives, and from admirers in distant lands would, I take it, have little effect on an English jury.

Prominent among the journalists who denied the massacres is Monsieur Jean Carrère, the Rome correspondent of the "Temps." I shall take his case as typical.

Monsieur Carrère was not in Tripoli when the massacres occurred. While staying in Naples early in November, on my return from Tripolitania, I noticed that all the Italian newspapers were full of what they called a complete vindication of Italy's honour and a crushing exposure of *la malafede, la ignoranza, l' odio* of those English hirelings of the Turks who had accused General Caneva's troops of murdering innocent Arabs. The "vindication" in question was especially written for the Italian Press. It was from the pen of M. Jean Carrère, and it took the form of a long article asserting, in most violent and dogmatic language, that the massacres did not occur, and raking up all the "atrocities" that have been laid at England's door since the burning of Jeanne d'Arc.

Incidentally, I suppose, we, the British correspondents, were denounced as liars, perjurers, swindlers, and spies. M. Carrère visited Tripoli some weeks later, and is now the great authority on that oasis "repression," which he did not see.

Another witness is the "New York Herald" of Paris. When my account of the massacres was published in the "Westminster Gazette," the editor of the "New York Herald" wired to his local correspondent to investigate my statements. I have already pointed out that this correspondent is an Italian jingo who would certainly have shown me no mercy if what I had said was untrue. But as he could not deny the accuracy of what I had written, he confined himself to saying that I had failed to take into account the provocation which the Italians had received. I may add that if I had not been in the oasis that day he would certainly have wired that fact to the "Herald." It would have been easy to ascertain if I had been all day in town or not, as Tripoli is a small place with one small hotel, wherein nearly all the correspondents were at that time lumped together. I refer to this point because Mr. Richard Bagot declared six months afterwards, in the "Nation," that I had not been in the oasis at all that day. This charge had never been made before. Would it not have been made instantly by forty Italian correspondents if it were true?

But the utmost that was said at the time against my friends and myself was that we had not had the courage to go outside the Italian lines into the Desert in order to see the manner in which the Italian dead had been mutilated. Signor Luigi Barzini made this statement in the "Corriere della Sera" of November 13th, and, I think, in the "Daily Telegraph" of the

same date. But, as I have already pointed out in a previous chapter, there was fighting going on when I visited the advanced posts, and I came back into the oasis and saw the massacres. Mr. Barzini and his friends remained at the front and did not see the massacres. I have reasons for believing too, that some of my English colleagues, who afterwards tried to take up what they thought to be a "moderate" and "judicial" attitude, were also at the front most of the time and saw only the smallest fraction of the slaughter that went on between them and the town.

So much for the "Herald" correspondent. A third witness is Mr. Martin Donohoe, of the "Daily Chronicle." Mr. Donohoe was quoted, first in the "Stampa" of Turin and afterwards all over Italy, as saying that there had been no massacres at all. Great stress was laid on his testimony by the Italian Press. The "Corriere della Sera" declared that that testimony was "precious," that Mr. Donohoe had rehabilitated the character of the Italian soldier. In the screaming headlines which gave prominence to this statement we were told that a truthful Englishman had at last killed the whole calumny.

But Mr. Donohoe had left Tripoli before the date on which the massacres took place; and, speaking on his behalf, the "Chronicle" has formally and publicly denied that he made any such statement as that attributed to him. But I presume that, in spite of that denial, Mr. Donohoe still continues to figure in Italy as the one brave, truthful Englishman who declared that there had been no massacre.

Other witnesses, possibly, to the same effect are Italians who represented English newspapers in Tripoli. Reading these men's testimony without knowing their names, the English reader might well



have been excused for believing that a fair proportion of English and American journalists denied the massacres. Those Italian representatives of English papers would have been at once expelled from Tripoli if they had confirmed the reports about a massacre. But, to do them justice, I do not think that this had much weight with them. They were out all day at the front where there was fighting, but no massacres; and if they saw any of that "indiscriminate slaughter" to which "The Times" correspondent refers, they either looked on it from a different point of view from us or else were so enraged at what they regarded as the treachery of the Arabs that they could not judge the matter impartially. As for the British correspondents, if they had concealed the truth they could have remained in Tripoli for a long time, enjoying the hospitality of officers, the applause of patriotic Italians all over the world. Their disclosure of what happened banished them not only from Tripoli, but from the pleasant climate of Italy, where they might otherwise have continued to represent their papers—banished them (if I may use the expression) to a London grey with November fogs.

I have now given the evidence on the Italian side. It is almost entirely the evidence of absentees. What have we on the other side? We have impartial Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, Germans, Austrians, and Frenchmen who were all in Tripoli when the massacres took place, and who, to their own regret and horror, witnessed those massacres. We have Reuter's correspondent, Mr. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. We have Mr. Grant, a canny and hard-headed Londoner of Scotch descent, who, being extremely anxious to remain in Tripoli, said as



little against his hosts as he possibly could, but felt that it would be a crime to keep entirely silent. Then we have "The Times" correspondent, the "Daily Telegraph" correspondent, and the "Westminster Gazette" correspondent. All these are Britishers. In other words, all the British correspondents said that wanton murder had been committed.

"The Times" correspondent did not, it is true, go so far as the rest of us. This was because he had been at the front and had seen only the smallest fraction of the massacres carried out by the Italians in the oasis. Yet even he declared that parts of the oasis had been turned into "human abattoirs"; that "the Italians having set themselves to cow the Arabs, the floodgates of blood-lust were opened, and in many cases the men got beyond control, and the innocent suffered with the guilty." Writing in the "Daily Telegraph" of the innocent oasis Arabs, Mr. Bennet Burleigh declared that "many unquestionably have been wantonly murdered."

Yet General Caneva denies that a single innocent Arab was killed; while Mr. Richard Bagot tells us that "the most searching investigations carried out by Italian officers and civilians of the highest honour and integrity have failed to bring to light one single case in which any Arab either has been ill-treated or put to death unless convicted of treachery."

If this is true, all the non-Italian correspondents must have fabricated the news which they sent. But that they could not possibly do so will be the verdict of any reader who has accompanied war-correspondents in the field. Collective action by doctors, by lawyers, or by the clergymen of any one denomination is possible, but, owing to the nature

of their calling, collective action of this kind by war-correspondents is impossible. The great, the primary object of each of them is to steal a march on the others. If one of them sends false news the others will lose very little time in denouncing him.

Of my own testimony I do not care to speak, but my contributions to the "Westminster Gazette," reprinted in the present volume, show that when I arrived in Tripoli it was with strong prejudices in favour of the Italians.

Among the German correspondents we have Herr von Gottberg, a Prussian officer who has long been connected with the "Lokal-Anzeiger" and who enjoys a high reputation in Berlin as a military critic. In addition to von Gottberg, we have five other Germans, not local Italians writing for German papers, but Germans permanently connected with the greatest organs of the Press in the Fatherland and in Austria-Hungary.

Some of these Germans are very superior men. Two of them are military officers; one of them, Herr Krause, is a Doctor in Philosophy. Two of them speak Arabic fluently. Besides, there was the German Consul, Dr. Tilger, a very able man, knowing Italian, Turkish, and Arabic, standing in every way head and shoulders above his consular colleagues, constantly quoted on the Continent as the greatest authority on every aspect of Tripolitan life. Dr. Tilger knew the Italians well; he had lived twenty years among them. He also knew the Arabs well, and was, consequently, able to obtain from Arab sources particulars of atrocities whereof the correspondents knew nothing. I am told that his report, which is now in Berlin, confirms every word which I wrote on the subject of the massacres in the "West-

minster Gazette" and the "Daily News." I think that it goes beyond anything which I wrote. Besides the testimony of Dr. Tilger we have that of his dragoman, who also speaks Italian, Arabic, and Turkish, as well as German, and who went about among the Arabs on the days of the massacre and conversed with them.

Among the French correspondents we have M. Cossira, whose evidence I quote elsewhere.

If, as Mr. Richard Bagot and other apologists of the Italians assert, not a single innocent Arab was killed by the Italians, then the story of the massacre was a gross libel. The libel would have been so gross that every foreigner in Tripoli would have denounced it. Why did not the Italian Government and the pro-Italian newspapers in this country go to Tripoli itself for evidence? Why did they not appeal to the Consular body, to the English and German residents of Tripoli city? Why did they appeal instead to people who had not been in Tripoli at the time? Because they were well aware that all the foreigners in Tripoli knew of the atrocities.

If there had been no atrocities the English Consul in Tripoli would have said so. Instead of that, he sent to the Foreign Office a statement to the effect that atrocities had been committed. The Italian Press vilified and abused him for sending that statement. While General Caneva was holding a *Te Deum* in the Cathedral to celebrate his "victory," four Italian correspondents—Barzini, Castellini, Piazza, and De Frenzi—had the impertinence to enter the British Consulate in order to cross-examine the British Consul-General regarding the statement in question. The Consul-General would have been justified in showing them the door, but he explained



that his statement had not been intended for publication.

The telegram regarding this affair is dated "Tripoli, November 14th," and is published in the "Corriere della Sera." It will be noticed that the above-mentioned Italian correspondents make absolutely no attempt to deny the massacres. They only say that the Bartlett-Davis-Grant document "is dishonest inasmuch as it does not mention the terrible facts which rendered absolutely necessary and urgent the repression of the Arab revolt, inasmuch as it fails to mention the greater repressions furnished by English Colonial history."

To the latter part of this question the British Consul-General boldly replied that "of those repressions mentioned in English Colonial history, England is ashamed." Signor Luigi Barzini, who sends this despatch, scoffs at the British representative "who said that he was ashamed of the conduct of his nation in the most glorious wars of conquest."

Of course, this brave and outspoken Consul-General has been sent elsewhere and has been replaced by an official from Constantinople who has been for the last three years at loggerheads with the Young Turks. British diplomatists in Paris and Vienna can safely scoff at the present Liberal Cabinet, apologise for it, refer to it as a stop-gap. Sir Edward Grey promotes them. But let a British Consul-General say a brave and honest word which is not only the very essence of Liberalism, but which also represents the opinions of ninety-nine per cent of the Conservatives in these Islands—Sir Edward Grey takes fright immediately, yields to Italian remonstrances, and, in a panic, recalls him.

This argument between the Italian correspondents



and the British Consul-General was on the spot, in Tripoli itself, and it will be noticed that there in Tripoli the Italians make no attempt to say,—as Mr. Richard Bagot and others far from the scene are so ready to say,—that not a single Arab was wrongfully put to death. In Tripoli city the Italian defence is: (1) “The Arabs attacked us treacherously,” (2) “You British did worse things in your Colonial wars.” To the second argument I would answer that two wrongs do not make a right. To the first I would reply that if the Arabs did wrong, the Italians should not have done wrong. But the Arabs did not make a treacherous attack on the Italian rear. I hope that I have already made this point clear.

Thus all the members of the local Consular corps knew that atrocities were committed. All the non-Italian correspondents have borne witness to those atrocities.

I might add that all the evidence I adduce to prove the massacres comes from men who were connected with the Italian army. All the British and German correspondents I have mentioned had been favoured with passes from General Caneva. Consequently they were likely, not to malign the Italian army, but to close their eyes to that army's faults and to develop a hatred of the Arabs. This is always the case in war, especially in war with a savage and fanatical enemy. A correspondent is naturally inclined to believe anything bad of the foe, to excuse any harshness on the part of his hosts. On this account I purposely refrain from quoting Turkish testimony against the Italians or even the testimony of Englishmen on the Turkish side.

A word in conclusion about the alleged Arab atrocities. It is not impossible, of course, that the

Arabs, furious at the massacre of their own kinsmen by the Italians, should retaliate by torturing and mutilating such of the invaders as fell into their hands. Nevertheless, there are some points about this story which need to be cleared up. It is not sufficient that all the Italian and some of the English correspondents try to make our hair stand on end by blood-curdling stories of the mutilations inflicted on the Italian dead. Some correspondents are too prone to write what will please the army to which they are attached, so that the censor will, by way of *quid pro quo*, let them have special interviews with the army chiefs and permit them to get out their news first. And foreign business-men, settled in a place like Tripoli, are very often found romping into the Press in frenzied support of the invaders, not because they love justice, but because they want to stand well with the new-comers, and to benefit commercially.

The permanent, forty-years-in-the-country man of business is often a representative of doubtful value to a newspaper. When he does happen to remember the name of the paper to which he is "accredited" and devotes a few moments to the work of dictating a hasty cablegram to it, that cablegram is not unlikely to be influenced, unconsciously of course, by his business pre-occupations. Without laying themselves open to any accusation of partiality or boycott, the Italians could ruin any business-man in Tripolitania who did not actively take their part. His caravans would "dry up" mysteriously, his customers would fall away, he would find himself high and dry above the currents of local commerce. Yet such men sometimes serve not one newspaper but many. Next to the craze for a "scoop," the craze for having "our own correspondent"

in every corner of the world is the bane of modern journalism. This latter craze necessitates very often the employment of business-men, who differ from real "special correspondents" in this, that (1) they have first got to consider their business interests, and (2) they have got to remain behind and face the music.

We should not, therefore, attach too much importance to reports of Arab atrocities which are sent from Tripoli by correspondents who have identified themselves with the Italians. And, in the present instance, as I have already pointed out, these reports are open to grave suspicion.

On October 28th the Italians evacuated El Henni after having buried there the dead who had died in the battles of the 23rd and 26th. When they returned to El Henni a month later, on November 26th, they found that some of the dead bodies had been disinterred. Now, even if we admit that the Arabs disinterred the bodies in order to strip off the clothes, as they might very likely do, there is nothing so very terrible in that. The Arabs are a very poor people, to whom cloth, buttons, and buckles are pearls of great price. I remember how an Arab soldier, with whom I travelled in the interior of Morocco, saved up my empty tins (which had contained tinned meats) in order to make cups of them. And, as Mr. Ernest N. Bennett puts it, "if clothes and boots are badly needed by the living, why on earth bury them in the ground?" Even if the corpses were afterwards mutilated, this is certainly not worse than the wholesale murder of innocent people in which the Italians indulged. But the Italians declare that the corpses in question were not those of soldiers who had been buried, but those of soldiers who had



been captured alive and then tortured to death. They describe the expression of agony on the faces, they tell how the eyelids of one corpse were sewn up ; how another soldier had evidently been buried alive and a third crucified. They brought personally conducted parties of foreign journalists to see these gruesome sights. They had them photographed. They published in English, and probably in other European languages, long illustrated descriptions of this find.

I felt, long before, that some such discovery was coming. Even on October 26th I heard the Italians describe the mutilations which they did not discover until a month later. Considering the extraordinary craftiness and cunning which one sometimes finds in the character of the Sicilian and the Neapolitan, and which I noticed myself in Tripoli, we should not be too eager to credit the lurid accounts of Arab ferocity with which, by way of counterblast, the Italian Press has been deluged.

Moreover, it is extremely doubtful if the particular mutilations which the Italian correspondents describe with such gusto and in such detail,—it is extremely doubtful if the sewing up of the eyelids, etc., would remain after a month of hot rainy weather. Decomposition would set in very rapidly and would be assisted in its work of destruction by the dogs, carrion-birds and beasts of prey. The "Daily Mail" correspondent in Tripoli tells us of "the expression of agony on the faces"—on the faces of corpses that had been exposed for a month in such a climate! Is not this ridiculous?

I have already spoken of "The Times" military correspondent in Tripoli. I have shown how pro-Italian he has been. Well, writing in "Blackwood's



Magazine" for January, 1912, this correspondent thinks that the accounts of the Arab atrocities have been "overstated." . . . "Men who are said to have been buried alive are probably Italian corpses that the Turks hastily interred for sanitary reasons. It is quite possible that some of the so-called mutilations were due to the packs of dogs which infest the oasis. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the evidences of brutality, as described in the Italian journals, could have survived in the minuteness of the detail given, after the exposure of a month of North African sun and torrential rain."

"The Times" correspondent refers to "the packs of dogs which infest the oasis." Owing to the destruction of practically all the houses in the oasis there must have been many such packs, and they must have been starving. Nothing is more likely than that they scraped away the sand which lightly covered the Italian corpses. In the "Secolo" of November 29th we find evidence in support of this theory. It is taken from the "Giornale di Sicilia," whose correspondent in Tripoli gives the following description of the burial of a Red Cross soldier :—

"I entered the [Mohammedan] cemetery with Bedi Farug, an Arab fisherman and a friend of mine. . . . Suddenly my attention was attracted by a tomb which seemed to be new and on which lay some palm-fronds, still green. A little tablet on the tomb bore this inscription in Italian :

*"Emilio Matteo Sibille, soldato della Croce Rossa Italiana, morto il 15 ottobre 1911."*

"Bedi Farug noticed my surprise, and being a species of living newspaper and knowing everything which happens, he said to me, 'This was a

little soldier. He died [of illness] while attending to his brethren. A little before his death he received a letter from his mother. Another soldier sat down by his bedside and read the letter for him. Death was then near. The little Italian soldier's eye was dim, but his heart was alive. He was troubled by the words of his mother, who had not known that he was ill and who said that she expected him to come back to his native mountains in good health and with the satisfaction of having done his duty."

The soldier died, but his companions "did not wish to bury him on the seashore where those horrible dogs scrape away the earth and tear the corpses to pieces" (*ma poi non volevano seppellirlo alla spiaggia dove quegli orribili cani scavano le fosse e fanno scempio dei cadaveri.*)

The local Mohammedan Mollah who had taken an affection for the sick soldier, who was, by the way, a Piedmontese, begged the Italians to "bear the ashes of your comrade into our burial-ground of Dab-il-si-Did. You can always find it there if ever you want to take it back to Italy."

The soldiers, we are told, "were very glad at this, and thanked the Mollah." They then buried their comrade in the Moslem burying-ground. "At the foot of the tomb some little flowers had been planted. 'These,' said Bedi Farug, with simplicity, 'have been put there by our women!'"

I only quote this to show that, in the opinion of the natives, corpses buried in the sand, as the Italian corpses at Henni were buried, are pretty certain to be mangled by dogs. If it is so at ordinary times, when the dogs are fed, what must it be when, owing

to the massacre or the flight of their owners, hundreds of dogs are running about masterless and half-starved ? Moreover, there is another danger. There is danger of corpses buried in the sand being uncovered by the torrential rains of the rainy season. Among the villages in the oasis are a number of Moslem burial-grounds which have in many cases been walled in to save the graves from the swift water-courses formed in November. Now, in last November the rainy season was so particularly rainy that the water rushed through part of the city in a small river, pouring into the sea near the Castello. And it was after this that the bodies were found. And once the water had uncovered them, the dogs would certainly not leave them alone. Then the Italians found them and raised an outcry in Europe in order to excuse their own massacres towards the end of October. From the Tripoli correspondent of one prominent London paper came a very naïve telegram :—"It was these mutilations which caused the Italian reprisals in the oasis on October 23rd-27th." But on October 23rd-27th the Italians were in occupation of El Henni and had no corpses "on view," so to speak. They buried all their dead before retreating. When they returned they found the corpses of their soldiers hanging from the trees, whereupon they assured the English correspondents that it was on account of those Arab atrocities that they had murdered thousands of oasis Arabs a month previously ! The whole thing is a strange muddle, and I, at least, cannot make sense of it. I can very well understand, however, why the Italians "find" so many of their comrades "crucified." "Crucified" is, as I have already pointed out, a good word. It appeals to the prejudices of



Christianity. It will rouse England and America. Thus the Italian leaders make use of the Christianity in which they do not believe, first in order to make their own soldiers drunk with religious fanaticism ; secondly, in order to excite Europe against the Turks and Arabs. It is a clever business, well worthy of the countrymen of Machiavelli.

In the same way their reported adoption of Arab children, their alleged kindness to Bedouin babies found deserted in the oasis, and all the other acts of kindness which have been so trumpeted by the Roman and Milanese Press, are simply instances of clever Press "business." Until the end of October, the Arab children in the oasis were treated by the Italians as if they were dogs. I have elsewhere shown how at least one such child was left on the ground to die. The Italian soldiers had no more compassion on those children than they would have had on young vipers. But once an outcry was raised about their barbarity, there was a sudden change. The word went forth early in November that soldiers were to be photographed with "rescued" Arab babies on their knees, and that long, sentimental tales were to be attached to the photographs. In this way the English and Germans, with their curious and inexplicable affection for these dirty brats, would be won over, would be got to believe that the Italians were humane, were bubbling over with the milk of human kindness.

Facile Italian pens produced in abundance interminable stories of heroic Bersaglieri, who had, at the risk of their lives, rescued Turkish infants and adopted them. Lachrymose tales were circulated of rough bluejackets who shared their food with Arab mites whom they had picked up in the desert.



Photographs were produced by the score showing black children seated on the knees of Italian soldiers, while, in the background, officers and Red Cross nurses tried desperately hard to "look pleasant." London newspaper offices were deluged with these "proofs" of Italian benignity. All this is humbug. It is manufactured stuff, turned out to order for the English, American and German market. The soldiers would sooner wring the necks of these black children than play with them or seat them on their knees.

Besides, even if this sudden affection were genuine, I would have nothing to say in favour of it. If the Germans desolated Yorkshire with fire and sword, no Yorkshireman would feel flattered in the least if he saw in "Die Woche" photographs of German soldiers with "adopted" Bradford children on their knees.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

#### THE CHURCH, THE SOCIALISTS AND THE WAR

THE last chapter of this ill-omened Italian adventure has yet to be written. God grant that anarchy and civil war may not write it in characters of blood and flame within the fair borders of Italy herself.

For it is only too probable that the Socialists and Terrorists, in the production of whom Italy enjoys such an ill repute, will eventually be the only gainers by this war. Even if General Caneva wins a military triumph, the raid will nevertheless prove a disaster, for Tripolitania will always be a burden to its owners, and in a few years, perhaps in a few months, the revolutionist will be able to say with perfect truth : " Didn't I tell you so ? "

And when Italy recovers from her present debauch of jingoism and blood, she will, I am afraid, turn for consolation to the man with the red flag. That sinister personage is the only Italian who has kept his head during the sanguinary revel, the only man who has told the exact truth, and given a perfectly just and accurate account of the situation. Perhaps there is one other Italian who is not blind to what is going on and who, remembering the fate of his father, shudders when he hears the cries of " victory." That man is the King of Italy, who was,

I am told, greatly averse to the present adventure, but who must now, of course, as a constitutional monarch, behave as if he approved of it. There is still another Italian who has not lost his head, but, occupying as he does an extraterritorial position, His Holiness can scarcely be regarded as an Italian at all.

To the gentleman with the bomb belongs, therefore, the sole credit of having remained cool and sane. The "Avanti" has published a caricature showing a ward in a fever-hospital. The beds of all the political parties are occupied by delirious patients whose temperature is somewhere near boiling-point. One bed alone is unoccupied, that of the revolutionists. Any one who has studied the revolutionary periodicals of Italy since September last must admit that this boast is fully justified. While all the clerical and monarchist papers have been indulging in the wildest dreams of conquest, the "Avanti" has pointed out that "the day will soon come when by far the greater part of the literature of this period will seem brutal and barbarous even to those who now produce it in a state of violent excitement and jingoist frenzy and to those who devour it and excite themselves by it. Like all kinds of intoxication, this intoxication of jingoism—more especially this intoxication of jingoism—leaves the brain confused and obtuse and the mouth bitter.

"When sobriety returns, Italian 'civilisation' will look at herself in the glass, and will perhaps be horror-stricken at her own appearance. When that day comes we, at least, can say that we did not encourage our country in her mad debauch, that we did not urge her on to fresh excesses." On October 1st the "Avanti" denounced the war-fever as a case of

"colossal, collective aberration," and said that Italy had been made drunk with the crude alcohol of a "bastard patriotism."<sup>1</sup>

Every word of this is justified. Before the raid the Socialist Press pointed out, day after day, with the most cold and deadly logic, that the contemplated occupation of Tripolitania was a mistake from every point of view, that the new territory would not attract Italian emigration, that it would always be a burden on the Roman Exchequer, that, before providing railways, schools, and water-works for the Libyan desert, the Italian Government should provide those necessities for large areas in the home country which were without them.

When General Caneva massacred the oasis Arabs who possessed fire-arms, the "Avanti" showed in the most convincing manner that Caneva himself had erred in failing to disarm the natives; and it showed that at Benghazi, General Briccola had had no trouble with his "friendlies" owing to the fact that he had adopted on the day he landed the simple precaution of collecting their rifles from them.

In the same way the "Avanti" was the only paper in Italy to point out how trifling were the Italian successes. While even the great "Corriere della Sera" was working itself into paroxysms of excitement over the ridiculous bombardment of Tripoli, the "Avanti" coldly pointed out the weakness of the Turkish batteries there and the impossibility of any serious resistance. In short, the jingo Press reminded one of nothing so much as a hilarious reveller whose tongue has been loosened, whose imagination has been inflamed, and whose reasoning powers have been impaired by a large

<sup>1</sup> In the appendix I give a specimen of that alcohol.



dose of some crude intoxicant. The Socialist and Anarchist Press, on the other hand, reminded one all along of a sharp, cool, cynical lawyer with all his wits about him. In the conflict between the two the position of the imperialist was both ludicrous and pathetic.<sup>1</sup>

Nobody would deplore more than myself the triumph of the revolutionists in Italy and the overthrow of the monarchy, but it is undeniable that this Tripoli adventure tends to bring us nearer to such a consummation. The revolutionists know that, though their friends are now few, the pendulum is sure to swing their way before long. It is significant that they continually tell of Lloyd George having been once compelled to escape in a policeman's clothes from a pro-war mob, and being now the most powerful Minister in the British Cabinet. It would be more to the point, however, if they dwelt on the almost successful revolution in Russia which followed the Tzar's unfortunate Manchurian war. Indeed, the probabilities are that, for the future, every unsuccessful campaign waged by a Continental

<sup>1</sup> In the "Avanti" of October 1st the reader will find a most able and eloquent denunciation of the raid. "Some people tell us," says this organ, "that this will not be really a war at all, that there will be a few shots, a blockade by the fleet, the simple landing of an army corps, and that all will then be over. And perhaps this thought is behind the whole enterprise; doubtless this conviction led to the war being prepared and decided upon. By exalting the prowess of Italy's military forces and ridiculously under-estimating the Turkish forces, our rulers have, as it were, administered morphia to a section of public opinion in this country and have rendered it insensible to the direct and indirect perils of the situation. . . . But we consider it our duty to warn the working classes of the dangers that await them. We invite them to strengthen their organisations in order to make headway against the forces which threaten the life, the future, the liberty of the country. Let once this aggression succeed and those forces, proud of having inveigled the Government and the nation into this military adventure, will be convinced that even in the matter of domestic politics they can safely carry out their imperialist and jingo programme."

State will be invariably followed by a revolutionary upheaval in that State itself.

As for the position of the Church in this war, the Vatican is impartial and even opposed to the conflict, but unfortunately a great number of the bishops and priests, acting on their own responsibility, have warmly approved of it.

The Government naturally tries to make as much as possible out of this clerical approbation so as to arouse the religious fanaticism of its soldiers and get as much fighting out of them as possible. Efforts have accordingly been put forth to make this most unholy raid look like a holy war, a Crusade, approved of by Mother Church, against the Infidel. The campaign was begun by vainglorious talk about the substitution of the Cross for the Crescent. Bishops took this same unfortunate line in their pastorals; and postcards printed in Italy bear the picture of a Bersagliere planting a flag with a cross on it upon the minaret of a mosque. There is something very unpleasant in the sight of religion being thus used for the benefit of a marauding expedition, engineered by men who in very many cases have no religion themselves. In the Franciscan Church at Tripoli I have seen officers strolling about the building while Mass was being said, admiring the architecture, pointing to the pictures, but not genuflecting before the high altar, and even turning their back on it sometimes, to the scandal of the whole congregation. I have seen them laugh and chat as not even a party of Cook's tourists would have done in an Italian church, yet those are, forsooth, the men who try, for military reasons, to excite the private soldier with religion before sending him into action. Their conduct is worse than that of the Russian officers

in the Caucasus, who, according to Tolstoi, used to prime their Cossacks with drink before sending them out to kill people.

Some high ecclesiastics seem to have been jingoist either through conviction or else because they succumbed to the social influences brought to bear on them by Signor Pacelli, the head of the Banco di Roma, and himself a strong Catholic.

Speaking at an aristocratic wedding-breakfast in Rome—at a breakfast which followed the marriage of the Princess Odescalchi—Cardinal Vannutelli referred to a victory gained over the Turks by Prince Eugene of Savoy and then used the following words :

“To-day Italy completes her mission of civilisation, for at Tripoli she plants the Cross on a land where the Crescent once waved.”

His Eminence concluded by hoping that Italy would complete her task in Tripolitania.

Next day the “Osservatore Romano,” the official organ of the Vatican, repudiated this ill-advised speech in the following note :

“No small number of Catholic newspapers and several ecclesiastical and political speakers who have recently discussed the Italo-Turkish conflict, have expressed themselves in such a way as to lead the public to believe that the war is a holy war, undertaken in the name and with the support of the Christian religion and of the Church.

“We are authorised, however, to declare that the Holy See is not responsible for such interpretations. Moreover, wishing to remain outside the present conflict, it cannot support it and even deplores it.”



Again, when a "patriotic" subscription was got up for the troops in Tripoli, the Pope forbade the bishops to contribute to it and the bishops forbade the priests. The Vatican also condemned the preaching of anti-Islâmic sermons in the churches, and it seems to have done its best, in every way, to rescue the clergy from the jingo wave.

Signor Pacelli, of the Banco di Roma, is a friend of Baron Sonnino, the Conservative leader and the proprietor of the clericalist "Giornale d' Italia." Consequently, towards the middle of last year, the "Giornale d' Italia" opened a campaign against Turkey in the name of Christianity and the Higher Patriotism of the Italian people. And, according to the frequent practice under such circumstances of many so-called religious papers edited by laymen, it became out-and-out jingo, it outdid the militarists themselves in its worship of brute force, and it covered with vulgar abuse every foreign correspondent who ventured to differ from it.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the impartial attitude of the Pope, and the opposition to the war of one Catholic newspaper in Milan, the Church in Italy will probably suffer in the reaction which will perhaps take place after this war. And no doubt it will suffer more on account of calumnies than on account of true accusations regarding the support which individual ecclesiastics have given the jingoes. For both the militarists and the anti-militarists stoop to falsehood in order to show that the Church is behind the raid. The militarist papers propagate the story that the Pope sent a rose to the Italian Admiral before he sailed; and they are always reproducing the remarks of some "*alto personaggio del mondo clericale*" regarding the enthusiasm which



is displayed for the expedition at the Vatican. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, assert that the Banco di Roma is an ecclesiastical concern, run largely by money from the Vatican itself; and accordingly they denounce the whole war as a clericalist, money-making adventure. This is quite untrue, but, at the same time, it may injure both the Church and the Throne in the eyes of the lower classes. A similar statement was made by the Spanish revolutionists regarding the Melilla expedition, and, whether it was true or false, that statement led indirectly to the Barcelona riots and the death of Ferrer.

In the great cathedral of Pisa on October 11th there was an imposing religious service for the 22nd Infantry Regiment which was leaving for Tripoli. At the end of the service the National Anthem was played and greeted with "*un applauso irrefrenabile*"—exactly as if the sacred building were a music-hall. Cardinal Maffi, Archbishop of Pisa, afterwards addressed the soldiers. Pointing to the flags which had been captured from the Saracens by the mediæval republicans of Pisa, and which now hang on the cathedral walls, the Archbishop hoped that the 22nd would bring back other flags to cover with new glory "*l' Italia, la terra nostra.*"

There was a similar send-off in Viareggio, a similar jingo sermon, and the playing of the royal march on the organ, "*tra la entusiastica commozione dei presenti.*"

It was noted by the Press that this is the first occasion on which the Italian National Anthem has ever been played in an Italian church. But surely the Italian clergy have chosen a bad time for bringing about even a partial rapprochement with the State. The hand they grasp is wet with innocent blood.

In one of his pastoral letters Monsignor Bonomelli declared that the war in Tripoli was a war "for the triumph of justice and civilisation. It is not blind nor arbitrary action. It is not a thirst for conquest which has induced Italy, already too patient and too often deceived, to have recourse to arms. It is the necessity of self-defence, the necessity of protecting our economic interests and of vindicating our national dignity."

The bishop concluded by saying that he approved of and encouraged the expedition to Tripoli, because "next to the tricolour rises the Cross; next to the work of civilisation stands religion, which has freed the world from slavery."

It is certainly a pity that, having freed the world from slavery, religion did not proceed to free the world from war, which is almost as great a scourge. Christianity would have done so, I think, if it had remained united. But in every war that is now waged by a Christian country a section of the clergy is absolutely jingo, while the peace-makers are nearly all of them members of non-Christian and even anti-Christian organisations. During the South African conflict we in this country heard war described to us from clerical lips as an "oratorio," and were called upon to rejoice in "war's red rain." In a recent book, "The Passing of War," the author, Canon Grane, an Anglican clergyman, confesses that, where war is concerned, "the breach between the creed and conduct of Christendom is peculiarly flagrant"; and the "Athenæum" agrees with him that the attitude of English clergymen in time of war is very bad. "For one who lifts his voice against violence and against the wholesale extermination of human life, there are scores who openly or covertly fan the

flames of passion and hatred, in direct violation of the very essence and spirit of their creed." On the Continent anti-Militarist is a synonym for anti-Christian.

At Santa Maria Capua Vetere, Professor Eugenio Vallega, a celebrated preacher, discoursed on the war in a theatre which was ornamented with Italian flags.

Monsignor Carli, Bishop of Sarzana, hopes in a circular letter to his clergy and people that "the blessed flag may be terrible to the enemies of the Christian name and a certain pledge of victory. Then our soldiers and the Italian people will chant a hymn of exultation; and our ships, guided by the Divine assistance and freed from every peril, can return tranquilly to their posts, happy and victorious."

It would be difficult, of course, for the clergy of a country to stand apart from their fellows during the progress of a war. And yet, on the other hand, it pains one who knows what a mixture of finance, massacre, and muddle this Tripolitan adventure really is, to find for example the Vicar-General of Naples ordering the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as long as the war lasts, and the Franciscan Fathers in Tripoli singing a solemn *Te Deum* in honour of General Caneva's "victories" of October 23rd and October 26th.

Are the Socialists and the Syndicalists alone to struggle against war? Why do not the Christian Churches take a step in the same direction by at least forbidding religious thanksgivings in churches for the slaughter of human beings?

In some rare cases, of course, such rejoicings are legitimate. It was different "when Hofer roused Tyrol." Friar Haspinger was in the right place



when he led his mountaineers against the French. And no Christian can criticise the martial chants of the heroic Montenegrins in their squat little Basilica of stone, hard by the graves of their old Prince-Bishops.

But why should any Christian ecclesiastics continue to chant like blind pipers in the wake of speculative banks or millionaire wire-pullers or Agnostic politicians? They might as well sing *Te Deums* to celebrate successful swindles on the Stock Exchange.

It would be only a waste of time for me to indulge in prophecies as to how the war is likely to terminate. For there never was a war quite like this one. The French took twenty years to subdue Algeria, though Algeria had not the support of Constantinople or of the surrounding Mohammedan populations.

In the "*Neue Freie Presse*" of March 10th Field-Marshal von der Goltz writes an extremely interesting account of the situation at that time in Italy's new "possession." It is a candid and truthful statement, but, as usual, the Italians were furious about it, so furious that a semi-official paper advised the King of Italy to complain on this subject to Kaiser Wilhelm when, about that date, the two monarchs met. Von der Goltz said that after the first five months the great Franco-Prussian War had been decided, whereas the first five months of the Italo-Tripolitan War had left things practically as they had been on the first day. The Italians are still, to all intents and purposes, on the coast-line cowering under the guns of their fleet. This means that they have done nothing, for the German Field-Marshal quotes with approval the statement of the traveller Gerhard Rohlfs that "the stronghold of Tripoli is its hinterland." Von der Goltz points out that there are



chunks of Tripolitania as large as the whole German Empire which the invaders have not even seen yet.

“ The roads from Tripoli to the Tchad and from Benghazi to Wadai are both of about equal length, namely, 2000 to 2200 kilometres, that is, as far as from Moscow to the Swiss frontier. From Tripoli to the generally recognised southern border of the Turkish vilayet is 1400 kilometres in a straight line, that is to say, the distance between Moscow and Cracow. Some Turkish posts are still further south. Caravans need months to go thither, months to return. Owing to the long halts in the oasis, a caravan generally takes a year and a half or two years for the whole trip, outwards and home again.”

The Field-Marshal's comparison between Russian and Tripolitan distances is ominous. The year 1812 saw a great army lost in Muscovy's deserts of snow. Shall the year 1912 see another great army lost in Tripoli's deserts of sand ?

Von der Goltz seems to think that it will, if the Italians advance. He points out what extraordinarily good soldiers the Arabs have proved themselves to be. They have not only picked up in an incredibly short space of time everything that can be learned about modern fire-arms, but they have become excellent shots. The bravery and stubbornness which they have displayed in their contests with the Italians are “ *geradezu erstaunlich*.” They seem to regard a rush on the Italian lines much in the same light as a Londoner would regard a rush to Margate. They feel refreshed and invigorated by it—if they survive. There are nearly a million and a half of these Arabs, and every man between sixteen and sixty is capable

of bearing arms, for nature and the hardships of desert life have mercifully relieved them of the cranks and the valetudinarians. If the Italians study the last campaign which those Tripolitans fought they may get some idea of what is before them. In 1835 the Turks seized Tripoli and overturned the dynasty of the Karamanli without the slightest difficulty. But the resistance in the interior, and especially in Fezzan, lasted a whole year. And this though there was no question of religious difference as there is now, though there were no such charges of massacre made against the Turks as are now made against the Italians.

Those massacres in the oasis constitute a most important military factor in the present campaign, and any writer on the war who did not give them great prominence would make a serious mistake. Writing from Senit Beni-Adam in "The Times" of April 11th, a correspondent of that paper says that "from Tunis to Aziziah the country rings with tales of wanton destruction committed by the Italians, of the massacre of defenceless men, the slaying of women and small children, even children at the breast. . . . As to whether the tales of bloodshed . . . are true, partly true, or wholly false, is a matter of no importance from the point of view of their effect upon the war. The point is that the Arabs believe them implicitly, that these tales have penetrated into the ends of the Desert and the Sudan (where reinforcements are consequently beginning to arrive in larger and larger numbers), and that they have aroused in their believers an undying hatred of the Italians."

From the purely material and strategical points of view the oasis massacres were, therefore, a tre-

mendous mistake. The corpse of each innocent man, woman and child murdered by the Italians in the oasis will cost the murderers literally ten times its weight in gold, ten times its weight in Italian dead. It is a heavy price to pay for a wilderness of sand, especially when the purchasers don't get the wilderness after all.

To return to von der Goltz, the old German Field-Marshal sees no way out of the difficulty except for the Italians to run a railway right down to the south of Fezzan ; but he admits that such a railway will, owing to its enormous length, be liable to be broken in a hundred places.

The Italians have forgotten the Syrian adage of Napoleon,—an adage which, by the way, the great Corsican himself forgot when he attacked the Russian steppes,—“Never make war against a Desert.”





## APPENDIX

IF the reader wants to get a good idea of the monstrous length to which the cult of the cannon has been carried by Italian jingoes I would advise him to read "*la Bataille de Tripoli*," by the "poet" Marinetti. My own attention was drawn to it by a cultured Irish lady who is as disgusted as I am myself at the present domination of Rome by Rome's own barbarians.

Describing the fighting on October 26th, Marinetti tells how he went to the house of Gemal Bey in order "to embrace the ensanguined brow of this soldier who hugs in his arms his hot rifle, as a mother embraces a feverish child. . . . An artilleryman . . . stammers painfully, with his torn jaws: 'Eight! I have killed eight of them!' But nothing equals the epic splendour of this sergeant who, his mouth closed by bloody gashes, lifts his two hands towards me each instant to indicate by his ten outspread digits that he has killed ten."

The deaths referred to were probably the murders of innocent, unarmed people, though the jingo poet does not seem to realise that such was the case.

To my mind this adoration of slaughter is almost as great a sign of degeneracy as the Futurist movement itself. Healthy nations take it for granted that their soldiers and their sailors have ordinary male courage: it is only morbid and cowardly degenerates who go into paroxysms of excitement and sing wild pæans when they see an artillerist pointing a cannon at an enemy three miles off and unable to reply. In his "*Canzone dei Trofei*," d'Annunzio falls into raptures about the firing of a gun, though there was, under the circumstances,

no more danger in that than there would be in working the handle of a village pump in Surrey. Following d' Annunzio (at a very great distance), Marinetti celebrates with a tremendous eruption of very bad poetry the bursting of Italian shrapnel-shells among the Turks, the "deluge of lead, the grand deluge of Italian force." ("Que c'est beau ! Quelle chance ! Une joie délirante serre ma gorge. . . . Bravo ! . . . Bravo ! . . . Gloire à vous, beaux fantassins du 40e. . . . Salut à vous, impétueux major Bianculi, capitaine Vigevano, capitaine Galliani ! . . . Salut à toi, lieutenant Vicinanza, héros au corps de caoutchouc.")

The absurdity of all this wretched bombast will be more apparent when we remember that the "beautiful foot-soldiers," the "impetuous Major Bianculi," and "Lieutenant Vicinanza, thou hero of the india-rubber body" all ran like deer before the Arabs, and that the result of the whole engagement was an Italian retreat.

But this does not affect Signor Marinetti. He addresses the stars ; he wishes that he could turn himself into a projectile so that he could burst among the "execrated" enemy : in language that is hardly decent, he makes love to the cannon. The machine-gun is "an elegant and fatal woman . . ." "une femme charmante, et sinistre, et divine."

The brothel and the slaughter-house seem to furnish this Italian gentleman with all his comparisons. When the shells strike the Desert, "Le sable énormément creusé rebondit, se redresse en gonflant une colossale nudité de femme aux crevantes mamelles. . . . Cette fois l'immense corps de sable improvisé dresse en plein ciel un profil plus humain. Ses gros seins noirs coulent en réglisse de fumée et son ventre roule volumineusement une danse solennelle. . . ."

When we realise that the men who write this sort of drivel are not only circulating without a keeper, but are dictating the policy of Italy, we shall understand the danger to which Europe is exposed.

Speaking of the anti-war party, Signor Marinetti declares that :

“ We have recently knocked down with our fists in the streets and at public meetings our bitterest adversaries, spitting at the same time in their faces these firm principles : . . .

“(3) The tiresome memory of Roman glory must at length be wiped out by an Italian grandeur a hundred times greater. . . .

“. . . We invite the Italian Government, now become Futurist, to increase all the national ambitions by despising the stupid accusations of piracy and proclaiming the birth of Panitalianism.”

THE END.





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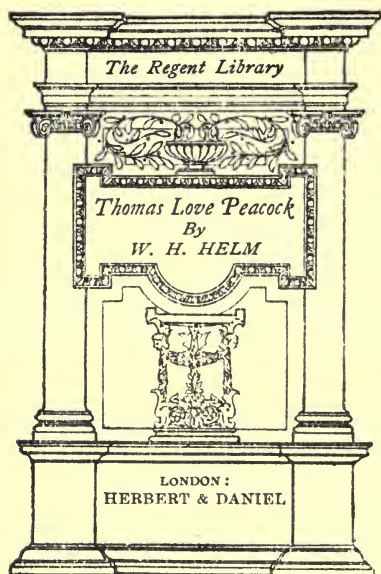
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